“When we turn the Bible into an adjective and stick it in front of another loaded word, we tend to ignore or downplay the parts of the Bible that don’t quite fit our preferences and presuppositions. In an attempt to simplify, we force the Bible’s cacophony of voices into a single tone and turn a complicated, beautiful, and diverse holy text into a list of bullet points we can put in a manifesto or creed. More often than not, we end up more committed to what we want the Bible to say than what it actually says.”

~ Rachel Held Evans

TOUCHING, FEELING, AND SEEING THE NARRATIVE

By Sherman Cox II

Preachers study the meaning of scripture so that they can convey that meaning to the congregation in the preaching moment. We go to considerable lengths to make sure that we preach the truth and not error. We study the passage within the context of the chapter, book, and even the whole cannon of scripture. In many cases, the preacher derives valid and truthful points from the text and then present those vital truths to the people. This is good, but often when you take the points from the story, you remove the ability of the people to fully experience the truth that you are presenting. Before the people can experience the text, we have to both understand and experience the text ourselves.

But how do you experience the text? You should do a full exegesis as you have done in the past, but I would also suggest that you might allow the five senses of touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste to help you ask questions of the text that you are presenting.

For example, let's look at the woman who grabbed for Jesus' cloak in Luke 8:40-49. After doing your exegesis, now go into the text and look around. What do you feel when exploring, in your minds eye, the text? Do you feel the pushing and the shoving as the crowd almost crushes Jesus? Do you see a frail woman whose loss of blood no doubt made her weak? Do you see the desperation as the woman who has expended all of her money, according to a parallel passage, comes to her last chance? Do you see the mass in front of her, and her pushing through, bobbing and weaving, to get to the Master? Do you feel the people shoving her aside as they try to get to Jesus themselves? Do you feel the clothing of the Master's garment on the tip of her fingers as she lunges for a touch?

Explicitly thinking about your senses forces you to think about the story. It forces you to realize that this is not just a lesson for us today - and it is that - but it is also a story about a woman struggling for liberation that only comes from a connection to the Master. It is a real story of a real desperate woman and her interaction with Jesus.

Thinking about these kinds of questions might give you a sermon title. Or maybe it could offer aid in organizing your sermon. In any case, you'll recreate an experience with a desperate woman touching the master's garment on the tip of her fingers as she lunges for a touch.

Many preachers exegete the text so that they can intellectually understand the Bible and preach a bible lecture. That is good, but take it a bit further and convey a story that we not only experience intellectually, but also physically and emotionally. Address the whole being by allowing your senses to aid in the exegesis.
A COMPLAINT

by Loren Seibold

Here’s a complaint that I heard recently: “You didn’t talk to Agnes at church on Sabbath, and her feelings are hurt.” Every pastor I know has heard some version of it. No matter how thin you’re spread on a Sabbath morning, you should have have the ability to spend quality time with everyone.

At one church I had hundreds of members, two services, taught a pastor’s class, and had a Spanish church meeting across the street that I’d check on in the spaces between. Even then, someone would report that “You rushed right by me in the lobby without saying anything.”

You can point out that there’s only one of you, and as hard as you try, you probably can’t greet every person. But it usually doesn’t help. As with other complaints, if someone wants to find you deficient, they will.

If falls into the same category as “You didn’t visit me when I was sick,” or “I really wanted to talk to you, but you didn’t call me,” when they hadn’t let anyone know they were sick or needed to talk to you. As sensitive as we try to be to people’s needs, we can't know everything.

One of the curious psychological phenomena of ministry is the extent to which people want us to incarnate God's qualities in ourselves. You already know that your children and marriage should be perfect, your faith constant, and your behavior unimpeachable.

But please let me know if you figure out how to be omnipresent and omniscient. They'd come in especially handy.

What do you think? Discuss this with me on the Best Practices Facebook page.

LATEST NCD RESEARCH

by Tom Evans

When the Natural Church Development survey was first introduced in 1998, I became one of the first five pastors to utilize the tool in my local congregation in North Dallas. Since that time, hundreds of Adventist churches have taken the survey! Those churches that have followed up with implementation, based on the results, have experienced growth in: tithe, offerings, membership, and baptisms (verified by research conducted for DMin dissertation by Rodney Mills). There have been a number of compelling reasons as to why I have heartily embraced Natural Church Development as an evaluation tool for the local church. Read the complete article.

READING FOR PASTORS

Monte Sahlin is writing again at Faith in Context, after some time away dealing with family health issues. Here’s an interesting piece about the future of the economy, and implications for ministry.

Are we talking too much about homosexuality in the church? David Murray thinks we’re contributing to making it culturally normal by addressing it too often. Quote: “I’ve lost count of the number of times Christian adults have talked about homosexuality in front of my little girls. It makes me so angry, because I want them to hear about healthy and beautiful sexual relations, long before being exposed to the most perverse and twisted - and I want them to hear it from me.” What do you think?

Five phrases that will kill your leadership. Quote: “If you believe the ‘called to ministry’ phrase, you run the risk of replacing God with ministry and begin worshipping the ministry itself.”
You've probably already heard about television star **Angus T. Jones** and his baptism into a Seventh-day Adventist church and interviews for Voice of Prophecy. Now, in the wake of his rather impolitic (though undoubtedly true) comments about the show he's on, **his mother says he's being exploited**. Are there dangers in elevating new celebrity Christians and using them to get attention for the message? **What do you think?**

**On a related topic.** Quote: “Indeed, Christians are often quick to scoop up ‘their own’ and elevate them simply because they, at one point or another, have expressed belief in God. Case in point: celebs like Gary Busey, Mel Gibson (at least around the time of *The Passion of the Christ*), Jessica Simpson, Kanye - Christian celebs who often don’t lead very Christian lives.”

**Thoughtful piece by Rachel Held Evans about labeling certain actions or attitudes “biblical.”** Quote: “The Bible is not a position paper.”

**Is the over-sexualization of our culture really a search for spiritual intimacy? That’s what Shannon Ethridge argues.** Quote: “If deep and spiritual intimacy is what humans seek, then relational or sexual intensity can never satisfy our deepest longings or heal our oldest wounds.”

**How to eliminate boring sermons.** Quote: “Let me be blunt: if your life is boring your sermons will be too.”

**Is a growing church necessarily a healthy church?**

Isn't it amazing how Black Friday and Cyber Monday have almost the status of holidays? **Perhaps there’s something the church could learn from the retailers, though.**

---

**TO THE POINT: FAMILY**

Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. With no relatives, no support, we’ve put it in an impossible situation. **Margaret Mead**

As a child my family's menu consisted of two choices: take it or leave it. **Buddy Hackett**

If minutes were kept of a family gathering, they would show that “Members not Present” and “Subjects Discussed” were one and the same. **Robert Braut**

Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city. **George Burns**

All parents damage their children. It cannot be helped. Youth, like pristine glass, absorbs the prints of its handlers. Some parents smudge, others crack, a few shatter childhoods completely into jagged little pieces, beyond repair. **Mitch Albom**

Families are like fudge - mostly sweet with a few nuts. **Unknown**

After a good dinner one can forgive anybody, even one's own relations. **Oscar Wilde**

The great gift of family life is to be intimately acquainted with people you might never even introduce yourself to, had life not done it for you. **Kendall Hailey**

Family quarrels have a total bitterness unmatched by others. Yet it sometimes happens that they also have a kind of tang, a pleasantness beneath the unpleasantness, based on the tacit understanding that this is not for keeps; that any limb you climb out on will still be there later for you to climb back. **Mignon McLaughlin**

---

**IDEAS, EVENTS, RESOURCES, ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Day of fasting and prayer** for wrongly-imprisoned SDA pastor in Africa

**Interactive health program** on Hope Channel. Go Healthy...For Good, an interactive health and wellness program with Dr. Nerida McKibben. The program airs Monday through Thursday at 7:00 p.m. ET, and repeats at 10:00 p.m. ET and other times throughout the week. Participate by phone, e-mail, text message,
You didn't talk to Agnes at church on Sabbath

Best Practices 11/25/2012

Facebook, Twitter, short video posts.


Previous resource links:

- Summary: mandatory abuse reporting by clergy by state
- eGracenotes mobile app
- New PlusLine at AdventSource
- NY13
- Pastor's convention, NAD Ministerial Department
- The Seven Campaign to stop child abuse
- Family Ministries Facebook page
- Andrews University Press, Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church
- General Conference International Field School of Evangelism
- NAD Theology of Ordination Study Committee
- General Conference Annual Council response to ordination without regard to gender
- Jesus 101 Biblical Institute with speaker/director Elizabeth Talbot
- Elder Ted Wilson's book Almost Home
- The ADVENTISTS - 2, by Journey Films
- The Great Controversy Project e-newsletter
- Real Family Talk
- ACS for Hurricane Sandy, Disaster Response Page

Best Practices for Adventist Ministry is published by NAD Ministerial. Publisher: Ivan Williams; Managing Editor: Dave Gemmell. Copyright 2012 North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists.
When the Natural Church Development survey was first introduced in 1998, I became one of the first five pastors to utilize the tool in my local congregation in North Dallas. Since that time, hundreds of Adventist churches have taken the survey! Those churches that have followed up with implementation, based on the results, have experienced growth in: tithe, offerings, membership, and baptisms (verified by research conducted for DMin dissertation by Rodney Mills). There have been a number of compelling reasons as to why I have heartily embraced Natural Church Development as an evaluation tool for the local church:

1. The principles are solidly grounded in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.
2. It gives the church an objective view of where they are currently at. Reality can be faced.
3. It gives the church hope. There is something practical they can do to improve their church.

4. It is not a one time program. Used properly, it becomes part of the life of the church.
5. Healthy churches find success in retaining new members who join through soul-winning efforts.
6. The natural end result is a church that more effectively reaches the harvest AND multiplies daughter churches.

