

12 Teachings That Harm the Church

I have heard it said that “balance is the key to life.” I agree with that statement, as I have found that any truth taken to the extreme (that ignores others aspects related to its subject) is unbalanced and can be harmful.

This is also why Paul the apostle said that he teaches “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), which involves a full-orbed presentation of truth.

The following are some of the “hyper” teachings that have been harmful to the body of Christ, in my opinion:

1. Hyper-Grace – Grace is typically defined as unmerited favor given to humans by God. This is a satisfactory definition albeit not comprehensive. Since Scripture teaches us that we are saved by grace and not by works (Eph. 2:8-9), those in the hyper-grace camp believe and teach that once a person is saved, they can live any way they want and still achieve the benefits of salvation. They need a full dose of the book of James to counter-balance their hyper-grace!

2. Hyper-Holiness – Those in this camp put an overemphasis on outward holiness to the point in which they believe a person has to dress a certain way in order to have right standing with God (for example: Women should not cut their hair, wear pants, makeup or jewelry). Their emphasis on outward conformity to strict standards makes them more like Pharisees than Christians. They need to meditate on Matthew 23 to understand God’s view that inward holiness is a greater priority than outward holiness.

3. Hyper-Calvinist – This camp emphasizes God’s sovereignty to the point that it bypasses what Scripture teaches regarding human responsibility. For example, during Charles Finney’s

ministry, he had to constantly debate hyper-Calvinists who taught that it was wrong for preachers to induce sinners to repent, make decisions for Christ or do anything that aided in the process of salvation. Of course, the majority of Calvinists have not taken this approach as we study the ministries of former heroes of the faith such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon and other Calvinists God used mightily to bring thousands of sinners to Christ by commanding repentance and obedience to the gospel.

4. Hyper-Arminianism – Those in this camp overemphasize human responsibility to the point that they nullify God's sovereignty. Extreme Arminianism such as "open theism" even goes as far as teaching that God doesn't know everything in the future and that God makes His decisions after He sees how humans respond to Him. They have reduced predestination (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29-30) to "post-destination" and have created a god that responds to time and space rather than the One who controls it.

The difference between predestination and human responsibility is a scriptural paradox that will never be fully understood this side of heaven. I always say that Scriptures that emphasize predestination are taken from God's transcendent view of human reality (from heaven's perspective), and Scriptures that emphasize human responsibility are from an immanent view of human reality (from the earth's perspective).

5. Hyper-Love – Those in this camp emphasize the love of God to the exclusion of the holiness and righteousness of God. (Psalm 89:14 says "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne.") Whenever we focus on one attribute of God to the exclusion of the other attributes of God, we become unbalanced and present a wrong view of God's character and nature. Those in this camp say that God is love (1 John 4:7) and ignore the Scriptures that deal with God's wrath, along with the laws of sowing and reaping due to sin (Eph. 5:1-6; Gal. 6:7-8).

Even the apostle John, who wrote "God is love," also said in the same epistle that those who practice sin are of the devil and are lawless because sin is lawlessness (1 John 4:1-10).

Love Wins author Rob Bell went so far as to teach that all men would eventually be saved because of God's love. Read Revelation 20:11-15 to balance that view.

6. Hyper-Faith – Those in this camp primarily preach on faith for healing and deliverance, and set believers up to think there will always be victory with very little suffering or pain if they exert faith in God. This neglects the fact that Jesus not only healed the sick but also spoke about the need for His followers to walk in humility and meekness, to take up their cross and lose their lives in order to find it (Matt. 5:1-10 and Mark 8:34-35).

7. Hyper-Prosperity – Similar to the faith camp, this circle of preachers primarily emphasize Scriptures that deal with personal blessing and financial prosperity. Although there is some truth in their teachings, this overemphasis produces believers who seek the blessing more than the Blessor! It can also produce false expectations of people who sow their money into a ministry expecting a hundredfold return, which rarely, if ever, happens on a purely financial level. I believe in biblical prosperity but not in a "rights-centered" gospel that ignores our biblical stewardship to produce wealth primarily to confirm His covenant in the earth (Deut. 8:18).

8. Hyper-High Church – Those in this camp emphasize institutional church traditions and protocols that produce a professional class of clergy who have to walk around all day in clerical garb. They insist that the church be set up as a hierarchical organization replete with titles and even a throne for the head bishop! Those in this camp are losing most of their young people and have to reread the New Testament to understand the way of Jesus and the apostles. Somehow I cannot picture Jesus, the original apostles or Paul wearing clerical

robes and collars every Sunday and focusing on hierarchical titles and titular elevations.

To counterbalance this approach, Philippians 2:1-12 comes to mind as well as Matthew 23, which is a judgment against the religious system set up by those who claim to follow God.

9. Hyper-Kingdom – Those in this camp preach as though the fullness of the kingdom has already come and that there are no more biblical prophecies left to be fulfilled. (Some call them “full preterists.”) Many don’t even believe things could get worse on the earth and don’t believe in the second bodily return of Christ. Scripture teaches a paradoxical view that the kingdom is already here (Col. 1:12-13) but not yet fully manifest (Rom. 16:20).

10. Hyper-Dispensational – Those in this camp believe they have to passively wait for the rapture and avoid political and social reform, because trying to transform culture is like “rearranging the chairs on the Titanic.” This is based on a faulty reading of Scriptures such as Daniel 9:24-27.

Although I do not believe every nation and all people will be saved before the second bodily return of Christ, I do believe there will be some sort of strong kingdom influence in the nations (especially “sheep nations”; read Matt. 25:32) before the Second Coming. All of the major biblical covenants and themes point to a victorious church and victorious gospel before the end of human history (Gen. 1:28, 12:1-3, 22:17-18; Ps. 110:2; Acts 3:21).

11. Hyper-Charismatic – Those in this camp focus more on the gifts of the Spirit than on the Word of God, character development and inward holiness. They elevate their spiritual experiences above the truth of Scripture.

12. Hyper-Rational – Those in this camp are afraid of any spiritual (subjective) experiences or manifestations. They depend on their mind to the neglect of their spirit. They

believe God only speaks through His written Word. They rationalize their faith and have little or no real prayer life or substantive fellowship with God. They split hairs over biblical doctrines and in some ways worship the Bible more than the God of the Bible. (Jesus said it is possible to study the Scriptures without coming to God—read John 5:39-40).

In conclusion, whenever we focus on a truth to the exclusion of other aspects of truth, we end up in error.

May God help us to understand and preach the whole counsel of God so that we can feed the flock of God and equip them to fulfill their divine purpose!