

4 Ear-Tickling Doctrines You Should Never Tolerate

Many today are worried about the Zika virus. But I'm just as concerned about certain destructive doctrines that are spreading like an epidemic.

During a recent trip to Uganda, friends there told me of a growing church in the capital city of Kampala that has been infected by the most serious form of American-style "hypergrace" teaching. This church attracts hundreds of young people who like the idea that they can fornicate whenever they want and still be right with God.

False doctrines are nothing new. In the first century, Paul sternly warned Timothy about certain preachers who know how to slice and dice God's Word to make it fit what people want. He wrote in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but they will gather to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, having itching ears, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths."

The King James Version says the crowds who crave this reconfigured gospel "have itching ears." The Greek word here, *knēthō*, can mean "to tickle" or "to itch." It means that people will gravitate toward teachers who tell them what they want to hear instead of what they need. And while the Bible sharply rebukes the teachers of these dangerous doctrines, Paul also blames the people who ravenously consume this distorted message.

The warning is clear: Be careful what you listen to!

There are many false doctrines circulating today, but there are four that have spread widely in the modern Pentecostal/charismatic movement. You may not be able to stop

the person who is preaching these heresies, but you should never, ever submit to this teaching or support it financially. Don't ever believe these four lies:

Lie No. 1: You don't need to repent of your sin or focus on sin. This is the crux of the "hypergrace" movement. While it is true that many legalistic Christians don't understand God's love and forgiveness, we can't swing the pendulum to the other extreme and portray God as being lax about sin. God is still holy, and true grace gives us the power to live a holy life. If a preacher minimizes repentance, or says you should never worry about sin in your life, you should run out the door.

Lie No. 2: You can live however you want to live sexually. Jesus Himself warned us in Revelation 2:20 about the influence of "Jezebel" in the church. He said she was leading Christians to "commit acts of immorality." You can see tolerance of sexual sin in many segments of the church today. Catholic bishops allowed their own priests to commit child sexual abuse for years; mainline churches have embraced same-sex marriage. But their error is no worse than that of certain charismatic preachers who minimize or ignore the sin of adultery and cohabitation among straight people. We should never evaluate a minister just by what he or she preaches; we should also take note of what he or she refuses to confront from the pulpit.

Lie No. 3: You can buy God's blessings. I do not believe in a poverty gospel, but the prosperity gospel that emerged in this country in the 1980s almost ruined our witness. The greedy televangelist who manipulated audiences to give in the offering so he could buy airplanes or mansions will give an account for every soul he turned away from Christ. Especially egregious are the preachers who promised people healings, spiritual gifts or the salvation of loved ones in exchange for a \$500 "seed" offering. God's blessings are free. Shame on those who merchandised His anointing.

Lie No. 4: God never calls us to suffer. Whenever the church

enters times of prosperity and ease, our message gets soft. This happened during the 1980s, when preachers in silk ties told us we could name and claim whatever we wanted in Jesus name. And while the verses they quoted about faith certainly apply to prayer, they mixed the message with the idea that life with God is like a bowl of cherries and that any hardship that comes our way is from the devil. These preachers avoided 1 Peter 4:1, which says: "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose."

I don't know about you, but I don't trust an arrogant preacher who says he never has struggles or problems. I don't follow a man because he has a Lexus or a four-car garage; I look for a broken minister who walks with a limp. The preacher who says Christians don't suffer has never felt the fire of God's testing, and he is likely an illegitimate son since he has never known the Father's discipline.

God is cleaning up His church today, and He is refining the message we preach. Don't prop up or support the false doctrines of the past. Purge their influence from your life and embrace the true gospel—the message calls each of us to take up our cross, die to our own desires and be mature disciples. {eoa}