Since February of 2007, 427 Adventist churches in the United States have taken the NCD survey. Recently, Ian Campbell (NCD consultant and advisory board member from Australia), visited NADEI and shared with us the cumulative results. The good news is that we have seen a dramatic increase in our average church health from the first set of surveys (prior to 2007). Our current average now stands at 50.5, up from around 43. This is certainly cause for celebration, but most people don’t jump up and down about getting a “C” in school. A score of 50 is average, so there is still much room for improvement.

By category, our scores as follows (from highest to lowest):

- **Need-oriented Evangelism** 55.3
- **Passionate Spirituality** 54.3
- **Gift-based Ministry** 53.0
- **Empowering Leadership** 50.2
- **Effective Structures** 49.6
- **Loving Relationships** 47.9
- **Inspiring Worship Service** 46.8
- **Holistic Small Groups** 46.5

A study of this scale can begin to inform us of trends within the Adventist church. Some of the findings are not surprising. The high and low positions of these characteristics have remained the same since 1998. As Adventists, we have a strong emphasis on Evangelism. Our challenge continues to be the development of Holistic Small Groups. Gift-based ministry has jumped from 2nd to last to 3rd. This improvement is encouraging. A troubling result is the low score of “Inspiring Worship Service.” Of the 11 questions related to “Inspiring Worship Service” on the survey, three are in the lowest 10 questions (of the total of 86 questions on the survey). One is particularly surprising, “I can easily explain why I come to the worship service,” with a score of 44 on this question. It would cause one to wonder how motivated members would be to invite others to a worship service if they can’t clearly explain why they attend themselves!

Valuable cultural insights can be gained by reflecting on the top 10 questions on the survey. Two questions related to “Need-oriented Evangelism” ranked #1 and #3 out of the 86 survey questions: “I try to deepen my relationship with people who do not yet know Jesus” (score of 67), and “I pray for my friends, colleagues, and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith” (score of 62). Two questions in the category of “Passionate Spirituality” ranked #2 and #5: “I enjoy reading the Bible on my own” (score of 66), and “The Bible is a powerful guide for me in the decisions of everyday life” (score of 62). These results are certainly encouraging! It is interesting that these four questions also score in the top ten for the Adventist church in Australia. Adventist culture is strong and transcends oceans.

We can also gain valuable insights by reflecting on the lowest 10 scores. The lowest two questions come from the category of “Loving Relationships”: “I can rely on my friends at church” (score of 40) and, “In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems” (score of 40). These results give us pause to wonder how much relational vitality is taking place in most of our churches. Are we simply skimming the surface and wearing masks of “all is well” on Sabbath morning?

Finally, there is one question on the survey that has the greatest correlation on whether an Adventist church is growing or not. The score on this question rises and falls consistently based on the growth or decline of the church. It is question number 74, “Our leaders are spiritual examples to me.” This question scored the lowest for us in the category of “Passionate Spirituality” with a 44. Of all the results, this finding is perhaps the most challenging. Overall, the 11,837 Adventists in the United States who were surveyed find their leaders as being below average in Spirituality. If we want to see our churches grow, this is the most significant area that needs attention! The call to revival and reformation is timely!

Many thanks to Ian Campbell for providing this research and the beneficial insights! If you would like to know more about NCD or to order a survey, contact Andrea at 269-471-8303.

*Tom Evans, Associate Director, Church Planting, NCD & Coaching*

Reprinted with permission of NADEI News.
Faith in Context
Commentary by Monte Sahlin on religion, values and contemporary issues

What is Likely to Happen with the Economy?
This is an astounding piece that I found in a journal on future trends in a scholarly article written by a business school professor. The primary focus of the article is how China is structuring its economic engine to compete successfully with the United States and Europe. He describes why the West is losing in this competition:

"J. P. Morgan can lose $9 billion on speculative trading in financial derivatives. Bank of America has lost $40 billion over the last four years on their failed acquisition of the mortgage lender Countrywide. A large number of big U.S. corporations pay no taxes to the federal government; instead, many of them receive tax benefits from the government. The Greek government can be forced to pay 436 million [Euros] to secretive investment funds ... who speculate against the established network of governments, central banks, and international financial institutions. People watch all this with disbelief. It is not a question of whether the law makes such behavior permissible. It concerns the ethics of the very system that supports national economies and underpins the global economic structure."

"History books are full of pages describing how originally successful systems have dug their own graves by allowing distortions, aberrations, exploitations, and abuses—in short, forgetting why they were established. Any political system or economic model finds its legitimacy in delivering human security, wealth, and welfare to the people. But what we see now is that a growing share of the enterprise system, particularly in the area of financial institutions, is violating this golden rule. ..."

"Many of those who exploit the system are not entrepreneurs. They have not launched new products, and they feel no responsibility to safeguard the livings of their thousands of employees. They merely shuffle financial assets around, they invent new and sophisticated financial instruments, and they display this ingenuity simply to enrich themselves by grabbing money from elsewhere. "As the profits they earn do not stem from production, they must come from other parts of the economy. Consequently, the part of the economy providing goods and services is forced to subsidize the nonproductive part."

What Does this Mean?
The economy may not improve significantly at any point in the next few decades. Congregations, pastors and Christian ministries may be faced with long-term increases in poverty and unemployment, the resulting pressures on families and pinched church budgets. Of course, the work of Jesus is not determined by the economic climate.


November 16, 2012 in Current Affairs | Permalink

Comments
Verify your Comment
Previewing your Comment

Your comment has not yet been posted.
Your comment could not be posted. Error type: 
Your comment has been posted. Post another comment
As a final step before posting your comment, enter the letters and numbers you see in the image below. This prevents automated programs from posting comments.
Having trouble reading this image? View an alternate.

Cigarette/Can

Type the two words:

Continue
Can we have a voluntary moratorium on writing or speaking about homosexuality in Christian circles. It doesn’t have to be forever, but if we could have just a few weeks or even months without it being written about or preached upon, we would all be the better for it.

I think I was 14 or 15 before I heard of homosexuality (it wasn’t exactly a trending topic in Glasgow city schools!). I was maybe late teens before I heard it mentioned, quite obliquely, in a sermon. That kind of ignorance or denial is probably not healthy today. However, I sometimes wish for these days again rather than the other extreme where we cannot get away from it. The media shove our it in our faces every day already. Do Christians need to be similarly obsessed?

Of course the subject needs to be addressed from time to time, especially when the militant gay rights movement is such a force in our society. However, it would be so good if we could get through a week now and again without having to soil our minds with it.

A clever devil
The devil is not stupid. He knows that the more people talk about homosexuality, the more it is normalized and becomes just another part of “ordinary” sinful society. The more we talk and write about it, the less shocking and the more “whatever” it becomes.

I imagine most homosexuals are delighted with the way Christians are helping to normalize conversations and discussions about this sin, especially without regard for the ages, innocence, and vulnerability of those who are present. I’ve lost count of the number of times Christian adults have talked about homosexuality in front of my little girls. It makes me so angry, because I want them to hear about healthy and beautiful sexual relations, long before being exposed to the most perverse and twisted – and I want them to hear it from me.

The Apostle Paul said of the unfruitful works of darkness, “For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret” (Eph. 5:12). If that verse doesn’t apply to some extent to this evil, I don’t know what it does cover.

Lost innocence
The devil also knows that by exposing younger and younger children to the vocabulary and idea of homosexuality, that precious innocence is lost and curiosity is dangerously aroused. There are appropriate ages to introduce these things to children, and we should respect parents discretion on this. Can we not find euphemistic ways of talking about some sins, protecting young innocent minds among us, while the rest of us know what’s being talked about?

We’re going to have to fight some fearful battles on this front in the coming years. Homosexuals will not rest with the acceptance of gay marriage. They want to eliminate all criticism and disapproval of their sin, and they will not stop until they are not only tolerated or accepted but approved by all. However, do we really need to constantly fill the blogosphere, Christian magazines, Christian schools, our pulpits, and our family dinner tables with this?
I feel I’ve failed in this area too, and therefore I’ve now resolved to neither talk nor write about this subject more than is absolutely necessary, and always in appropriate forums and ways.

Why don’t you join me?

Christian bloggers, writers, editors, teachers, and preachers, can I appeal to you? Please give us a break from mentioning homosexuality. Even for a month. Give us something positive and wholesome to think about. Give us Jesus.

11 Responses to “Can we have a break from homosexuality?”

1. David Murray (Isle of Lewis)
November 26, 2012 at 7:15 am #
I agree. It’s got to the stage that when a person is giving an example of a sin during a talk, it seems homosexuality is always one of them. In reality it’s a very uncommon sin and shouldn’t be talked about so much. That verse is very interesting in relation to this too.

Reply

2. Anne
November 26, 2012 at 8:02 am #
If you had been a fly on our wall last night and heard every word of our conversation, you could not have written a closer account of what we’d been saying….

I will simply add a hearty AMEN. So let it be.

Reply

3. Mike
November 26, 2012 at 8:55 am #
Great idea David. I’m in.

Reply

4. Scott
November 26, 2012 at 10:24 am #
I haven’t written or spoken about it myself in some time, but I’m not sure of the issue here. It’s not like Christians are the ones bringing it up. Most of the discussion I hear is related to responses from the world. It’s blasted at us constantly. Students have it shoved down their throats at school, media is all over the issue, I can’t even watch a football game without an ad for some show with a prominent gay character. So asking Christians to ignore the issue seems a bit much. Again, I don’t have regular conversations about the issue, but when it’s thrown at me, I do feel the need to respond in a biblical way.

Reply

5. Adam Thompson
November 27, 2012 at 7:32 am #
I see it the same way, Scott. Most of the time when I hear Christians bring it up, it’s in response to accusations/demands/questions/activism from the world.

While I agree that it’s ridiculous how often it’s talked about (considering we’re talking about a tiny percent of the population), I don’t see a solution, when most of the time it’s not Christians who bring the topic or issue up.

