

David Barton: Will Spirit-Filled Pastors Answer God's Call to Preach Holiness Again?

Years ago, pastors used to preach a lot of sermons on holiness. But times and attitudes have since changed, and we don't often hear people talking about holiness anymore. Unfortunately, that includes charismatic Christians. And yet Christian historian David Barton says we could win this nation back if the church would simply revive its passion for holiness and discipleship once again. If we don't, the results could be disastrous.

In a recent interview with Barton, he said charismatic pastors are ignoring crucial biblical teachings on holiness and discipleship—and it's affecting the entire body of Christ in America. ([Click here](#) or [click on the podcast icon](#) to hear our interview.)

He told me that his son attended a Pentecostal university. During the 2016 election, his son asked his classmates—who adhered to conservative theology—if they preached about marriage, life or abortion. They said, “Absolutely not. That's not to be covered in the church.”

This, Barton, said, is where many Pentecostal and charismatic preachers are today—and even conservative pastors in general. Many know what is true but aren't preaching about it.

“We don't have the fear of God anymore,” Barton says. “There's no sense of having to give an account to God for our behavior or our beliefs and our thoughts—all the things we should teach. So now we've become a user-friendly kind of church.”

Sadly, it's not just Christians in general who are to blame. Much of the problem, Barton explains, lies in pastors' priorities for their churches.

"We asked [theologically conservative pastors], 'How do you know whether your church is successful or not?'" Barton told me. "The top five answers we got from those evangelical pastors ... on how we measure whether our churches are successful are the size, the offerings, the number of people who attend the church, the number of staff meetings, the number of programs you offer and the square footage we have."

None of these answers is based on Scripture, Barton says. And that is a major red flag indicating where the American church is today.

"If your No. 1 issue is offerings, then you are not going to say anything that will jeopardize offerings, which means you're not going to say a whole lot of stuff," Barton says. "And you're not going to do anything to jeopardize attendance. And so that's why they will not talk about these things. Growing up in that background that used to be called Holiness, and we're not finding holiness taught anymore. We're not finding people confronting the lifestyle saying this is morally right or morally wrong."

But what caused the church—and especially pastors—to get to this place of seeker-sensitive preaching? Barton has a compelling answer.

"Here's where I think we've really missed it—and I think Pentecostals and charismatics have especially been part of this—we are crusade- and revival-oriented," he says. "We have guys going to Africa and you have to have crusades—10,000 people or 100,000 people or whatever. ... Right now, it's all about converts and getting people to say the sinner's prayer."

Of course, Jesus had His moments of preaching to thousands of people. But Barton points out that it wasn't the large crowds

who changed the word. It was the handful of disciples that He poured into on a regular basis.

“That’s where we’ve failed as charismatics,” Barton says. “We’re measuring the wrong things, and we’re using the wrong behavior. ... No American church today is being accused of teaching hard stuff and driving people away with disciples staying behind to be taught more. ... In the Pentecostal world, there’s no holiness teaching anymore.”

If the American church refuses to focus once again on discipleship and holiness, Christianity could face a worldwide crisis, Barton says. After all, in the last 300 years, 85% of all evangelistic resources have come out of the U.S. Because of that, 32% of the world today professes to be Christian. (For comparison, 21% are Muslim, 14% are Hindu and 7% are Buddhist.)

That’s a great number, Barton says, but the only way to genuinely increase the percentage of Christians in the world is if each believer decides they’re going to reach just one person this year—minister the gospel to them and then teach them how to follow Jesus. If every Christian did that, then by this time next year, Christians would make up 64% of the global population.

“If we got back to that local focus of ‘I’m going to take care of my town—if Christians did that all across the United States, we would have America back in a heartbeat,” Barton says.

I hope every Christian reading this article takes Barton’s words to heart today. And I hope they take it a step further and share this message with their own pastors and close friends. The charismatic church needs to revive our passion for holiness out of love for Christ. The stakes are too high to stay as we are.

If you enjoyed this article, you’ll love my full interview

with Barton. Just [click here](#) or scroll up to listen to the podcast!