

A Lesson for Conservative and Charismatic Christians Regarding Preachers Like Francis Chan, Benny Hinn, Todd White and Others

I was recently asked for my take on the controversy surrounding Francis Chan speaking at what some call “questionable events.” I took time to pray while driving three hours to one of these events to meet Chan and hear him speak. When I posted the picture on my Facebook page, it created quite a firestorm, branding me as heretical, ecumenical and part of the NAR (I don’t even know what that is unless they meant the NRA). The irony is that nothing could be further from the truth; listen to the controversial sermon here beginning at the 18-minute mark and judge for yourself.

My ministry allows me to meet many different Christians. Last week, I attended the National Religious Broadcasters event, was invited to Fox News studios in Los Angeles just days later and worked with Pure Flix’s Billy Hallowell on the new series *After Columbine* earlier in the month and was able to chat with Ray Comfort before filming. My schedule provides many opportunities for me to observe what’s going on in American Christianity.

When I met Chan backstage, I found him to be very humble and eager to listen as we talked about these issues. True to form, he also delivered a powerful message on repentance. Isn’t that our goal as preachers? The event moved me deeply during worship, and I had the opportunity to meet some of the other speakers such as Corey Russell and Derek Carr. Their passion for the lost and their heart for “genuine” revival was

evident, as thousands came forward to recommit and renew their relationship with the Lord.

The irony is that when I try to tell the other side of it, heresy hunters are not open, humble or teachable. The old adage “Don’t confuse me with the facts” comes to mind. Why are emotional worship, nights of prayer and pressing into God viewed as fanatical when these things are actually biblical? Why do I never see the heresy hunters at all-night worship services or broken by the Lord at the altar? This question demands an answer—and the answer is that many have never been filled mightily with the Holy Spirit. They can’t say, like Jeremiah, that God’s Word is in their heart like a burning fire (Jer. 20:9). Read more here on emotional worship and listen to my sermon on the true cost of revival here.

The men and women who do the most for God are always people of prayer and worship—heart-wrenching, soul-searching prayer. Prayerlessness is the great sin of America today.

For those interested, many of the teachers I listen to are featured on our radio network, and I use The MacArthur Study Bible often. I love solid teaching and sound doctrine, as well as the movie *American Gospel: Christ Alone*. I also desperately need the power of the Spirit, as Spurgeon said every time he walked up those famous steps in London, “I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Unction is the dire need in the pulpits today. I’ve noticed that the division between cessationists and continuationists is causing a lot of the controversy. Cessationists tend to be leery of emotionalism, and continuationists tend to be the polar opposite.

What about Roman Catholic priests at events? The theology of Rome cannot be reconciled with historical Christianity. This type of ecumenicalism is not biblical. When asked why no one says anything when leaders allow priests on the stage, I’m saying something now: It’s not right. Maybe some leaders don’t

understand Rome's theology, but to hastily charge them as heretics and part of the one world order is naive at best, dishonest at worst. I can't speak for Chan, but I'm assuming he believes the same.

And how do we know that Chan isn't bringing solid teaching into the charismatic community? I would love to see more of that. Maybe John MacArthur can reach out to Jesus Culture; John Piper to Bethel; and Alistair Begg, or better yet, Paul Washer, to Elevation Worship. No, I'm not joking. I would love to see more unity.

What about some of these people with eccentric behavior such as Todd White, Heidi Baker and Lou Engle? Personally, I don't understand many charismatic mannerisms, nor do I agree with some video footage from past events, but I would have to speak to them directly and see the fruit. I love Lou's heart for prayer and fasting. Some people are eccentric and very emotional. It's difficult for me to properly evaluate everyone because I tend to be reserved, and I sometimes judge those who are different (meaning, not conservative like me). I can neither endorse nor rebuke speakers I don't know unless something is clear and evident, such as when I debated a pastor on Fox News about gay marriage. [Click here](#) for the quick video version and [here](#) for the hour-long audio.