Reply

6. Clay
November 26, 2012 at 1:14 pm #
There is a link to your site on gracetraveler.com and the title of this article grabbed me so I just had to pop over and read it. I have been guilty of being lured into this trap, it just seems so hard with the topic being placed all around, but what you said really resonated with me as true. I heard a long time ago that the way banks train tellers to spot counterfeiters is by over exposing them to real money so that when a fake one comes across they can spot it right away, not because they have been studying and dwelling on the false, but because they know the truth so well.

Reply
David Murray  
November 26, 2012 at 10:00 pm  
Autsin: I'm trying to reduce people's focus on this sin. Your comment does the opposite.

Peter D.  
November 27, 2012 at 9:12 am  
The way it is handled is perceived as hateful. By focusing on one thing, we have forgotten about the real mission of the church. Love God First And Best. Love Everyone No Matter What. Preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Make Disciples. That is the very clear parameter we are given. When we do these things, the Holy Spirit can work, convict, correct and heal. I grow weary of the subject to the point of saying, "let's talk about something else". If they don't, I leave the room.

Dave Gehrls  
November 27, 2012 at 11:12 am  
Professor Murray, you make several interesting points, then, it appears to me, that you pull Eph 5:12 completely of context.

11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” 15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Eph 5: 11-17 NIV

My research has shown that the average church has failed to teach, especially the youth, a clear, wisely presented understanding of what the Bible teaches on immorality and especially homosexuality.

Reading Eph 5 from verse 1 give us the full context of this great call to turn from immorality and become imitators of God.

God’s love and grace cannot be separated from God’s justice. Jesus began his preaching ministry with “Repent…” -Matt 4:17

God’s love demands that we call sin…SIN. Only guilty sinners realize their need for God’s mercy. God’s love and grace which sent Jesus to die on the cross only has meaning in the reality of my sin.

God’s word is light that exposes our sin. “…through the law we become conscious of sin.” Rom 3:20 Until sin becomes sinful we don’t feel the Conviction needed for Repentance and Forgiveness which leads to Saving Faith.

God’s light of truth which exposes my sin also reveals the cross. When my sin becomes sinful then the Blood becomes the BLOOD, the Cross becomes the CROSS, and in that light I either choose to cling to my sin or repent and kneel at the Cross.

Is Catholic theologian Ross Douthat accurately nailing us evangelicals as well as Catholics in his book, "Bad Religion – How we became a nation of heretics"?

"Has the church lost the ability to help people deal with their sin?"

The deeper agenda in the homosexual controversy is an attack on our 1st Amendment freedoms of religion…they are attacking us…so we cannot help but speak out. Where some have failed and hurt the cause of Christ is in how they speak out. We need speech…full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Col 4:5
Can we have a break from homosexuality? | HeadHeartHand Blog
http://headhearthand.org/blog/2012/11/26/can-we-have-a-break-from-homosexuality/

Recent Comments

12/3/2012 7:52 PM
5 Phrases That Will Kill Your Leadership

“I can do it better myself.”

True, to an extent. But you can’t do everything better. And even if you could, where would you find the time? This phrase leads down the path of “I must do it all”. You can’t do it all. You are finite. You are rhythmic. You cannot sustain a fevered pace, going from one task to the next. You will burn out. You must delegate wisely.

“I am judged on results.”

No you’re not. You may be employed to produce results. But you’re not judged by God to produce results. That’s His arena. Your task is to remain obedient and faithful. This requires a stellar and growing, dynamic relationship with Christ, Himself. Many of your colleagues have burned out thinking they were being judged by the results, which were not forthcoming in their assignment.

“If I work hard, God will provide.”

Nope. Hard work isn’t a trigger for God’s provision. At least, hard work ALONE isn’t. This phrase implies that you can go and go and go, at the expense of other areas of your life (like your physical health, your marriage, your parenting) and somehow God will fill in the gaps. Those who live by this phrase believe resting is evil and lazy. Again, not true. Resting is not only a solid practice, it’s ordained.

“I’m called to the ministry.”

No you’re not. If you’re a pastor, you’re called to be a disciple who is cleverly positioned in the pastoral context. If you’re a youth volunteer, you’re called to be a disciple who is cleverly positioned in the youth ministry context. Get the idea? If you believe the “called to ministry” phrase, you run the risk of replacing God with ministry and begin worshipping the ministry itself.

“I need others.”

True and not true. You need others because you are wired for community. Even if you’re an introvert, you cannot survive in ministry leadership without a few, deep relationships. But don’t fall into the trap of believing you need others. What you need is Christ. Co-dependency on others is unhealthy. If you believe you deeply need others, you will hang on every slice of approval and morsel of disapproval. As a result, you’ll ride a rollercoaster of emotions.

Want to remain strong in your ministry leadership? Then you’ll have to come to grips with these 5 phrases. Don’t be deceived by them. They sound good on the surface. But stick to the truth or one day you’ll hit the wall and be totally surprised.

What scriptures would you add to these 5 phrases?

Are there other subtle phrases like these you’d like to add to the list?

photo credit: country boy shane via photopin cc

Share this:

November 27, 2012 in Blog, Strongology, Techniques with 12 Comments

Profile

Sign in with Twitter Sign in with Facebook

NAME
EMAIL Not published
WEBSITE
COMMENT

You are worth more than you know

Search

Disclosure

Some of the links on the posts and pages in this site are “affiliate links.” This means if you click on the link and purchase the item, I will receive an affiliate commission. Regardless, I only recommend products or services I use personally and believe will add value to the Serving Strong community. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255: “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.”

Unless otherwise noted, sources for images may be accessed by clicking on the images themselves.
Notice a theme in those statements?
The object is always I.
Just saying.
Matt Steen recently posted.. The Nines Replay

Scott replied:
39 minutes ago
Nice catch, Matt.

Kevin Martineau

Kevin Martineau recently posted..
God helps us handle what we are given

Scott replied:
21 hours ago
Beautiful add, Kevin! And notice the focal point of the phrase: “I” again. It’s all about God, not us. Thanks for adding to the list.

Bill (cycleguy)

Bill (cycleguy) recently posted. ZOO

Scott replied:
21 hours ago
Hmmm, Bill. Sounds similar to the “I must do it all” mentality.

Jerry Watts

Jerry Watts recently posted.
Hey Todd – thanks for the many ways you encourage & enlighten us through your mail-outs…With a great deal of respect for all the great helps you offer, while I may not use the phrase to ‘prop up’ my position – please know that my ‘call to ministry’ was a definitive ‘call.’ It was not at the end of a service-in front of a crowd – rather, the call to this disciple was to preach. Knowing that internet feedback will be fast, furious, and probably fierce – one of the issues facing the ‘ministry’ today is too few feel a sense of a ‘divine call’ and too many feel like they ‘volunteered’. These are just my thoughts. Once again, thanks for your words, thoughts, and helps.
Great post. I know I’m guilty of saying most of these from time to time…but I can’t do it all and hard work doesn’t mean I’m following Christ. Over the past year God has really been showing me the difference between being a “Christian” and being a “Disciple”. I must FOLLOW HIM!

tcavey recently posted. What Does Gideon Have To Do With The 2012 Election?

Scott replied:
View 22 hours ago

TC, you are right on. Hard work doesn’t always mean we’re following Christ. That’s good right there. Thanks for sharing it!

By the way, TC is blogging over at http://tcavey.blogspot.com/ Check it out!

REPLY

Jason Stasyszen
View 2 hours ago

Great post, Scott. I especially like #4 because we are called and chosen to love and know Jesus and express His Kingdom and heart. That may come through being a pastor or worship leader or whatever else, but you’re so right, it can become our god when we don’t differentiate. Good stuff! Thank you.

Jason Stasyszen recently posted. The Burden of Self-Defense

REPLY

Scott replied:
View 22 hours ago

Thanks, Jason. #4 can be so subtle, can’t it?

FOLKS: By the way, Jason is blogging over at http://www.endlessimpact.com/ Check him out!
EXCLUSIVE: 'He's being exploited by the church': Two and a Half Men star Angus T Jones' mother voices fears after his extraordinary religious rant

- Teenager, who joined the show as a child in 2003, earns $350k per episode
- Filmed 'testimony' for the Forerunner Chronicles, in which he describes his 'awakening' to the Seventh-day Adventist movement
- He says he 'does not want to be on' the hit show
- Two and a Half Men bosses are yet to comment on the rant
- His mother claims he is being 'exploited' by the church

By Julie Moul and Lizzie Smith


The mother of Two and A Half Men star Angus T Jones has spoken out to say he is being 'exploited' by his church after he branded his hit show 'filth' in an extraordinary religious rant.

Carey Jones, 42, told MailOnline she was worried for her famous son. 'I'm concerned he's being exploited by the church,' she explained, but refused to comment further.

The 19-year-old - who makes $350,000 per episode playing Jake - was seen urging fans to 'turn off' in a new video for the Forerunner Chronicles.

In Angus Jones Testimony, he says: 'If you watch Two and a Half Men, please stop watching. I'm on Two and a Half Men and I don't want to be on it.'

Scroll down for video

Bizarre outburst: Angus T Jones calls his hit show 'filth' in a video clip posted online

Jones has been on the show since he was 10 and it is unclear if he has tried to quit the show. The exact details of his contract have yet to surface.

His comments are likely to attract ire from the show's co-creator Chuck Lorre and his bosses at Warner Brothers, who are yet to comment.

The teen's outburst continued: 'Please stop watching it and filling your head with filth. People say it's just entertainment.

'Do some research on the effects of television and your brain, and I promise you you'll have a decision to make when it comes to television and especially with what you watch on television ... it's bad news.'
Regret: Angus is contracted to the program and his comments are likely to attract ire from his bosses at Warner Brothers.

Intense: A reflective Angus ones in his 'testimony' as a 'soldier of truth'.

