

8 Humanistic Errors That Have Crept Into the Church

I learned a long time ago that societal culture and its values actually frame much of the preaching, teaching and theology of the church. In this article, I want to focus on what I will call “humanism,” which has shaped the framework of the thinking, goals and methodologies of multitudes of Christians, churches and leaders in the church place and workplace.

By humanism, I am referring to anything people refer to as self-empowering that neither originates from the worldview of the Scriptures nor depends upon our identification with the cross of Christ for existence and essence. It is also any concept that glorifies the self instead of glorifying God.

Much of the misleading literature and teaching is from the popular genre some call leadership, motivational teachings, success literature or self-empowerment and self-help literature. I spent more than a decade studying these kinds of books from both Christian and secular authors and have found them to be both a great blessing and also misleading, because much of it leaves out the necessity of going to the cross and dying to self in order to experience His resurrection power to fulfill your assignment. Even Jesus needed the power of the Holy Spirit to speak and act—He did not merely depend upon His great strategic mind and imagination to accomplish His purpose (see Acts 1:1-8).

Based on my studies, I have noticed the following eight popular errors that have crept into the church:

1. You could do anything you dream you can do.

I remember hearing and reading many people say that they can do anything they desire or dream to do. Some even quote the Scripture (out of context) in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all

things because of Christ who strengthens me,” when it comes to them having success related to fulfilling their dreams. However, in spite of all this wishful thinking, we cannot be anything we desire to be and we cannot make something happen merely because we dream about it or focus on it.

God has apportioned to each one of us only a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3) based upon our particular assignment (Eph. 4:7), according to His will—not our will (1 Cor. 12:5-7). Hence, no matter how hard one tries, wishes or dreams, we are all given assignments by God that limit our capacity based on the natural and supernatural abilities that we have received at birth by God’s design. For example, no matter how much I desire to play professional basketball, it will never happen in spite of how much faith I exert, positive confessions I make or good intentions I have—because of my physical limitations.

Consequently, the physical, spiritual and mental limitations upon my life are actually good for me because they fit my divine assignment and encourage me to invest my time in areas of my calling that bless other people rather than areas outside of my lane. Those who teach that people can do or be anything they want to do or be have taken their cue from secular humanism rather than from the Bible.

2. Cut out toxic people from your life.

I have read numerous posts on social media related to people advising their followers to cut “toxic people” out of their life. Of course, we have to define what they mean by toxic. If they are referring merely to people who are difficult to get along with, and/or people who may not always agree with them, and/or people they have an argument with—then said posts are misleading, given that the Word of God instructs us to: bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves (Rom. 15:1), bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2) and restore those who have fallen (Gal. 6:1).

Furthermore, sometimes having disagreements is a healthy way to come to proper conclusions regarding what is right and wrong (see 1 Cor. 11:19). Paul tells us that love is patient and kind and bears all things with others (1 Cor. 13). Consequently, if people define the word “toxic” the way I stated it above, then they would have a hard time staying married, raising children or having close friends and associates in business and ministry, as there will always be disagreements between people who labor and/or live together.

However, I would agree with the proposition to cut toxic people out of one’s life if it were referring to people who are a bad influence and who lead a person to fall into sin or away from following the Lord. Thus, trying to live an insular life without conflict or disagreement is unreasonable and arises from an erroneous, self-focused, humanist ideology that actually nurtures weak-minded people with a victim spirit. rather than those who can handle dissonance and disagreement and still function at high capacity.

3. Only do what you have a passion for.

Although passion, at times, can depict what we are called to do for God, it can also become a distraction—since it’s possible to have a passion for hobbies that have nothing to do with our assignment. Furthermore, this teaching arises out of the context of secular humanistic success literature that is narcissistic, since we are called to do many things that we do not have a passion for!

Do you think Jesus was excited about going to the cross? He did not die on the cross because He was motivated to do it by passion—He did it out of obedience to the Father (Matt. 26:36-46). Consequently, there are many things I have to do on a daily basis that I do not want to do—but I do it, not because I am passionate to do it, but because I am responsible to get it done. For the mature Christ follower, when passion fails, stewardship takes over.

4. Individual identity trumps participation in the body of Christ.

People living in today's secular humanistic culture are obsessed with being unique and being known for the identity they carved out for themselves. Whether it be by identifying themselves with tattoos, earrings, gender, sexual lifestyle, attire or a cause—people are spinning their wheels trying to make a name for themselves. (Not that everything mentioned in this list is always evil or wrong.) This has crept into the church with rampant individualism illustrated by people and churches competing with other people and churches—trying to win the attention of their community by being “different” and “better” than others. Consequently, the humanistic concept of individual identity is opposed to participating in the body of Christ for the glory of His kingdom and honor.

5. Individual autonomy is worshipped.

Even as Lucifer attempted to lift himself above God and His heavenly council (Isa. 14:12-14) so he could do his own thing and be worshipped (Matt. 4:10), so the most sacred and honored concept in contemporary culture is human autonomy. Thus, many imbued with secular cultural values despise those who hold to a biblical worldview because the Scriptures place ethical boundaries around human behavior and hold humanity accountable to their Creator. Most secular humanists don't want anyone telling them what to do—period! Christians and churches who are unaccountable to anyone else and who place more priority upon actualizing the self than fearing God have fallen into the erroneous trap of secular humanism.

6. Spirituality without community is more akin to New Age religions.

There are millions of Christians who think they can follow God without connecting to a community of Jesus followers. Consequently, many who call themselves “spiritual” define

themselves as isolated from others because they value their private faith. This concept of spirituality is more akin to humanistic New Age religions (such as Hinduism and Buddhism) than to biblical Christianity, which describes Christ-followers as belonging to His body and family (1 Cor. 12).

7. Prioritize happiness over holiness.

There are those who practice humanistic techniques such as “mindfulness” who desire to control their atmosphere and be tranquil and happy, in the midst of life’s turmoil. (I am not saying that there is anything wrong with using a technique to be fully “present.”) However, any believer who attempts to prioritize happiness over holiness (which involves being set apart for God’s purposes) has been sucked into the vortex of secular humanism.

8. Use enlightenment concepts to elevate rationalism over supernaturalism.

The launch of the secular humanistic “Enlightenment” (1685-1815) resulted in humanity’s attempt to define truth merely as that which can be empirically proven through the sciences. Whenever a Christ-follower, church or denomination collapses Christianity down merely to that which can be rationally understood while rejecting supernaturalism, they have fallen into the trap of secular humanism.

In closing, my prayer is that those who read this article will have more discernment related to what worldview they have aligned themselves with, so they will be motivated to search the Scriptures and live their life to the glory of God and not to the glory of humankind. {eoa}