

Shane Idleman: Why Being Controversial Isn't Necessarily Wrong

If God decides to usher in another spiritual awakening where the church comes alive and sinful man repents on a large scale, it will not be nice and tidy. All great moves of God have been controversial.

As a student of revivals, I understand that being “controversial” isn’t necessarily a bad thing. God is not predictable, and odd things can happen when a sinful person is overcome by the power of God.

Not Everything Done in God’s Name Bears His Approval

Some suggest that today’s battle is not so much against liberals in the church but against those who are “not open” to new prophecies and visions—those who “religiously hold to the written Word alone.”

This statement concerns me because it can be used to promote anything done in the name of the Lord. Granted, Acts 2:17 (NKJV) is relevant for us today, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.” But this Scripture is balanced by 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Not everything done in God’s name bears His approval. We must look at the fruit.

For example, as I read *The Journals of George Whitefield*, the Welsh Revivals and the firsthand accounts of the First Great Awakening in America, I found that Pastor Jonathan Edwards’s

words were true. He observed that the work of the Holy Spirit would be evident because it would produce the right fruit:

- It would elevate the truth.
- It would exalt Christ.
- It would oppose Satan.
- It would point people to the Scriptures, and
- It would result in love for God and others.

Pastors must preach the totality of God's Word, call out sin and correct error—holiness, not hysteria, should be sought. The result will be genuine fruit, not ungodly fanaticism.

Even a Broken Clock Is Right Twice a Day

A "prophet," as mentioned in the Bible, can be anyone in a position of spiritual authority or claiming to be. They are not to be elevated or idolized. We follow Christ, not men. False teachers aren't ostentatiously dressed in red, armed with pitchforks. They often look credible and talk convincingly; however, they bring destructive teachings into the church. They tend to avoid difficult truths such as sin, judgment and repentance, and focus on what people want to hear rather than what they need to hear. False teachers provide layers of truth mixed with error, but even a broken clock is right twice a day.

Today, when the truth of God's Word is spoken, people are often offended because they've been conditioned to hear feel-good messages that do little in calling out sin. As a result, churches are filled with people whose lifestyles reflect little change. William Still said it well, "Many, who for the first time come under the sound of Holy Ghost preaching, are mortally offended ... because they have never been exposed to the white light of the Spirit."

Wisdom requires that we examine what is being sought and taught—that is, what’s the focus? Repentance, holiness, obedience and purity should be primary rather than boasting, blessings, abundance and prosperity.

The Word, Not Feelings, Is the Gauge for Truth

Jesus warns, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). There are false teachers within the church. We are encouraged to pray for wisdom and discernment. “Words from the Lord” should not supersede the Bible but, instead, confirm it. As Wayne Grudem once said: “Prophecy involves not authoritative Bible teaching, and not speaking words of God which are equal to Scripture, but rather reporting something which God spontaneously brings to mind.”

We hold religiously to the written Word because it is our guide—to test what is being said: “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32). The speaker should be careful since his words must be under, or subject to, God’s Word. If those who look to the Word are accused of quenching and grieving the Spirit, we are reminded that Jesus used the Word of God for finality, discernment, and power. We must do the same.

A Final Word to Those Who Mislead

A false prophet intentionally misleads people by influencing them to act in a way contrary to God’s Word. False prophets also don’t apologize when wrong. Granted, even false prophets sometimes apologize to mask their mistake, but the apology is more of an excuse (“This is what I *really* meant”). False prophets are often flamboyant but lack godly character. They usually include the title of *prophet* or *apostle* on their business card. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing, and they often focus on making money.

Have you been manipulating, conjuring or falsely

misrepresenting the work of the Spirit? Don't live your life with a question mark here. Those who are truly saved want to protect and honor the work of the Spirit. Don't waste another minute living like this. Take time now and repent. God will rend the heavens and fill you with His Spirit. {eo}

*For more on the topic, see "The Battle for Truth—7 Unmistakable Traits of False Prophets." excerpted from **Shane Idleman**'s series on revival and his new book, *Oh God, Would You Rend the Heavens? Understanding and Contending for a Genuine Spiritual Awakening*. For more on this, [click here](#).*

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