He adds: 'If I am doing any harm, I don't want to be here. I don't want to be contributing to the enemy's plan. 'You cannot be a true God-fearing person and be on a television show like that. I know I can't. 'I'm not OK with what I'm learning, what the bible says and being on that television show.'

Jones gives his testimony sitting with a representative of The Forerunner Chronicles in his trailer on the Warner studio lot, where his series is filmed.

VIDEO: Two and a Half Men's Angus T Jones' extraordinary religious rant.

'Filth': Angus is paid $350,000 an episode to star in the show, in which he is seen with guest star Miley Cyrus in a recent episode.
In his younger days: A chubbier Angus with then co-star Charlie Sheen

New co-star: Angus with Ashton Kutcher, who replaced sacked Charlie Sheen as the new star of the show

In the video the young star laughs nervously as he admits his worried family have likened his recent ‘awakening’ to the Seventh-day Adventist movement to joining a ‘cult’.

‘Of course all my family, not all my family, but some of my family were like “he’s going to a cult” trying to tell me to get out of there,’ said Jones.

‘But I didn’t feel like I was being fooled, I could study it for myself. Its there in the bible and there’s no evidence for the opposing views.’

Jones’ comments are just the latest crisis for the show, which was put in jeopardy when its original star Sheen was fired and replaced by Ashton Kutcher after attacking Chuck Lorre amidst a storm of bizarre behaviour.

The show has since struggled to maintain its high ratings.

WHAT ARE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS?

Jones talks about his education in the ‘basic messages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’, a Protestant Christian denomination which is marked by its observance of the Sabbath on a Saturday.

Members are discouraged from purely secular activities on the Sabbath, instead spend the day worshipping. Preparations begin on the Friday night at sundown.

The official teachings of the denomination are expressed in its 28 Fundamental Beliefs, which Jones revealed he was studying.

Jones’ ‘testimony’ was released by the ForeRunner Chronicles.

According to a tweet for The Forerunner Chronicles Jones is now a ‘soldier for truth’.

They state on their Facebook page: ‘The Forerunner is dedicated to proclaiming the truth that you need to know. “To live and die for the truth” is the motto [sic] and Jesus Christ is our general.

‘He gives the orders... we put in the work! No questions asked.’

The ForeRunner has previously released a series of 11 videos entitled the Jay-Z Deception, which chronicle the ‘darkness’ of pop stars like the Rihanna and argue that they are ‘antagonistic to Christianity’.
Having peaked at 28.7 million viewers when Kutcher made his debut, ratings have slipped hitting a recent series high of 13.6 million when Miley Cyrus guest starred in an episode.

Jones has appeared on Two And A Half Men since 2003 and received a pay rise in May when the show was renewed for a tenth series.

But he complained of reduced storylines, telling E! Online last month: 'My character does Skype calls. He only does one scene Skype calls... It's easy but it's boring.'

In a further testimony on the Seventh-day website the Voice Of Prophecy, Jones revealed that he felt his role in Two And A Half Men was an opportunity to spread his beliefs to a wider audience.

'I am confident I am there for a reason,' he said.

'I don't think I would be on the show this year if God hadn't pushed me into it because otherwise I genuinely didn't want to do another year of the show. I'm so thankful to be there its a lot of fun and God will get the glory out of it.'

Jones also revealed that he found the church during a difficult period in his life.

With his parents going through a divorce, he began spending as much time as possible out of home and admits he experimented with drugs.

'When I look back now I see that... the enemy was trying to push my in a different directions but God... pulled me out right at the last second,' he said.

'I was running away from that situation. Slowly that led to drugs. I never drank. And I'm still a virgin so God protected me from those things.'

He described how the Holy Spirit spoke to him through a friend and he accepted Jesus into his life. He then went about the process of finding a church.

In his ForeRunner Chronicles video Jones explained that a schoolfriend introduced him to the Valley Crossroads Seventh-day Adventist Church, where he felt at home.

'I really started to get into reading the bible and I started to look for a church to go to. Every Sunday I was going to like three or four churches, I was just looking for the right church,' he said.

And he added: 'I was looking to go to a church with an all-black congregation,' explaining that he had imagined himself as a member of a gospel church.

'The first day I went there I went by myself and I walked in and sat down at the back... It was just like, that was my church.'

Speaking out: Angus T Jones gives his testimony in a video posted online on Seventh-day website the Voice Of Prophecy

Angus T Jones' family and their criminal past

While he may have raised eyebrows with his outspoken views, by finding religion Angus T Jones has avoided following in the criminal path of close family members.

The young actor's uncle, Eric Eugene Claypool, is currently serving a 99-year prison sentence for murder after shooting a man he claimed had sexually abused him.

According to prison documents on November 16, 1994, Claypool, now 38, stole a .357-magnum from 31-year-old Jay Harlan and shot him in the back of the head.

'When I look back now I see that... the enemy was trying to push my in a different directions but God... pulled me out right at the last second,' he said.

'I was running away from that situation. Slowly that led to drugs. I never drank. And I'm still a virgin so God protected me from those things.'

He described how the Holy Spirit spoke to him through a friend and he accepted Jesus into his life. He then went about the process of finding a church.

In his ForeRunner Chronicles video Jones explained that a schoolfriend introduced him to the Valley Crossroads Seventh-day Adventist Church, where he felt at home.

'I really started to get into reading the bible and I started to look for a church to go to. Every Sunday I was going to like three or four churches, I was just looking for the right church,' he said.

And he added: 'I was looking to go to a church with an all-black congregation,' explaining that he had imagined himself as a member of a gospel church.

'The first day I went there I went by myself and I walked in and sat down at the back... It was just like, that was my church.'

ANGUS T JONES' FAMILY AND THEIR CRIMINAL PAST

While he may have raised eyebrows with his outspoken views, by finding religion Angus T Jones has avoided following in the criminal path of close family members.

The young actor's uncle, Eric Eugene Claypool, is currently serving a 99-year prison sentence for murder after shooting a man he claimed had sexually abused him.

According to prison documents on November 16, 1994, Claypool, now 38, stole a .357-magnum from 31-year-old Jay Harlan and shot him in the back of the head.
Criminal past: Police mugshots show Angus' parents Carey and Kelly Jones

And Jones' family made headlines when mugshots emerged of his parents, Kelly and Carey Jones, taken in their former home of Travis County, Texas. His mother Carey, Claypool's sister, was arrested in 1992 for ripping the meter out of a taxi and then punching a police officer in the face while she was drunk. Then in 1997 she was arrested on a burglary charge after a woman woke to find Carey in her living room.

Jones' father Kelly, now 50, was arrested in 1986 for possession of marijuana and carrying an unlicensed .45-caliber handgun after he created a disturbance in a bar. In 1997 Carey had Kelly arrested on an assault charge after he allegedly pulled her out of a car and pushed her to the ground. She later dropped the charge, but Kelly was ordered to complete an anti-violence class.

MOST READ NEWS

A nation's joy, a husband's nerves: Anxious William at...  
'Lord of the Rings' wizardry left us feeling sick':...  
Inside the Chinese dungeon where sick father secretly kept...  
Duchess set to spend days in hospital with rare but...  
Bulimia, cannabis and a minister in the next room for the...
Another religious Christian sect with their interpretation of the Bible. Oh so many of them. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Evangelical Christians, Christadelphians, Protestants, Catholics, plus many more than claim they are the way follow us. You sheeplike, think for yourself or we will do your thinking for you. Do not question us; we have all the answers. Just ban all religions.

- scottishterrier, Sydney, Australia, 28/11/2012 07:32

If I were his mother, I would be very concerned as well, especially with his comment that “he doesn’t want to be here,” and all that talk about “The Enemy.” Angus feels comfortable with his chosen congregation, which is understandable. Yet he has to decide for himself if they are really telling him the truth. Too often people let others tell them what they should believe. Because they may find love and acceptance with a certain group of people, they feel they should believe everything they are told. Otherwise, perhaps, they would no longer be accepted into their fold. I wish him, and anyone who finds him- or herself in such a situation, well. I hope they truly find peace of mind and heart.

- FarinaBloom, Poughkeepsie, United States, 28/11/2012 05:26

Oh no, my sensibilities have been offended. I could just change the channel, but no... I want to make sure nobody can watch this show even if they enjoy it... Why? Because everything’s always about me, don’t you know? Some of the commenters on here seriously need to pull the stick out.

- RichieTipsyKariuki, Moon, Australia, 28/11/2012 02:05

“What the Bible says”? Angus—please look up Deuteronomy 21:18-21, 22:23-24, 20-10 and 13:5-10; also Leviticus 24:16, 20-27 and 21-13; Exodus 22:19, 21:15 and 31:12-15. These are all people that your “good book” (lol) says you should go out and kill. Do you really want to follow this book??

- Mr M, Santa Cruz, Calif, 27/11/2012 18:07

Don’t bite the hand that feeds you. This kid is set for life with the money he’s earned from the show—but how about give it back to Warner Bros since the money is probably filthy anyway if you hate TAAHM that much. Give another young actor the chance to earn a good buck and appreciate it while they’re at it.

- cm88, Essex, 27/11/2012 16:58

It seems he’s simply listening to God’s voice. “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Revelation 18:4. Sooner or later, more people will heed the call and come into God’s truth.

- MDdrew10, Silver Spring, United States, 27/11/2012 16:02
Don't worry mate, most of us have stopped watching it anyway, it's cr*p with that Kutcher idiot in it.

- SB1, London, United Kingdom, 27/11/2012 15:42

Rhi said, "If he was really that appalled by it...he could just quit the show..." He probably can't just quit because he has contractual obligations. Of course, his employer could allow him to exit the contract early, but that's completely up to his employer.

- Me, USA, 27/11/2012 15:41

What a pr*t! Is he going to give back the millions he's made on the back of this so called 'filth'? It's a comedy show for crying out loud. He should definitely stop going to see these religious whackos and start enjoying being 19. Idiot!

