

The Latest Wind of Doctrine: Bricks & Mortar – Week 1

HOOK

Alisa Childers: Took a “bible” study class. Her (progressive) pastor asked:

- How many of you believe the bible is God’s word? Why?
- Does the bible have final say?
- What about other religions who claim the same authority for their scriptures?
 - Ex. The Quran says Jesus wasn’t crucified. The Quran and Bible can’t both be right.
- So, why the Bible?

She had a real crisis of faith telling the story of rocking her newborn to sleep and singing hymns to a God she wasn’t sure she believed in. She thought (paraphrase), “If the Bible is right, Islam receives a crippling blow against their “sacred” scriptures, and if the Quran is right, the Bible is crippled.”

If she was going to reject Christianity, she was going to reject authentic Christianity, not just was she was being presented. So she dug into the roots of Christianity itself. So, she dove into “historic Christianity.”

- “There’s no fuzzy “my truth” when it comes to history.” - Childers

BOOK

Ephesians 4:11-15 - *...He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...*

- **How do we avoid being carried away with every new wind of doctrine?**
 - Sound teaching of God’s word in “the knowledge of the Son of God.”

INTRO

There is a dangerously pervasive heresy sweeping through Christian churches today. 15-20 years ago, it was subtle and under the surface.

Most of the time it was quietly cancerous enough as to not be given a name but its ideas grow in influence even in Bible-believing churches. At the time, the ideas stemmed from a movement called the Emergent Church, but today it's called Progressive Christianity.

Not only is it no longer undercover, but it's making a push to become mainstream Christianity. Its ideas are so attractive and initially subtle that many churches are unintentionally leaning into it.

Elijah spoke about Athanasius and Arianism last week. Each generation seems to have a significant heresy which grasps the attention and loyalty of many Christians. This is ours today. Elijah reminded us of God's words through Jude to "contend for the faith."

It won't make us trendy and probably won't make us popular. In fact, we'll probably be ostracized for our stands, but we stand on a firm foundation. Plenty of people have attacked Christianity, an uncountable number have sought to defame scripture, and all authentic believers have undergone persecution on some level, but as the waves of cultural thought have changed, God's word and His people have stayed consistent.

LOOK

Where did Progressive Christianity come from?

Late **1800's** the church had to confront the new scientific theories of evolution.

- Pushed common thought into modernism (everything has to be based on objective evidence. Science is the standard for gauging truth.)

Late **1900's** the church is confronting the overwhelming tide of the LGBTQ+ movement.

- Pushes back against modernism (everything must be based on my subjective experience. My personal experience is the standard for gauging truth. Truth being relative to everyone ("My truth") aborts the existence of truth. There's no such thing as truth.)

The overall Church response has been **silence** trying to avoid offense and retain membership. This has been the problem in both centuries. Christians try to give a little ground attempting to create goodwill and peace, but **sinful culture doesn't want to "meet-in-the-middle."** **Culture demands the church to give total surrender, support, and even celebrate ITS values.**

What is Progressive Christianity?

8 POINTS OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY (progressivechristianity.org)

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean that we are Christians who:

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but **one of** many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is **inclusive of ALL people**, including but not limited to:
 - Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics,
 - Believers and agnostics,
 - Women and men.
 - Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
 - Those of all classes and abilities;
 - i. **(Overall tenet: Unity. Universal brotherhood under the universal fatherhood of god.)**
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is **more value in questioning than in absolutes**;
 - (Doubt is a badge of honor. The only sin is certainly.)
 - Everyone is supposed to create their own individual religions.
 - BUT, you're not allowed to arrive anywhere.
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.

On the surface it looks very similar to Christianity but more accessible, more likable, more accepting, and a more palatable version of the faith.

We absolutely MUST learn to listen to what people are saying and assess what's said reasonably. We must have a standard for spotting clues to someone's purposes, messages, and standards.

- Is this just another version of Christianity?
- Is it a valid option for Christians?

How do they view Jesus?