If Todd White has said controversial things in the past, let's give him the opportunity to clarify. Would some of these leaders be willing to go on the podcast "Remnant News" and answer these questions with me, and my podcast "Idleman Unplugged" where I talk about controversial issues? Both can be found on iTunes and Podbean. I did a recent interview on "Remnant" that just posted on YouTube. Todd, Heidi, Lou and Mike Bickle ... I'm easy to reach. Would love to try to better understand your ministries.

Do I have concerns with Benny Hinn? Absolutely, but I recently heard he restored his marriage and denounced the false gospel.

Has anyone checked these facts? Again, I'm not endorsing him; based on what I have seen in the past, I have several issues with his ministry, especially if repentance has not taken place. My question isn't why did Chan speak to a huge group of people, but why did Benny Hinn if he has not repented of the false gospel? If he hasn't, why did organizers allow it? Again, we need clarification.

If I were offered the chance, as Chan was, to speak to thousands of people about the true gospel—to preach hell hot and heaven sweet and call the stadium to repentance—I would have a hard time saying no. Speaking at an event doesn't always mean endorsement. Chan and I don't follow many of these ministries closely; we don't always know who is safe and who is dangerous. If our motivation for going into a dark and dying world is to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, that should be taken into consideration.

I tend to be “safely” conservative when considering the power of the Holy Spirit, however, Scripture clearly supports the miraculous work of the Spirit today. I'm open but cautious. I think we have too many prophecies and not enough humility, too much self-centered worship and not enough waiting on God. We need sound doctrine and the power of the Holy Spirit. It's possible to be “Bible taught” but not “Spirit led”—straight as a gun barrel theologically but just as empty. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (see 2 Cor. 3:6).

Don't get me wrong. Theological and expositional teachings are essential to Christian living, but how often are theology students encouraged to fast and pray as well as study? How often are they taught brokenness and repentance in addition to translating the Greek language? How often are they taught the surrendered life? We can sometimes be more concerned about a master's degree than a degree from the Master.

All of us need to be filled with God's Spirit. We need gentleness, love, grace, and mercy to overflow from our

hearts. Then, and only then, can we preach, write and speak with boldness for the truth. Sadly, it appears that many are eager to be critical. God help us. When we point out error, we should be broken and humble, not excited about it.

Many bloggers disqualify themselves by their attitude, and most have limited facts. They grasp at a picture here or a YouTube video there and begin their tirade. I have a question: When was the last time you led someone to the Lord, visited the sick, worshipped and prayed for hours, and served your family with humility? Those are true marks of a believer. A defender of truth should also be a defender of love and grace. This lack was the pitfall of the Pharisees.

A word to future conference organizers: 1) If you truly want to see revival, don't charge for the event or sell products. 2) Don't have popular speakers and worship leaders simply to draw a crowd. God isn't concerned with numbers; His Spirit falls on a broken and contrite heart. 3) Don't have a tight schedule to follow. Waiting on God is the missing element these days. We don't need to leave for lunch or collect an offering. 4) Speakers, please don't say, "Thus saith the Lord" unless He has truly spoken. 5) We don't need to always fire up the crowd with motivational sermons. For the love of God, preach repentance if you want to see revival. We need people filled with the fire of God because they've been saturated by His presence: "Preaching, in one sense, merely discharges the firearm that God has loaded in the silent place" –Calvin Miller.

A few years ago I prayed, "Lord, bring revival to the churches." I was not ready for the response that followed. I felt impressed with these words: "You don't want revival—it will ruin your schedule, your dignity, your image and your reputation as a person who is 'well balanced.' Men will weep throughout the congregation. Women will wail because of the travail of their own souls. Young adults will cry like children at the magnitude of their sin. With the strength of

My presence, the worship team will cease playing. Time will seem to stand still. You won't be able to preach because of the emotions flooding your own soul. You'll struggle to find words but only find tears. Even the most dignified and reserved among you will be broken and humbled as little children. The proud and self-righteous will not be able to stand in My presence. The doubter and unbeliever will either run for fear or fall on their knees and worship Me—there can be no middle ground. The church will never be the same again.”

Do you truly want revival?

Listen to the podcast to hear about Francis Chan's response to hanging out with false teachers.

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