- SB1, London, United Kingdom, 27/11/2012 15:36

The views expressed in the contents above are those of our users and do not necessarily reflect the views of MailOnline.

Find this story at www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2238930/Two-Half-Men-star-Angus-T-Jones-mother-voices-fears-extraordinary-religious-rant.html
The Insiduous Cult of Celebrity

BY BRETT MCCracken
JULY 14, 2010

It isn’t hard to see that our world is utterly smitten with celebrity: the concept, the people, when TMZ is a TV show, when “breaking news” of some plane crash in Africa gets equal billing with “breaking news” of Lindsay Lohan’s jail sentencing; or when the death of Michael Jackson captures cable news for, well, almost a year… We are saturated with celebrity, to an arguably dangerous degree. It might do us some good, then, to consider the issue on a deeper level. What is the meaning and cultural impact of celebrity, and how should Christians respond?

An unhealthy obsession

Emblematic of our obsession with all things celebrity are popular websites like TMZ and Perez Hilton, celebritainment TV channels like E!, and magazines like US Weekly, In Touch and People. These are all big-money enterprises, and crucial to their success is the fact that there is a huge demand for pop culture and celebrity media coverage. Paparazzi-snapped photographs of celebrities doing the most mundane things are sold to magazines for thousands of dollars on a daily basis. The occasional grade-A wedding or baby photograph can fetch in the millions.

And, let’s be honest: Part of our obsession with celebrityism is that many of us, even secretly, crave our 15 minutes of fame. And today, those precious 15 minutes are more attainable than ever before. “Now, with YouTube and Facebook, you can be a star very quickly in your own world,” Teresa Tomeo, author of Noise: How Our Media-Saturated Culture Dominates Lives and Distortates Families, says. “People become enamored with this whole idea of celebrityism and the whole idea of being famous.”

Why are we obsessed?

This is the question at the heart of the matter. On one hand, a lot of it has to do with sheer exposure: The more we saw Paris Hilton mugging for the cameras five years ago, the more she became a “celebrity” in our eyes. “That’s a new development that is a result of celebrityism,” Bob Hostetler, author of American Ideals: The Worship of the American Dream, says. “They haven’t accomplished anything, they haven’t performed any heroic deed and they haven’t entertained millions—they’re just famous because they’re famous.”
On the other hand, there is a definite class dimension to celebrity. The vast majority of celebs are very wealthy, either by way of inheritance (Paris Hilton), entrepreneurial spirit (the Olsen twins), sheer talent (Tiger Woods) or, um, reality shows (Kate Gosselin). These people represent the status symbols we all aspire to; they have it all (seemingly), and thus they invoke a kind of envious fascination from the rest of us.

The root of the issue, Craig Detweiler (author of Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century), believes, stems from our need to immortalize ourselves and our accomplishments. “I think the fault is that fame and celebrity enter the highest virtue in culture. It’s the closest thing to getting to heaven or eternal life,” he says. “In other words, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley are all eternal in pop culture, and so becoming a celebrity is the closest thing to eternal life outside the Church. I see a hunger for celebrity as a hunger for eternity.”

Christian celebrities

According to Hostetler, there are three things that have caused Americans to become so enamored with celebrityism: the longing for community, significance and glory. “We feel connected to celebrities even though they don’t know us. It’s almost that they become our friends, just like Rachel, Ross, Phoebe, Monica, Chandler and Joey became our friends even though we have no idea who these people are and what they’re really like,” he says. “It underscores the lack of community many of us feel. Obviously, all three [longings] are God’s will for us, but it’s not His will to find it in celebrity worship.”

So how do we deal with these longings in a healthy way? The antidote, Hostetler says, is true worship: “Almost instantly, when I turn my mind and heart toward the worship of God, the distractions, depressions and discouragements of this world, the emptiness that we look to celebrity worship to fill, begins to dissipate. He’s fulfilled my longing for community, my longing for significance and my longing for glory.” Furthermore, Tomeo adds, Christians must take responsibility for their role in celebrityism. “There are too many frequencies filling our ears,” Tomeo says. “If we’re spending the majority of our time with media outlets instead of with God and family, then that’s a problem. Think of everything in moderation.”

“We have to be aware of the problem, the obsession,” Hostetler adds. “We have to refuse to play the game. One of the saddest things is that in the Church, we’re not countercultural in that respect—we don’t resist and we don’t push back against our culture’s fixation on celebrity. Instead, we just adopt our own celebrities ... When a famous person identifies with Christ, we adopt them as a special category of celebrity because they’re now Christian.”

Indeed, Christians are often quick to scoop up “their own” and elevate them simply because they, at one point or another, have expressed belief in God. Case in point: celebs like Gary Busey, Mel Gibson (at least around the time of The Passion of the Christ), Jessica Simpson, Kanye—Christian celebs who often don’t lead very Christian lives.

Perhaps part of the solution, rather than simply tearing down celebrities, is to understand our own value—and the value of those around us—to be no less significant just because we don’t share the limelight. “We need to affirm the saints in our lives who are all around us—everyday saints rather than cultural celebrities,” Detweiler says. “Who should we be celebrating? And I don’t think it’s enough to say Jesus—no, that’s too easy. In other words, saints are human manifestations of our highest ideals, so we need more human role models.”

Our response

Ultimately, celebrity derives from humanity’s most rudimentary fault: pride. It is about the elevation of man to some high status of beauty, achievement and power ... not something we should promote. This is not to say it is wrong to admire someone for their success, integrity or achievement. The Bible constantly heralds the “heroes” of the faith (Hebrews 11) and does not shy away from singling out certain people (like Moses, Noah and Paul) who used their life for great purposes. Likewise, it’s important that we land celebrities who do good works and “give back” in significant ways. “Celebrity is a form of bully pulpit—a platform upon which to promote a vision,” Detweiler says. “The responsible celebrity takes the spotlight that’s shining on them and turns it or holds up a mirror that redirects the spotlight on the least of these.” Whether it’s Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie doing humanitarian work in New
Orleans, Bono using his celebrity to help AIDS orphans in Africa or Chris Martin making trade fair, we should be happy to see celebrity being put to good use.

Certainly there are concerns regarding celebrity and its place in our world today. But there are also opportunities. The power and influence celebs wield is great, and it can be used for both good and ill. Rather than complaining about or boycotting (or just mindlessly idolizing) celebrities, perhaps Christians should be looking to build relationships with them. Perhaps in this big, messy, hyper-cynical explosion of entertainment we call the world, this is one thing Christians can do to make it a little better.

This article is an excerpt of a longer piece that originally appeared in RELEVANT magazine. It's a good magazine. You should subscribe.

Brett McCracken is a blogger and author of the upcoming book Hipster Christianity (Baker Books). He would like to be a cross between C.S. Lewis and Terence Malick, with a dash of Derrida thrown in for good measure, only without the nihilism.

**Tags:** Celebrity; tabloids; reality TV; perry hilton; britney spears; andy rich; kate moss; tiger woods; us weekly; people; tmz; perry hilton; TV; features; culture; brett mccracken

**COMMENTS**

Beth-long commented...

"Christians should be looking to build relationships with them"? Why? What am I not getting about this suggestion?

7/14/2010 12:50 AM

Anonymous commented...

I dont understand this line as well...

7/14/2010 1:04 PM

M. Elle commented...

While I understand the confusion about that line, I can also identify with it. While it is in no way easy to buddy up with a celebrity, I have always had a sort of longing to do so. Again, while it is near impossible to have a personal relationship with them, if indeed that is what's being implied, the best way to compensate for the lack of such would be to sincerely pray for them. I used to do it more often than I do now, but this article has served as a reminder of how important it can (/should?) be.

7/14/2010 1:46 PM

viaRenovo commented...

I think he is suggesting that we consider celebrities as real people and not just someone we admire or criticize from a distance. Many people in the public eye, after gaining fame, often feel used by others for their money, power or simply to be a piece in an autograph seekers collection. While most of us won't have the opportunity to truly befriend a celebrity our attitudes in how we view them can be a part of correcting this celebrity culture.

7/14/2010 9:59 PM

M. Elle commented...

Agreed. Thank you for articulating what I could not. :)

7/14/2010 10:01 PM

Show older

Please [login](#) or [register](#) to comment

**RELATED**
Where Doubt Falls Short
Plot Your Own Advent Conspiracy
Thanks in Practice
A Non-Political Antichrist
Petraeus and Sin as a Spectator
Sport
When People Pray for the President
What Makes Jesus Angry?
How Should Christians Help the Poor?
Pat Robertson Finally Weighs in on the Whole Petraeus Thing
Does God Punish Disobedience?

How to Know When to Walk Away
Welcome to the World, Hashtag
When a Relationship Ends
5 Things We Will Wish We’d Done Differently
Thanksgiving Is What You Make It
Success in the Upside-Down Kingdom
In the RELEVANT Store, Cyber Monday Is Cyber Week
A Reminder to Be Careful at Thanksgiving

Why Is Yahoo Being Ordered to Give $2.7 Billion to a Mexican Yellow Pages Directory?
The Man With the World’s Biggest Biceps Seems Normal
Are You Freaking Out Because Kate Middleton is Pregnant?
The U.N. Recognizes Palestine
To Serve and Protect and Be Great
We’ve Got a Winner
Even the United Nations Makes Mistakes
Train With Toxic Cargo Derails in New Jersey
America’s Role in the Bangladesh Factory Fire

DMX Knows All the Words to “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”
Welcome to Twitter, @Pontifex
The Hills Are Alive With the Sounds of Carrie Underwood
Johnny Cash Has Been Literally Everywhere
Andy Stanley REVIEW: The Dark Tale of ‘Killing Them Softly’
Video of the Day: Wilco, ‘Sunblind’
Let the Brief History of Nintendo Carry You Through Friday
Sufjan’s Just Giving Away Christmas Music Now

Connect Your iTunes Subscription for Web Access
FOR SUBSCRIBERS
Access Your Free Downloads
Subscriber Services
Manage Your Newsletters
Give RELEVANT
Connect Your iTunes Subscription for Web Access
SUBSCRIBE NOW FOR INSTANT & GET EXCLUSIVE DOWNLOADS
NAME
EMAIL
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP
CLICK TO CONTINUE
© 2012 RELEVANT Media Group | Privacy | Terms of Use
The author argues that there are many meanings of the adjective ‘biblical.’

