

Is the Church Relevant?

Is the church of today relevant? This is a question that has haunted church leaders for decades. In 1968 *Christianity Today* magazine addressed this question, and here is part of what they said:

“Much is being said to the effect that the Church is no longer being relevant to the world in which we live. A prominent entertainer said that the Church has no meaning to young people because it has no answers, either for their personal problems or for the problems of the world.”

I have never been one to place much value on what entertainers have to say. It seems to me that most of them need to get their own lives fixed before they try to tell the rest of us how to live. However, this is an indictment that at least needs to be explored. Has the church in America become irrelevant? If so, what has caused this and how can it be fixed?

Before I get into that, I must be sure you understand I am not one of those who feel criticism is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Nothing grieves me more than to see churches painted as evil and of no value. Even if a church has ceased to be relevant, it still has value. Some may be unable to see this, but I assure you it is true.

When you pastor for half a century, your view of things is different than that of someone who spent 50 years facing the other direction. You realize church is more than just what happens on Sunday mornings. Real church is what happens the other six days of the week. It involves people with real needs reaching out to one another in tangible ways and holding one another up in prayer. It involves births, deaths, marriages and divorces. It includes both celebrations and times of weeping with those you have come to know and love. And none of

that changes, even if the message of the church is irrelevant to a dying world.

But this does not mean church leaders should be given a free pass when it comes to the issue of the church being relevant. We are living in a time when our world has been thrust into intense chaos. Every day we are confronted with news of disaster and death. This is not just confined to those who live somewhere else, but far too often, this happens right where we live.

I want to also point out that this chaos is not limited to just natural disasters; there is also moral disaster. For some strange reason, men want to masquerade as women, and women want to become men. Relentlessly we are pressured to accept that men wanting to marry men is normal. Women murder their own children, and children murder their parents. Racial hatred has become epidemic, and hatred of police and authority has become the norm. Our world is totally broken.

It is fair to ask, "Where is the voice of the church in all this?" Now more than ever it should be easy for the church to provide relevant answers that bring a guiding light to a very dark world. But this is not the case. The world has no answers, and unfortunately, the church also seems to have no answers. Why?

The answer to that question is found in the *Christianity Today* article I quoted from earlier. The article goes on to say:

"It becomes utterly irrelevant when it preaches a Christ who is not the Christ of the Bible but has been divested of his supernatural and miraculous nature; when its primary concern is with the condition of the prodigal in the far country, trying to make him happy, comfortable, and prosperous rather than to bring him home to his Father ..."

This is so accurate it shocks me. It brushes aside all debate and cuts right to the heart of the issue by boldly declaring

that Jesus has the power to change broken lives and that the church becomes irrelevant when this message is abandoned. It saddens my heart to say that it appears this is happening today. So many churches seem to want to make the sinner happy and comfortable in their sin rather than tell them the truth. The truth is this: Sinners are living in a filthy pig pen, and they need to return to their heavenly Father and allow Him to clean them up.

The Christ of the Bible did not come to coddle sinners; He came to offer them a way to escape the bondage of their sin. He came to offer them a new life as born-again creatures. This is the Christ of the Bible; this is still His message, and it is more relevant today than ever. This is also the message the apostle Paul preached.

Romans 12:2 (AMP) says, "And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you]."

Some will not agree that this message will make the church relevant. For many, the message of love is what they believe has been missing in the church. Yet your love will never change anyone. In fact, God's love alone will never change anyone. God loves the entire world, yet the world remains broken. Why? It is because man has rejected God's love and His invitation to come and experience something life-changing.

What you must understand is that I am simply saying Jesus still has the power to heal broken lives. He has come to set the captives free and to bind up broken hearts. But this can only happen when the broken humble themselves, cry out for His mercy and completely surrender their lives and their futures to Him.

This message will never cease to be relevant. {eoa}

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