

In the Face of 'Preachers of LA,' Has the Church Become a Reality Show?

Beginning this fall, a major television network will begin airing a new reality show called *Preachers of L.A.* Before you continue reading this article, please view this trailer.

Though every ounce of my being is tempted to respond in condemning judgmentalism, I will obey God's command and judge not.

As with everything else, Christianity has changed in this new millennium. The question we must all ask is, Is it for the better or for the worse? Never before has the church earned such a poor reputation as we have in this generation. It appears as if the current church in America has two gods—the god of attendance and the god of money. We are seen as superficial, arrogant, self-serving, unloving and unholy.

If this is so, where did we go wrong? Hmmm?

Though I have studied church history, I am not much different than most believers. My point of reference regarding Christianity begins with my first experience in the church.

I was witnessed to and led to Christ by two different people simultaneously. Bob Birdsong, a former Mr. Universe, and Kim Kimberly, a former Vegas musician turned street preacher.

Bob came into a clothing store where I was working while I was studying at the University of New Mexico. Kim would also come through the mall handing out tracts, followed by her band of homeless rejects and the dregs of society.

I was soon led to a church called Calvary Assembly. It was an old-time gospel church pastored by the late R.C. Dobbins. He

was a cotton-spewing gospel preacher who shouted out phrases like, "Saying 'Amen' to a preacher is like saying 'Sick-em' to a bulldog!" and, "I don't mind feeding you milk, but I find it a shame when I have to part the whiskers to get the bottle in."

I was handed over to a beautiful ex-hippie couple by the names of Mike and Sherri Schaefer for discipleship. Today they pastor a wonderful church on the west side of Albuquerque. Not long after, I met Paul and Joyce Austin. Paul taught me how to be a man.

Within a few months, I was accepted to Rhema Bible Training Center in Broken Arrow, Okla.

I remember sitting through Kenneth Hagin's faith library class. Though Brother Hagin is credited for the Word of Faith message and "name it, claim it," I never heard any type of extreme teaching from him. He didn't drive a Ferrari or Bentley. He drove a red Ford Bronco.

He was a humble man who lived a simple life, though he was accused of the contrary. He was married to one wife. He came from humble beginnings, and after God healed him as a child, he preached the gospel until the day he went on to be with the Lord.

Something has changed in our midst. We, the church, are in a very controversial season. Could it be that we, the leaders of this church, sometimes forget whom we are serving? I was always taught that the word *minister* meant "servant." We serve God by serving the least.

I remember learning in a practical ministries class that as a pastor, we should not live below our congregation or above our congregation. It is important that we live right in the middle.

We also learned that Mormon bishops give their time freely

without any monetary compensation paid by members of the church. They work full-time jobs, and their income comes solely from their professions.

We as Christians have done the opposite. We have turned Christianity into a career. I am not advocating that we follow the tenets of the Mormons. However, it is a blameless principle. I know there are many ministers across America who receive no compensation whatsoever from their congregations. I applaud them.

This is the very reason why the Heal Your Servant ministry does not pay any salaries. Our purpose is to help fallen ministers. God has blessed me with a wonderful profession, and there is no need for our ministry to meet a budget in order to pay salaries. Every penny we make goes to serve the broken minister. If the money comes in, we use it. If it doesn't, we don't worry about it.

Our ministry is to help people bound by sexual indiscretion in the church.

I will never forget the first time I ever heard of such a matter within the church. It was the time when the Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker scandals arose. I was a new believer, and I could not understand how this could ever happen.

To top it off, many of the people I was sharing the gospel with used this against me in rejecting the message.

Today, we hear of weekly scandals and wonder who will be the next to fall. With over 70 percent of ministers addicted to Internet pornography and 38 percent having committed adultery, the question is, Are we truly any different than the world?

It is no wonder why the networks find it financially advantageous to feature a reality show that focuses on a gospel different than that which the Savior lived. Advertisers are lining up to pay big bucks to convey the church as a

mockery.

It is time for us to open our own hearts and judge ourselves. We must be brutally honest about our misgivings. If we have a habitual sin we cannot defeat, let's find someone we can trust.

We must seek out those with the capability to lead us toward God's grace and deliverance.

As far as the television show itself is concerned, it appears as if it is a trap to once again bring shame to our great cause. My prayer is that we all learn to walk in wisdom, humility and temperance.

I would love to hear your opinion.

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