By Rachel Held Evans, Special to CNN

On "The Daily Show" recently, Jon Stewart grilled Mike Huckabee about a TV ad in which Huckabee urged voters to support "biblical values" at the voting box.

When Huckabee said that he supported the "biblical model of marriage," Stewart shot back that "the biblical model of marriage is polygamy."

And there's a big problem, Stewart went on, with reducing "biblical values" to one or two social issues such as abortion and gay marriage, while ignoring issues such as poverty and immigration reform.

It may come as some surprise that as an evangelical Christian, I cheered Stewart on from my living room couch.

As someone who loves the Bible and believes it to be the inspired word of God, I hate seeing it reduced to an adjective like Huckabee did. I hate seeing my sacred text flattened out, edited down and used as a prop to support a select few political positions and platforms.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.

And yet evangelicals have grown so accustomed to talking about the Bible this way that we hardly realize we’re doing it anymore. We talk about “biblical families,” “biblical marriage,” “biblical economics,” “biblical politics,” “biblical values,” “biblical stewardship,” “biblical voting,” “biblical manhood,” “biblical womanhood,” even “biblical dating” to create the impression that the Bible has just one thing to say on each of these topics - that it offers a single prescriptive formula for how people of faith ought to respond to them.

But the Bible is not a position paper. The Bible is an ancient collection of letters, laws, poetry, proverbs, histories, prophecies, philosophy and stories spanning multiple genres and assembled over thousands of years in cultures very different from our own.
My Take: The danger of calling behavior “biblical” – CNN Belief Blog - CNN.com Blogs


complicated, beautiful, and diverse holy text into a list of bullet points we can put in a manifesto or creed. More often than not, we end up more committed to what we want the Bible to say than what it actually says.

Nowhere is this more evident than in conversations surrounding “biblical womanhood.”

CNN’s Belief Blog: The faith angles behind the biggest stories

Growing up in the Bible Belt, I received a lot of mixed messages about the appropriate roles of women in the home, the church and society, each punctuated with the claim that this or that lifestyle represented true “biblical womanhood.”

In my faith community, popular women pastors such as Joyce Meyer were considered unbiblical for preaching from the pulpit in violation of the apostle Paul’s restriction in 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent”), while Amish women were considered legalistic for covering their heads in compliance with his instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:5 (“Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head”).

Pastors told wives to submit to their husbands as the apostle Peter instructed in 1 Peter 3:1, but rarely told them to avoid wearing nice jewelry as the apostle instructs them just one sentence later in 1 Peter 3:3. Despite the fact that being single was praised by both Jesus and Paul, I learned early on that marriage and motherhood were my highest callings, and that Proverbs 31 required I keep a home as tidy as June Cleaver’s.

Opinion: What all those Jesus jokes tell us

This didn’t really trouble me until adulthood, when I found myself in a childless egalitarian marriage with a blossoming career and an interest in church leadership and biblical studies. As I wrestled with what it meant to be a woman of faith, I realized that, despite insistent claims that we don’t “pick and choose” from the Bible, any claim to a “biblical” lifestyle requires some serious selectivity.

After all, technically speaking, it is “biblical” for a woman to be sold by her father to pay off debt, “biblical” for a woman to be required to marry her rapist, “biblical” for her to be one of many wives.

So why are some Bible passages lifted out and declared “biblical,” while others are explained away or simply ignored? Does the Bible really present a single prescriptive lifestyle for all women?

These were the questions that inspired me to take a page from A.J. Jacobs, author of "The Year of Living Biblically", and try true biblical womanhood on for size—literally, no “picking and choosing.”

This meant, among other things, growing out my hair, making my own clothes, covering my head whenever I prayed, abstaining from gossip, remaining silent in church (unless I was “prophesying,” of course), calling my husband “master,” even camping out in my front yard during my period to observe the Levitical purity laws that rendered me unclean.

During my yearlong experiment, I interviewed a variety of women practicing biblical womanhood in different ways—an Orthodox Jew, an Amish housewife, even a polygamist family—and I combed through every commentary I could find, reexamining the stories of biblical women such as Deborah, Ruth, Hagar, Tamar, Mary Magdalene, Priscilla and Junia.

My goal was to playfully challenge this idea that the Bible prescribes a single lifestyle for how to be a woman of faith, and in so doing, playfully challenge our overuse of the term “biblical.” I did this not out of disdain for Scripture, but out of love for it, out of respect for the fact that interpreting and applying the Bible is a messy, imperfect and - at times - frustrating process that requires humility and grace as we wrestle the text together.

The fact of the matter is, we all pick and choose. We’re all selective in our interpretation and application of the biblical text. The better question to ask one another is why we pick and choose. "What is it about the Bible that you need?" After all, isn’t that the whole point of interpreting the text?

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Rachel Held Evans.

The Editors - CNN Belief Blog

Filed under: Bible • Christianity • My Take • Opinion

4325

We recommend

Belief Blog's Morning Speed Read for Monday, November 19 Religion
Dating after 50: Beware the 30-something CNN Living
Two preaching giants and the betrayal that tore them apart Religion
5 things we learned from Franklin Graham Religion
Liberal Catholics use election results to battle bishops Religion
Photo: Obama imitates gymnast McKayla Maroney's ‘not impressed’ look Political Ticker

From around the web

5 Worst Mistakes Women Make in Bed MyDailyMoment
7 Surprising Signs of an Unhealthy Heart Caring.com
Calling in Sick: 7 Good Reasons, 7 Lame Reasons Salary.com
The Terrifying Line in Obama’s Speech That Everyone Missed Investors.com
Sandor Boros's New Orleans Marathon: How Does It Compare to Others? Zimbio
McDonald's Staffers See Red Over Prof's Digital Eyewear BusinessWeek
My Take: Searching for God, settling for sex

Editor's Note: Shannon Ethridge is an advocate for spiritual and sexual integrity. She is a counselor, speaker, author and certified life and relationship coach. Her 19 books include the million-selling Every Woman's Battle book series, "The Sexually Confident Wife" and her latest book, "The Fantasy Fallacy," a response to the "Fifty Shades of Grey" phenomenon, a discussion of the roots and role of sexual fantasies.

By Shannon Ethridge, Special to CNN

(CNN) - When a friend alerted me to the "Fifty Shades" trilogy in April, none of us had any idea it would sell in excess of 40 million copies within months, or that sales of whips, chains and other BDSM paraphernalia would skyrocket as a result, or that a European hotel would replace its Gideon’s Bibles with "Fifty Shades of Grey."

Many legitimate possibilities have been offered for the seeming success of “mommy porn.” Women are more sexually liberated than ever before. Couples are longing for ways to spice up their sex
lives. Many women have a deep inner longing to be dominated by a man who’s absolutely obsessed with them.

While there might be some truth to each of these theories, I think the real force behind this "Fifty Shades" phenomenon is that our society is clamoring for closeness. However, in the absence of genuine sexual intimacy (best defined as “in-to-me-see”), we settle for sexual intensity: erotica, pornography, an office romance, an extramarital affair or whatever strokes the ego and provides the sexual high we crave.

Follow the CNN Belief Blog on Twitter

I suggest that sexual intensity (such as that experienced between the lead characters of the "Fifty Shades" trilogy) is simply not the same as intimacy. If it were, then prostitutes and porn stars would be the most emotionally and relationally fulfilled people on the planet. That doesn’t seem to be the case.

Does the entangling of arms and legs and the exchange of bodily fluids scratch the human itch for intimate connection? Or is sex just the closest thing we can imagine to what we’re really craving: a deeper spiritual and emotional connection, both with our Creator and with His creation?

When I explain through my writing, speaking and life coaching that I am an “advocate for healthy sexuality and spirituality,” some assume I’m insane. Why would someone even use the terms “sexuality” and “spirituality” in the same sentence? I do so because I believe they are basically the same thing, or at least two sides of the same coin.

Regardless of gender, age, race, political views, economic status, etc., all humans have two things in common: We are both spiritual and sexual beings. And behind every sexual longing, I believe there’s an even deeper spiritual longing.

So we have much to learn about God through understanding our sexuality, and there is much to learn about our sexuality through a deeper exploration of God.

Looking at sexuality through a spiritual lens, and vice versa, is not a new concept. In the Song of Solomon, a man’s and woman’s desires for healthy sexual intimacy are celebrated. In the book of Hosea, God uses the analogy of a husband’s relentless pursuit of a sexually unfaithful bride to illustrate the depth of His own passion and commitment to His people. God obviously knew that “sexual metaphors” would teach us about ourselves and about Him.

CNN’s Belief Blog: The faith angles behind the biggest stories

This brings me back around to the "Fifty Shades of Grey" phenomenon. I don’t believe that fantasy is evil, even sexual fantasy. But when we divorce physical pleasure from emotional connection, such as when we selfishly strive for orgasm through pornography, masturbation or illicit sexual encounters rather than cultivating sexual ecstasy with our marriage partner, sexual ecstasy is only “half-baked.” Love and relational intimacy are the “yeast” that allows our sexual ecstasy to rise to
its highest level.

My counseling experience shows me that we often seek healing for our deepest wounds via sexual encounters. Our minds and hearts believe we will “get it right” or “find the love I need” via an intensely satisfying sexual relationship.