- Divine Son of God worthy of all worship as God who is the only way to redemption. **Vs.** A moral example for us to follow. Jesus is a spiritual big brother who sets a pattern for us to walk in His footsteps.
- Grace **Vs.** Moralism
- People are essentially evil **Vs.** People are essential good, little to no use of the word “sin” or God’s wrath.
- All about eternal life worshipping God **Vs.** All about my life now
 - ... No longer Christianity

DECONSTRUCTION VS. TESTING OUR FAITH

Illustration: pool platform?

What is deconstruction to a Progressive Christian?

Deconstruction is seeking holes – what can I throw away and doubt?

- Doubt which is seeking justification for unbelief.
- “Whatever you do, don’t land on a conclusion. Stay floating and flexible.”
 - Ultimately, traditional, orthodox, time-tested doctrines are thrown out with the trash. Everyone is building a faith of their own for themselves.
- Progressives spend less time pouring over scripture and more time discussing their personal experiences, unanswered prayers, and frustrations with the church. For some reason they downplay the canonical books and elevate the apocryphal ones.
 - The only authority is individual experience.

What is testing our faith for a Christian?

It’s seeking truth = What can I stand on as certainty?

- Does historical Christianity prove out? Can I stand on it?
- Testing the pillars to see if they are objective. They have no right having authority in your life, unless they are true.

Why is Progressive Christianity SO attractive?

Because it encourages each individual to shed their obligations to a Sovereign King who has clearly defined His expectations for humanity. Then, you get to rebuild your own religion tailored to what YOU want it to be.

- You get to create a “projection of God who is just as tolerant as we imagine ourselves to be.” – Collin Hansen
 - Your god can be tolerant of your beliefs about sexuality, gender, abortion, or any sin or lifestyle you can rationalize in your own moral standards. You can rebuild god in your image.
 - (PS. We are little gods is part of their theology.)
 - **But He’s certainly no longer the God of the Bible.**
- You get to read scripture and say, “I really don’t think that is what Paul meant.” “That may be true for others, but not for me.” “This part of the Bible isn’t relevant to me.” “Actually, what I think it means is...”
 - **2 Peter 3:16** – (paraphrase) The ignorant and unstable twist scripture to their own destruction.

Ephesians 4:11-15 - *...He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...*

- **Illustration:** Counterfeit Money
- We will spend the next 7 weeks studying the doctrines of historical, orthodox Christianity. THEN, hopefully we’ll develop a refined taste for undiluted truth and quickly recognize any counterfeit – even subtle – that comes along.

What is Doctrine? (from Christianity and Liberalism by Machen)

Christianity is not a religion of moral principles. It’s a faith based on an event.
 EVENT (something happened) – MEANING = DOCTRINE – MESSAGE PREACHED –
 THE CHRISTIAN FAITH – THE BELIEVER’S PURPOSE AND LIFESTYLE.

- EVENT = Jesus died and resurrected
- DOCTRINE (meaning) = Jesus died for our sins. Jesus loves me!

Building blocks (the BRICKS AND MORTAR) of our faith. The doctrines of:

- Scripture, God, Man, Jesus, the Cross, Resurrection, Salvation

TOOK

We MUST learn to recognize heresy and watered-down gospel sermons, so we can guard what we're consuming. Our regular intake MUST become undiluted truth.

- **Lemonade Recipe example**

- As soon as you change a major ingredient, it's no longer lemonade.
- If Christianity is separated from its doctrine, it's separated from its root and is no longer Christianity.
- You can believe whatever you want, but don't call yourself a Christian if you don't stand for Christian cornerstones.

Excerpts from: **Progressive' Christianity: Even Shallower Than the Evangelical Faith I Left** by Ian Harber (3.7.2020)

"I was an #exvangelical who left the faith of my youth for "progressive Christianity." Then I returned. Here's my #revangelical story.

The Christian tradition I grew up in—for all the wonderful things it gave me—was not prepared for a generation of kids with access to high-speed internet. The answers given in church seemed shallow compared to the legitimate critiques that were a Google search or YouTube video away. Questions about Scripture, politics, and suffering laid the foundation for me to explore progressive Christianity.

