

6 False Teachings Bringing Deceptive Darkness Into the Church

Since that very moment in the Garden of Eden when a single bite shattered the harmony of the world, man has tried to make his own way, be his own master, and set up his own kingdom. It's nothing new.

Nevertheless, if we want to be faithful followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in this day and age, we must be alert and ready to boldly stand against the spirit of the age that seeks to modify the message of Christ, undermine His power to set us free from sin, repaint Christ's picture to make Him more acceptable to a wayward generation and rewrite the gospel to remove the offense of the cross.

For the last 2,000 years, the church has been plagued with heresy after heresy seeking to tame the gospel, and today is no different. Here are just a few of the popular beliefs in our current culture that threaten to infiltrate the church:

1. **Universalism:** the belief that all people will be saved or that all ways lead to God and eternal life. Many who subscribe to this theology claim that, for instance, Christians and Muslim worship the same God.
2. **The Prosperity Gospel:** the belief that God's primary concern is for believers to be healthy and wealthy. If Christians are sick, suffering or poor, it is because of sin or a lack of faith.
3. **The New Age Movement:** a belief system of Eastern influence that emphasizes universal tolerance and doing what feels good (moral relativism). It contends that man is divine and can create his own reality and identity.
4. **Legalism:** the improper use of the law described in

Scripture to try to attain or maintain salvation. Legalism also fosters judgment of fellow Christians for not adhering to one's own ideas of holiness rather than encouraging them to imitate Christ, obeying God's standards as explicitly outlined in Scripture.

5. **Hyper-grace:** the overreaction to legalism, resulting in abuse of God's grace. Believers find themselves drawn to the modern hyper-grace movement because they are looking for freedom not just from legalism, but also from God's standards.
6. **The Emerging Church:** a movement that claims to be Christian but employs culturally sensitive methods to make the gospel more palatable to a postmodern culture. Jesus' life is treated more as an allegory or narrative rather than a true event. Of particular concern is the inclusive approach to various belief systems, an emphasis on emotions over absolute truth and the notion that there is no hell, judgment or need for forgiveness. The Emerging Church movement also glorifies honesty and confession, but without repentance.

Behind all these false ideologies is the belief that Scripture is not infallible and truth simply changes with the times. A 2014 Gallup poll revealed that:

- 22 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the actual Word of God and should be taken literally
- 28 percent believe it is the actual Word of God, but with multiple possible interpretations
- 28 percent believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God but should not be taken literally
- 18 percent believe it is an ancient book of legends, history and moral precepts written by man

How do we respond to such false teachings as they arise within the church? We preach Christ. We reinforce biblical doctrine, clinging to the highest authority—the Word of God. For “The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not

believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Cor. 4:4-5a).

We preach Christ who was promised by God back in Genesis. We preach Christ, who was born of a virgin. We preach Christ, who healed the sick, raised the dead, made the lame to walk and set the captives free. We preach Christ, who chose to die a criminal's death on the cross in order to set us free from sin. We preach Christ, who rose victoriously from the grave, never to die again, thus assuring everyone who places their trust in Him of eternal life with Him in heaven. We preach Christ, who will come again to judge the living and the dead.

So we can say:

1. **To the universalists:** No one will be saved apart from Jesus Christ. Only those who choose to repent and call on the name of Jesus will have eternal life (see Acts 4:12, Matt. 25:46, Heb. 9:27, John 14:6).
2. **To heralds of the prosperity gospel:** Jesus promised us that we will suffer, but that He is with us and has overcome the world (see John 16:33, Rom. 5:3-5, 2 Tim. 3:12, Luke 14:27).
3. **To the new agers:** There is only one sovereign God, Creator of all things (see Is. 55:8-9, Job 12:10, Heb. 2:5-10).
4. **To legalists:** If righteousness were attainable through the law, Christ would not have had to die (see Matt. 7:22-23; Gal. 2:21; Rom. 3:10-12, 28; James 2:10). We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ's singular work on the cross, and even this faith is a gift from God not achieved by our own efforts (see Rom. 4:5, Eph. 2:8). And we are not to judge our brothers and sisters in Christ on debatable issues (see Rom. 14:1-12).
5. **To proponents of hyper-grace:** God's grace has freed us from the bondage of sin, but we should not receive His sacrifice in vain (see Rom. 6:23, Heb. 10:26-29). We

must repent and seek to live under the lordship of Christ, seeking holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Pet. 1:13-16, 2:11-12, 16; Rom. 5:20-6:18).

6. **To the emerging church:** If we dilute the gospel, then we no longer have Good News to share (see Gal. 1:8-9, 1 Cor. 15:1-4, Ex. 20:3-6, John 8:24). Only Christ can break the chains of sin, set the captives free and conform us to His image (see 1 John 5:3-5, Phil. 3:7-9, Gal. 5:16).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, arm yourselves with the Word of God. Know your Bible and speak the truth in love. In this way, may we remain faithful by the power of the Holy Spirit.
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