If deep and spiritual intimacy is what humans seek, then relational or sexual intensity can never satisfy our deepest longings or heal our oldest wounds. Christian and Anastasia (for all the "Fifty Shades" fans) won’t discover heart-deep intimacy in whips, chains, pain and sexual intensity. Their deep wounds will be healed by sacrificial love (of which Christ is the incarnate example) and intimate relationship (both human and divine). Soul-deep intimacy is what we seek, and it’s ultimately found in the God who created human sexuality.

*The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Shannon Ethridge.*

The Editors - CNN Belief Blog

Filed under: Christianity • My Take • Sex
There is a world of difference between preaching a sermon and living a sermon. No amount of study can compensate for deficiencies in your life. You can "study it" but if you aren't "living it" it'll ring hollow. The opposite is true as well. Jesus' teaching was authoritative because it was backed up by his life. You can't back up your sermons with a seminary degree. You've got to back it up with your life. My advice? Don't just get a sermon. Get a life. Then you'll get a sermon!

Let me be blunt: if your life is boring your sermons will be too.

If you have no life outside of church—no hobbies, no friends, no interests, no goals—your illustrations will feel canned, your applications will feel theoretical instead of practical, and your sermons will be lifeless instead of life-giving.

The greatest sermons are not fashioned in the study. They are fleshed out in the laboratory of everyday life. Now, please don't misinterpret what I'm saying. You need to study to show yourself approved and rightly divide the word. So keep studying! In fact, study more. But you can't just study the word. You need to live it. The most powerful sermons are well-studied and well-lived.

At the end of the day, God won't say, "Well studied, good and faithful servant." He won't say, "Well thought" or "Well said" either. There is only one commendation: "Well done."

Now let's be brutally honest: most Christians are educated way beyond the level of their obedience already! We don't need to know more, we need to do more. That's why I think sermons should focus on application more than interpretation. Theological doesn't mean theoretical. In fact, as you get a life, your messages will be less theoretical and more experiential. You won't just preach your sermons. You'll incarnate them!

Share this:

Mark Batterson is the lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C., a multi-site church and a leading fellowship in the nation's capital. Meeting in movie theaters and Metro stops throughout the D.C. area, NCC is attended by more than 70 percent single twenty-somethings. Mark's weekly podcast is one of the fastest growing in America. His book, In A Pit With a Lion on a Snowy Day: How to Survive and Thrive When Opportunity Roars peaked at #44 on Amazon.com's best-seller list. He has just released his newest book entitled, Wild Goose Chase: Reclaiming the Adventure of Pursuing God. He and his wife Lora live on Capitol Hill. They have three children.

More from Mark Batterson or visit Mark at www.evotional.com/

Copyright © 2012 ChurchLeaders.com Privacy Terms of Use Advertise About Us Newsletter Signup Contact Us

Get the Free Christmas Outreach Guide

Enter your email Download Free when you sign up for emails and offers from ChurchLeaders.com & partners
There's a lot of discussion that goes on about church growth: what causes it; how to generate it; prepare for it; launch it; build it; cultivate it and even, to some degree, manufacture it. Many of the discussions are helpful, but there are a number of subtle beliefs that still creep up that aren't healthy. In fact, they're down right superstitious and, at times, dangerous to the church.

I've collected these myths over many conversations, coffees and lunches with church leaders and I'd like to share them with you.

10 Old Wives' Tales About Church Growth

1. If You're Not Growing, Something's Wrong

If growth and a bigger crowd is "always" the result of obedience then some of the OT prophets will have some serious explaining to do.

Of course, if you're not growing—or you're declining—I think it is cause to evaluate what you're doing, but it's not a given that something is always "wrong."

Don't Miss

- 23 Reasons for Rapid Church Growth
- Overcome the 5 Barriers to Church Growth
- 10 Enemies to Church Growth
- 4 Factors of Fast-Church Growth

God could be doing something different—more Jeremiah and less Peter.

Also, while we're at it, let's stop using the Acts 2 passage as a normative prescription for every church today. It's an amazing description of something special God was doing in history to launch his church, but it's not a church growth manual. A casual reading of the NT will show churches of all different shapes and sizes, and never once is there a declarative statement that the church should be growing faster than it was—more obedience, yes; helping the poor, yes; staying true to the Gospel, yes; practicing the Lord's Supper and baptism, yes.

2. The More You Grow, the Healthier You Are

We would love to believe this one. It certainly feels good to have a bigger crowd. There's a built-in justification for ministry leaders when more people show up, I know. However, just because your church has more people attending doesn't mean your church is completely healthy. In fact, it might be cause to closely evaluate the message the crowd is hearing.

Growth can be healthy, and it can be a very good thing—it's just not an automatic four-stars for healthy spirituality. Large numbers are no more an indicator of health than great wealth is an automatic indicator of wisdom. You can be wealthy or impoverished and still be wise/fool. The same goes for church growth. You can have a lot of people or a little and still be healthy/unhealthy. Health deals more with what's going on below the surface. Growth tells us something's going on, but whether it's good or bad, that's another issue.

3. Contemporary Music Will Save Your Church

It can help at times—depending on the community and the people you're trying to reach—but it's not always a help. In fact, sometimes it's an obstacle.

Changing your music and the feel of your worship gathering should have a reason bigger than, "We want to reach young people!" or, "We want to stay hip." Hopefully, the music you sing is an authentic expression of your distinct makeup as both a church and a community and not a grasp at straws for church growth. Bottom line: Contemporary music is not the salvation of the American church.

4. Church Growth Can Be Manufactured

I admit, on the surface it does seem like we can manufacture church growth—through events, strategy, planning, etc. However, what I mean to say is true church growth is a work of the Holy Spirit—a byproduct of our obedience intersecting God's sovereignty.

True church growth is not due to our efforts alone. You can spend money and market an event and draw a crowd. That's not hard if you have the resources. But church growth—growing the actual Body of Christ—is a supernatural accomplishment that only God can complete. This should temper our planning, strategy and vision for growth.

5. If Your Church Grows, Your Leader Is "Anointed"

OK, this one I hesitated to put on the list because I think it's common sense. We've all seen the carnage from large church leaders who hide ongoing sin. Would we call them anointed? Probably not. Leading a large church doesn't make you "anointed" by God and the flipside is true as well—leading a small church or ministry doesn't mean you lack it.

Of course, I do firmly believe God puts a special anointing on specific leaders to do something of great magnitude for the church at times—D.L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Graham, etc.—but we should be careful about how we use the terminology or draw conclusions about just what it means to be
6. If Your Church Doesn’t Grow, It’s a Problem with the Leader

This happens all the time. Church members are frustrated with the fact the church isn’t growing, maybe it lacks vision and new people aren’t coming, and they point the finger solely at the leader. The only problem is ... it’s not always the leader. Sometimes it’s the members—or a member—spiritual warfare or even a season of transition.

Can it be the leader? Certainly, but it’s not always the case. If the leader is obedient and has kept both their life and doctrine together, there’s a good chance it’s something else.

7. Good Preaching Is the Answer to Growing Your Church

Preaching is extremely important, but having a charismatic and gifted speaker is not the stand-alone element you need to grow your church—or turn it around. Preaching is a core element of the church, but focusing on preaching alone—or trying to find a talented communicator—is not the answer to church growth.

In fact, if you’re a really good preacher, you should probably have people leaving on a regular basis because making disciples is hard. Just ask Jesus about the crowds that left him.

8. You Will Retain a Large Percentage of Your Visitors on Special Days

Some of you have seen long-term growth from your programs on Easter, Christmas or during a special event. Most have not. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t do something high-quality that connects with seekers in your community, it just means you shouldn’t make those special days your only church growth strategy. Can God use these special days to reach people? For sure. Is it a solid growth strategy? Not alone.

9. The More Programs You Offer, the More Your Church Will Grow

Programs are great servants but lousy masters. We live in a culture that provides unlimited choices and some churches have matched suit with this same mentality—providing an excessive amount of programs in effort to serve more people.

The goal is good, but more programs don’t typically equal church growth. In fact, sometimes church programs just keep us church-busy and hold us back from engaging our neighbors.

Programs aren’t bad, but they should always have a clear purpose and, in my humble opinion, they should be offered in moderation with an understanding that you can’t program discipleship. The church isn’t meant to be a wheelhouse for saints to gather—it’s meant to be a sent collective to light up the world.

10. If You Build It, They Will Come

They might, but it’s not a guarantee. Sometimes building projects just create a new container for the same people. Other times building projects are a Godsend.

It definitely takes some serious prayer and leading of the Spirit to find out which outcome you might expect before launching an expensive campaign. There are some great stories of building projects that seemed to have God’s hand on them from beginning to end; there are also church building campaigns that ended in millions of dollars of debt, church splits, fired leaders and empty—new—seats.

God never promised us a growing church if we just start to build it—faith and wisdom go hand in hand. Don’t buy into this Field-of-Dreams superstition. When you start a building project it should always be with prayer, faith and humility because the results, well, they could go any way God wants them to and that might not equal a Hollywood ending.

What old wives’ tales have you heard about church growth?

Share this:

Send

Brian is the Editor of Outreach Magazine, ChurchLeaders.com, and SermonCentral.com. He works with creative and innovative people to discover the best resources, trends and practices to equip the church to lead better every day. He lives in Ohio with his wife, Jenna, and their four boys.

More from Brian Orme or visit Brian at www.brianorme.com

Copyright © 2012 ChurchLeaders.com Privacy Terms of Use Advertise About Us Newsletter Signup Contact Us

Get the Free Christmas Outreach Guide

Enter your email Download Free when you sign up for emails and offers from ChurchLeaders.com & partners
Black Friday is the day after Thanksgiving when shoppers typically crowd stores and begin their Christmas purchases looking for deals. Cyber Monday refers to the newest trend in shopping, the Monday after Thanksgiving when merchant offers huge discounts for purchases made online. Combined they can represent a huge portion of not only a company’s fourth quarter sales but their entire year. Total spending for the weekend reached an estimated $59.1 billion, a 13% increase from a year ago.