I read Rob Bell's books *Velvet Elvis* and *Love Wins*. I read Donald Miller's *Blue Like Jazz*. I still remember the paragraph from *Blue Like Jazz* that opened me up to a world of grace I hadn't before experienced—but also to a world freed from orthodox doctrine.

The views I encountered were thrilling. Science did not have to be discarded because of the Bible! When prayer felt like a coin toss, mysticism provided a new way to encounter the divine! I found people who understood what it was like to deconstruct your faith and rebuild it from scratch. Wokeness was the new morality. [...] There was, conveniently, no personal God to place demands on your life in any meaningful way. In this "progressive [Christianity]", Elizabeth Gilbert's trope is the only thing left: "God dwells within you, as you." There's no way to distinguish between ourselves and God. In this paradigm, we *are* God.

But then I ran into a problem. As I kept listening and reading, I realized I didn't have the tools to **rebuild**—and I wasn't receiving any from these voices. Every belief I held had been neatly disassembled and laid bare on the floor for examination. But there was no guidance for putting something back together. Helping people deconstruct their faith without also helping put it back together again is lazy, irresponsible, dangerous, and isolating.

Mark Sayers describes the progressive vision of the world as "**the kingdom without the King.**" We want all of God's blessings—without submitting to his loving rule and reign. We want progress—without his presence. We want justice—without his justification. We want the horizontal implications of the gospel for society—without the vertical reconciliation of sinners with God.

A few months later, two things happened simultaneously: I began formal theological education and, in a tragic accident, I lost the grandfather who had raised me. This death plunged me into a season of intense suffering, but in a theologically rigorous environment.

One of my teachers said, **“We do theology in the light so we can stand on it in the dark.”** I was doing theology *and* standing on it in the dark. For the first time I really learned the doctrines of the Trinity and of Scripture as a unified story, and how to read it as inspired literature. I was taught how doctrines that I assumed were contradictory—like penal substitution and Christus Victor—actually need each other to form the full, beautiful, biblical picture. From there, the wide and rich world of historic Christian orthodoxy swung open for me to explore.

My petition to pastors, then, is twofold:

1. As Jude says, “Have mercy on those who doubt” (1:22). Don’t meet doubts or questions or concerns with harshness, dismissiveness, or shallow answers. Be patient with hard questions, and work with your people for comprehensive, nuanced answers.
2. Teach the richness of the Christian tradition. Don’t settle for feel-good platitudes as guidance for a better life. Give complicated answers to complicated questions. Show how Jesus, the most brilliant person to ever live, speaks to every aspect of life and society with compassion, love, and grace.

We need *more* theology, nuance, grace, compassion, and understanding in our churches, not less. But these things are made possible *by* orthodox doctrine, not in spite of it. There are more paths than ever before in today’s world—more options for spiritual “enlightenment” or curate-your-own-beliefs faith. But no path leads to true happiness and everlasting life except the “Jesus alone” path (John 14:6), which is narrower than we might like (Matt. 7:13) but more satisfying than we can imagine (Ps. 16:11). Jesus has the words of life. He *is* life. Truth. The way.”

FURTHER INQUIRY

What are the most important aspects for us to understand about who God is?

What are the most important aspects for us to understand about mankind?

What can you learn from comparing the answers of these two questions?

RECAP

- Paul challenges believers to be theologically fortified against false doctrines.
- Stability in the faith comes from the consistent teaching of scripture which develops a taste for undiluted truth.
- The current heresy infecting Christianity today is the Progressive Christianity.
- When held up to the light of scripture, it’s easy to see that it’s not Christianity at all, but a self-centered religion in aggressive opposition to Christianity.
- The recipe for orthodox, historical Christianity is the accurate understanding of the doctrines of: Scripture, God, Man, Jesus, the Cross, Resurrection, Salvation

Ephesians 4:13-14a - ...attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine...

Challenge 1: Do your best to answer the “Further Inquiry” questions.

Challenge 2: Bring your bible and a notebook over the next 7 weeks.

~ *Soli DEO Gloria*

eGroup Questions /// Title: Series

Pray:

Questions:

1.

Ask for prayer requests: Pray

Fill out student contact sheet if there are any new people.