

10 Common Unbiblical Beliefs in the Contemporary Church

As an observer and participant in the broader body of Christ since 1978, I have heard many things communicated that I deem unbiblical. Many of these teachings are so commonly believed or assumed that the average Christian embraces them without examining the Scriptures.

The following are some of the more common erroneous beliefs:

1. Salvation and a decision for Christ at an altar are the same.

One of the most common misconceptions I have observed in the church today is the fact that folks think that if a person repeats “the sinner’s prayer” or responds to an altar call, they are “saved.” This is problematic, since we may be giving false hope to the respondent by reassuring them of their salvation, when in fact they may not really be saved.

Also, nowhere in the Bible does it say that merely saying words ensures salvation. Furthermore, the altar call is a modern development in the evangelical church that arose out of the methodology employed by evangelists who appealed to the masses to come to the altar to receive Christ (or to “walk up the sawdust trail”). Though there is nothing wrong with this approach that identifies those who want to give their life to Christ (so people can get their names, pray with them and follow them up), it is not the same as salvation.

Scripture is clear that both the heart and the mouth have to confess Jesus is Lord (see -10), and Paul the apostle regularly echoed the word of John the Baptist when he said to bring forth fruit proving your repentance (see Acts 26:20, Matt. 3:8). Hence, making an emotionally motivated “decision” to ask Jesus in your life is a good step, but a truly

converted person will bear fruit, proving they really gave their life over to Jesus. (See also 1 John 3:9.) I used to say that “hundreds got saved tonight” when I was referring to an altar call response of masses of people; now I merely say, “hundreds made ‘decisions for Christ,’” since, after all these years, I am now very careful to distinguish between a “decision” and a “conversion” experience.

2. Worship is just singing songs.

I have learned that the mere singing of words to a song doesn’t amount to worship. Jesus also said that people can honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him (see Mark 7:6-8).

True worship includes blessing the Lord with all your soul (see Ps. 103) which implies that your whole heart, mind and soul—your whole being—is willingly bowing before the lordship of Christ while adoring and worshipping the Godhead. (See Rev. 4.)

True worship also implies obedience which is why Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will obey My commandments” (see John 14:15). Consequently, I have known many persons either on worship teams and or people in church who—during the worship segment of the church service—displayed exuberant praise and worship, yet their private life was anything but submitted to God.

3. Repentance is crying at the altar.

I have seen countless people making “altar calls” week after week, crying as they came up. The average believer thinks that this is a sign of repentance; however, the word “repentance” has to do with a mindset change, a change of thinking, more than an emotional experience. I have learned that unless a person changes the way they think about God, their hearts will never be transformed by His power. Even Esau could not find repentance, even though he sought it with crying and tears!

(See Heb. 12:17.)

4. We should say prayers.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say to merely “say” prayers. But everywhere, in both testaments, is a command to “seek God”. God discloses Himself to the seekers—not just to the casual inquirers. (See Ps. 42, 63; Matt. 6:7,33; Heb. 11:6.)

5. God only expects us to give a tenth of our finances.

Tithing is only a principle handed down from God to Adam and to his offspring, which is why Abel gave God a first-fruit offering (see Gen. 4) and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all gave God a tithe. This was reiterated again in the Law of Moses (Lev. 27) and in the prophets (Mal. 3) and taught in the New Testament (see Matt. 23, Heb. 7.)

That being said, when Jesus came He did not focus on a mere tithe—He commanded His disciples to surrender everything they had to Him (see Luke 14: 26-33.) This passage alone should dispel the notion that God only requires a tenth.

Nothing less than a total heart surrender of everything we are and have is expected by the Lord Jesus Christ (see Phil. 3, 2 Cor. 5:15). Consequently, although it is still important to set at least 10 percent aside to give to God, it doesn’t mean you can do what you want with the other 90 percent. The earth is the Lord’s, and He demands proper stewardship and obedience regarding what we do with 100 percent of our finances and possessions—not merely 10 percent.

6. The church is a meeting place.

Christians continually refer to buildings that house church services as “the church”—which is why when going to said building, they say, “We are going to church”. This in spite of the fact that Scripture teaches that His people are the church and that each believer makes up the temple of the Holy Spirit

(see 1 Cor. 3:16,12.).

We need to change our language to agree with the reality that the building or cathedral we meet in is *not* the church but merely houses the body of Christ for corporate worship, biblical instruction and the Lord's Supper.

7. Ministers are only in the church place.

The word "minister" simply means servant. Since we are all called to be servants of God, we are all ministers of God—irrespective of whether or not we are in full-time church ministry. Whatever job you have, your employer is paying you (whether they know it or not) to be a minister of God, representing Him to the particular entity where you work.

8. Eternal life begins when we die physically.

While many believers talk about going to heaven to be with God for eternity the truth of the matter is: eternal life begins the moment somebody receives Christ here on earth (see John 3:16-19, 5:24). Consequently, we can begin to enjoy the abundant (eternal) life now while living on earth!

9. The larger the church, the more influence it has.

The fact of the matter is, our nation has never had more megachurches, while at the same time, Christianity has never had as little impact on culture as it does today. Hence, there is not necessarily a correlation between the size of a church and its impact on the surrounding community.

There are even small to mid-sized churches that have far more impact on a community than megachurches that are only concerned with attracting their neighbors for church growth and care not about the conditions of the communities of the unchurched.

10. There is no need for a true Christian to confess their sins.

There is an unbiblical teaching going around in some hyper-grace circles that, once a person is born again, they never need to confess another sin since Jesus paid the price for all sins, past, present and future. While it is true that Jesus paid for the sins of believers—past, present and future—we need to continually live a life of true repentance and apply the blood of Jesus to our life after we sin. Even as the apostle John told all believers “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The apostle James also admonishes believers to “Confess your faults one to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (see James 5:16a). If anyone teaches that Christians can live the rest of their life with unconfessed, un-repent-ed-of sin—after grieving the Holy Spirit of God (see Eph. 4:30), then I do not know what Bible they are reading, but it is not the same one as I! {eoa}

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