Some stores opened late Thanksgiving night while others pushed significant bargains to their online sites. IBM stated that online sales rose 17.4% on Thanksgiving and 20.7 percent on Black Friday compared to 2011. Online shopping on Friday alone topped $1 billion for the first time. Online sales on Black Friday increased 21% over last year. Clearly a shift is occurring.

Talk about a shift, IBM said that its data showed that 24% of online shoppers used a mobile device to check out a retailer’s site and about 16% of online purchases were made on mobile devices! Clearly the Internet and technology are re-shaping America including how we shop for Christmas.

Most predictions leading into Cyber Monday are that once again online shopping will increase. If Black Friday mobile device sales continue into Cyber Monday we can expect not only online sales to increase but also an increase in mobile purchases.

Why the Church Should Care. Statistics such as these should be a wake up call to the Church. We are undergoing a huge shift in our society and the Church runs the risk of being left behind. At a time when everyone from retailers to politicians are paying attention to the emerging online appetite the Church is still asleep at the wheel. Giving to the church continues to decline yet we the Church are doing very little about it. America is moving away from cash and checks towards a digital world of commerce and we are utilizing a collection tool from the 19th century wondering why our giving is in decline. We are not equipped to meet the expectations of your audience.

Lesson #1 – The easier you make it for people to give the more likely they will be to give. Every Sunday the typical church passes a plate or bucket asking for people to donate. Yet most never carry a checkbook and have very little cash on their person. So, IF they give the amount will be only a few dollars rather than a significant gift. Our portal for collecting the offering is out dated.

Lesson #2 – You must offer people multiple options to give. Retailers know that some like to shop the stores and handle the merchandise while others like to shop online. A smart retailer never puts all his eggs in one basket. Yet only 14% of American churches offer online giving. Clearly in most churches you only have one option to give and that is on Sunday morning when the collection plate is passed. See above.

Lesson #3 – People want convenience. This past Thanksgiving season retailers began their sales the night of Thanksgiving. Many also allowed shoppers to connect online early on the morning of Black Friday thus avoiding lines. Retailers know that people want convenience so their online stores are literally open 24/7. People at your church will respond if you make giving convenient for them. An app for instance allows your people to give online wherever they are even if they are at grandma’s house on Sunday. Make your giving convenient and you will see an increase in giving.

Lesson #4 – Retailers work at driving shoppers to their stores and sites. My local paper on
the day before Thanksgiving was huge. However there was not much news it was all advertisements for Black Friday! My email box was filled this past week with various offers from Amazon to my favorite running store pumping deals and sales towards me. Retailers know it is not enough to have the tools for sales unless you drive people to those tools. Many churches offer online giving but then let it sit without ever driving people to that site. You have to work your giving tool in order for your giving tool to work!

The National Retail Federation is predicting that sales this holiday season will rise 4.1% from 2011 sales. If NRF’s estimate is correct, holiday sales this year would be $586.1 trillion. Most of that money will be on wasted stuff. How many of your Christmas gifts are you still using from last year? Can you even remember what you got or what you bought? Wasted dollars. Consider that the medium gift to a church in a whole calendar year is only $200.

**A dollar given to your church is an investment in eternity!** Let’s tell our story of all the wonderful things we do with the dollars people give us to make our world a better place. This Christmas season don’t shrink back from asking people to give to your church. Take a page from the retailers so that we too will see increases in giving. Despite the challenges and uncertainty of our economy people are spending money. Let them know about how their gift to your church can and will make a difference. I am convinced that if we tell our story AND give them the means to give people will step up. What are you waiting for?

Mark Brooks

Founder and President

The Charis Group and Charis Giving Solutions

PS. We will be hosting a series of free educational webinars about mobile phone Apps and online giving for churches. [Click on the link to sign up…](http://thecharisgroup.org/upcoming-webinars/)

Related Posts:
- Online Commerce is Changing Everything!
- Retailers are making plans are you?
- The Mobile-Payment Offering, Coming to a Church Near You!
- The Generation Gap and The Church
- Economic myths and economic realities
Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson, right, calls for a December 1 International Day of Prayer and Fasting for two Adventists imprisoned in the West African country of Togo.

Wilson spoke about the situation with church leaders worldwide through a video conference on November 20. At left is Williams Costa Jr., Communication director for the Adventist world church.

Antonio do Anjos Monteiro, shown here in a file photo, is one of two Adventists currently imprisoned in Togo on what Adventist legal and human rights experts say are unsupported charges.

- By ANN staff, Adventist News Network, written on November 20, 2012

Adventist President Calls for December 1 "Day of Prayer, Fasting" to Support Falsely Accused Members

Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson today called for an International Day of Prayer and Fasting on December 1 to rally support for the release of two Adventists currently imprisoned in the West African country of Togo.

Wilson and top church executives who voted the emphasis day at a November 20 morning business meeting said the event will raise awareness of the plight of Antonio dos Anjos Monteiro, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the church’s Sahel Union Mission, headquartered in Lome; and Bruno Amah, an Adventist lay member and businessman in Lome.

Adventist lawyers and human rights activists have called for both men’s release since they were detained in March for conspiracy to commit murder. A Togolese man implicated Monteiro and Amah as conspirators in an alleged blood trafficking network, but a police search of Monteiro’s home and local church headquarters did not produce evidence. Since then, local authorities have recognized both men’s innocence.

Diplomatic efforts to secure both men’s release are expected to continue. Today church leaders established a working group to oversee efforts led by John Graz, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Adventist world church. Church leaders are enlisting the support of members worldwide to raise further awareness through a social media campaign to promote the December 1 Day of Prayer.

“We are asking the entire world Seventh-day Adventist Church to join in prayer and fasting on December 1,” Wilson said. The world church leader met with both men in prison earlier this month during a tour of West Africa.

“These are falsely accused, innocent church members and we are pleading with the Lord for his intervention so that they can be reunited with their families and continue their work,” he said.

Stay Socially Connected with NAD

© 2012 North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists | 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Visit: nadadventist.org | George Johnson Jr., communication director | Dan Weber, associate communication director | Lynetta Murdoch, senior editorial assistant. Email: newspoints@nad.adventist.org

Add me to this list | Remove me from this list | Forward to a friend | Find us on Facebook

Sent to <<Email Address>> — why did I get this?
unsubscribe from this list | update subscription preferences

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists · 12501 Old Columbia Pike · Silver Spring, MD 20904

12/3/2012 8:18 PM
11-20-2012 Live, Interactive Health Program Comes to Hope Channel

Participate by phone, e-mail, text message, Facebook, Twitter, short video posts

The newest addition to Hope Channel’s nightly live-line up is Go Healthy... For Good, an interactive health and wellness program with Dr. Nerida McKibben. The program airs Monday through Thursday at 7:00 p.m. ET, and repeats at 10:00 p.m. ET and other times throughout the week.

Viewers can participate by phone, e-mail, text message, Facebook, Twitter, short video posts through services like YouTube, and other media.

“We want to capture the attention of the average TV viewer with up-to-the-moment health news, discuss the practical value of the latest research, and share with viewers how to integrate it all into their lives,” says Dr. McKibben, a gynecologist and obstetrician. “From prenatal to end-of-life care, God’s principles are scientifically proven to add years to your life, and life to your years. Go Healthy... For Good makes the biblical perspective on good health more practical and accessible to viewers of every background.”

“Dr. Nerida and her guests will review the latest health-related trends, discuss possible treatments and therapies, and offer insights on pharmaceutical and natural regimens,” says Gabriel Bagle, the program’s producer. “And they’ll give advice with a biblical perspective.”

Outstanding Guests and Strategic Partnerships

Viewers will notice the program’s credibility right away. Guests will include medical staff from some of America’s leading hospitals and teaching universities such as Albert Reece, MD, PhD, vice president for medical affairs for the University of Maryland School of Medicine; Ben Carson, Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins; medical experts from the Pan American Health Organization; and Drs. Allan R. Handsides, director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department, and Peter Landless, associate director.

Additional contributing partnerships are established with Washington Adventist Hospital in Washington, D.C., Kettering Memorial Hospital in Ohio, Florida Hospital in Orlando, and Loma Linda University Medical Center in Southern California.

Why Another Health Program?

While there are many health and wellness programs on TV, Go Healthy... For Good will be unique for its broad spectrum coverage of cutting-edge science, current events, diet, exercise, mental and emotional health, and real-time advice for viewers who contact the program and talk to experts on the air—all from an Adventist’s biblical perspective.

“I want people to make good choices each day and equip them to be healthy and whole. Their questions and testimonies, along with the contributions of our guest experts, will drive this program,” says McKibben. "Go Healthy... For Good will become the place that people can go to for biblically-based, best-practices answers to their questions on health. We’ll give people hope and enable them to live their dreams of a long and healthy life with good.”

“We’re doing this, in part, as a community service so viewers can see the direct link between the Bible’s principles for healthy living as taught for many years by our church, and the latest research and developments being discussed in the media,” adds Bagle. “Things we’ve taught for more than 100 years are supported and verified now by science, and we’ll have experts each day to validate them.”

Prevention, Diet, Exercise...and Shopping

Another goal of the program is to highlight health principles for those who suffer difficult or life-threatening conditions. “Some cases of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and digestive disorders can be reversed and overcome through responsible changes in lifestyle,” says Bagle. “And sometimes all that people need is information and strategies to change their perspective and find hope, and that alone can equip people for improved health or find a renewed energy to fight their condition.”

Other regular features will include proper exercise regimens for all fitness levels and a food segment that teaches everything from how to strategically shop for and select healthful foods, to how to prepare them in the most nutritious and delicious ways. A whole-food, plant-based diet will be presented as the most ideal.

The program will air on Hope Channel, Hope Channel Europe, Hope Channel International, and Hope Channel India, potentially reaching billions of people.

http://www.HopeTV.org

Scott Steward
Marketing Representative
www.HopeTV.org