

Christianity in the Balance

Last month Ted Haggard, then President of the *National Association of Evangelicals* (which boasts 30 million members) and senior pastor of the 14,000 member *New Life Church* in CO Springs was exposed and he confessed to his congregation that he was “a liar and a hypocrite” for much of his adult life. While teaching against sexual immorality from the Bible, he was indulging in it to a shocking degree. This is not the first scandal emanating from a high profile Christian leader—nor will it be the last. Although this scenario is very sad, there are things we can learn from it. Let me suggest 4: **1)** Just because Haggard was an outspoken advocate of the anti-gay marriage bill to be voted on in CO in the November elections, yet was practicing homosexual behavior at the same time, thus marking him as the ultimate hypocrite, this does not make homosexuality right or morally neutral. What God said about homosexuality has nothing to do with Haggard’s or any human’s action. His Word still stands: homosexuality is still “an abomination” (Leviticus 17:22). **2)** Just because Haggard was considered one of the most influential Christians in America (see TIME magazine) and has been exposed does not mean that Christianity is to be discredited; Christianity is based on the matchless, perfect, sinless life of Jesus Christ who rose from the dead and rules over the world today as Lord. True religion is based on God’s impeccable character, not human behavior. Humans are all sinful, weak and unreliable. James says, “we all stumble in many ways” (3:2). **3)** Haggard’s life illustrates the truth of God’s warning given 3, 000 years ago when the LORD declared, “Do not look at his appearance...God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). For years, some in the Christian world were pointing to Haggard and his church as the exemplary model for all to follow and replicate, Haggard now admits he was living in sin privately the whole time. **4)** Just because Haggard was caught in an unthinkable egregious sin does not automatically mean he is not truly born again. This level of sexual immorality was confronted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5...and Paul’s first conclusion was NOT that the guilty party was unsaved. He assumed the person was a believer who needed to be rebuked, disciplined & restored. Only God knows the heart. When biblical discipline is implemented, the true nature of the heart is often exposed. Haggard has admitted his sin, and has asked his family and church for forgiveness. If you think you are immune to gross sin then heed Paul’s sober warning to all Christians: “if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Election '06 Follow Up

Last month 7 states approved amendments to ban gay marriage: WI, VA, TN, CO, ID, SC, SD...Arizona voted it down. [see Hebrews 13:4]

This month’s dirty word is...SIN. SIN is yucky and ugly. No one wants to talk about it...but the Bible does...and we must. SIN is transgressing God’s Law and His Holy character in thought word or deed. The Bible says all humans are born as sinners (Ps 51:5) and must admit their sin and repent from it in order to be saved (Lk 18:13-14; Acts 2:37-38). On 6-20-05, on *Larry King Live*, Joel Osteen admitted to Larry that he does not preach on sin because he does not want people to feel bad. That’s like the fictitious Michael Scott, of *The Office*, who declared, “If you’re a doctor, you don’t tell your patient when they have cancer...you just say things to make them feel good.” That kind of thinking is reprehensible and immoral. But we are guilty of the same if we fail to tell people the truth, even the truth about the bad news of sin that has infected every human soul. But we also tell them the good news—the Remedy—that is that Jesus died for their sins and rose again so they can be forgiven...that is the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

CLIFF'S NOTES

Random Musings About “What in the World is Going On?” Past and Present

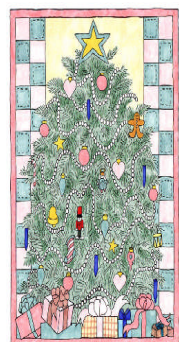
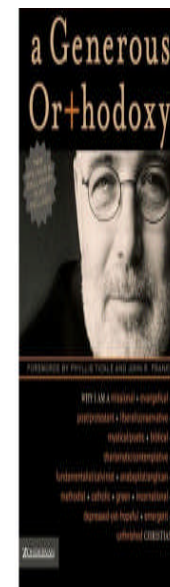
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GBF is 15 weeks old today! Just a tad over 3 months; still just a fragile baby, but becoming more functional, stable...and cute. God continues to graciously meet all of our needs above and beyond all that we can imagine. Some vital signs: we have 21 formal members; we’ve averaged 70 people each Sunday; we have had 1st time visitors every Sunday since we started; we’ve had over 170 people attend our church at least once; we had a full-scale Sunday school program for all ages since day one starting from scratch; the facility continues to be a blessed gift from God; the Fellowship Meal has been a hit; the children and youth have acclimated wonderfully during the transition; God’s hand of blessing and leading is evident. To Him belongs all the glory, honor and praise!

A Dangerous Heterodoxy...

TIME magazine listed Brian McLaren as one of the 25 most influential Evangelicals in America; he’s selling millions of books and he’s looked to by many as the Pontiff of the *Emerging Church [EC]* movement. In the Foreword of his book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, he’s called the next Martin Luther. Luther was just the most influential person to come along in the last 500 years, so Christians better get familiar with McLaren. I read his book, all 348 pages...it’s dangerous! He undermines all that is biblically sacred, but in a subtle, ambiguous way. As a result, believers the world over are being duped by this teaching and don’t realize it. It’s like an invisible virus. He denies inerrancy, the penal substitution of Christ’s atonement, absolute truth; he condones veneration of Mary and idols, he’s pantheistic and evolutionary, he allows for Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims to be saved without being Christians—the list goes on and on. He also writes with a caustic tone, bombastically and snidely impugning any reader who might disagree with his conclusions. He snarls, “If you take what I’m saying and turn it into either of these approaches, you’re smoking some kind of weed yourself, I think” (p. 283). Not the kind of attitude one would expect from a pastor. Be warned—*Emerging* is everywhere—listen to Scripture which exhorts, “examine everything carefully; hold on to that which is good. Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). In this verse Paul was talking primarily about false spiritual teaching.



Web sites of the month: www.letusreason.org
www.aomin.org www.monergism.com www.waltermartin.org
www.drbarrick.org <http://phillipjohnson.blogspot.com/>
www.answersingenesis.org

Rev. Martin Luther, father of the Reformation, may have been the first person ever to put lights on a Christmas tree—he used candles, citing Isaiah 60:13 as his theme verse: “The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the box tree, and the cypress together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I shall make the place of My feet glorious.” If so, this would have been in the 1500’s.