

Preface

As a pastor I have been deeply disturbed by the pragmatic church trends of our present day. It would be easy to study this subject out of a sour and fleshly spirit and do so without God's approval and blessing. This is not my intent. I want to share this study in love but with boldness at the same time (2 Tim. 4:2). We need to hear direct teaching about the errors of pragmatism. I fear that the pragmatic approach in the present hour has taken the church on a trip from which there is no possible return. Therefore, those churches that are still holding the line should not be discouraged and become threatened by churches that are growing because of compromise. We must hold on to the truth that we have (Rev. 3:3) and not waver, knowing that in the end we are accountable to only one person – God!

Pragmatism says, "If it works, use it. The end justifies the means." Therefore, God's people have decided to bait the unsaved with worldly methods in order to get them into the church and then use these methods as a normal part of church life in order to keep people interested in the church. Preachers have concluded that we need preparatory steps to help the lost see the truth and get them saved. Furthermore, we must then change the service to fit the liking of the people and cater to their needs and wishes. This calls for a relaxed and positive atmosphere and sometimes an exciting and electrifying atmosphere. This is the only way we can get people into the church and build a "friendly user church." But we must understand that this pragmatic approach takes away from the power of the message and places it in the methodology of man. It also steers the church off course from the biblical position of separation from the evil practices of unbelievers. God has not called the church to adopt the worldly culture of the lost. God has not called the church to entertain sinners in their sin and condone their lifestyle in our own churches (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Worldly pragmatism is a travesty or mockery of the doctrine of separation! The church is to be a "called out" assembly from the world. Furthermore, this pragmatic approach forgets that the early church was not concerned about how the unregenerate world viewed their church services (Acts 2:42). Lastly, we must remember that we are not told to flood the church with the lost. We are primarily told to go out into the world and reach them (Mark 16:15).

My prayer is that God will use this study to help us understand that pragmatism is wrong and that this philosophy causes great confusion when trying to present the Gospel. It has blurred the distinction between the church and the world and has created many false decisions for Christ, which produce no true repentance in the heart.

"It is the temptation of this pragmatic age to presume that
technique is the secret of evangelism."

A. Skevington Wood

Pragmatism & Presenting the Gospel

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Today a wave of pragmatism is sweeping over the church. The church has come to the unsound conclusion that human technique and manmade methodology is needed in order to get results. And the primary aim of the modern church is that they want to be successful according to man's standards instead of remaining true to biblical principles and upholding God's holiness. In addition, individual feelings and personal subjective experiences have dominated the lives of believers today. Christians choose to live in ignorance so that they can feel good about what they are doing rather than facing the pragmatism of our day and standing against its unsound practices and unbiblical approaches to evangelism.

A lady called me on the phone not long ago and in the course of the conversation she said, "Doesn't anybody care anymore? Doesn't anybody care about what God thinks?" What is going on today? I'll tell you what is going on. Pragmatism has entrenched itself within the church in these last days and we had better wake up and see what has occurred and then take our stand against it.

2 Timothy 3:1-2

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

Pragmatic practices of the last days are unholy and are molding the church to the pattern of the world system. The pragmatic worldly programs that are designed to get people into the church are constantly on the rise. Some methods are unholy because of their connection to the devil's program of our present age while other methods are not evil per say. Nevertheless, all these "user friendly" methods and approaches designed to get masses of people into the church simply are unbiblical and should not be used to replace the real reasons and purposes why people should come to church. These reasons include hearing the preaching of the Word of God, prayer, fellowship with the saints and receiving the Lord's table. Where in the Bible do we see the apostles or elders baiting people to come into the local church ministry by using the world's programs and agenda? Where do we see the local churches using worldly methods and gimmicks to bring the masses into the church? This is a totally foreign practice to New Testament Christianity. Therefore, a red flag should go up when we see all of these adopted methods of the world occurring within the church – wrestling for Jesus, disco for Jesus, karate for Jesus, weight lifting for Jesus, bowling for Jesus, etc.

Why does the modern church offer variety shows, drama and dance clubs? Why have they offered our teens rock music or whatever they want? Why has the church stooped to the low level of going out into the world or secular society of unbelievers to see what they would like in a church? It's because God's people have fallen into the trap of pragmatism, which tries to use whatever means it possibly can to attain its objective or goal.

I know some of you may not like this study. But that does not bother me in the slightest. I'm going to preach them anyway. But I don't want to preach them in the flesh. There is too much preaching like that today. My prayer is that I might write these message under the direction and ministry of the Spirit. But I will not apologize for declaring truth, nor bow down to man and try to please him with some kind of pragmatic approach to preaching, which is designed to draw larger crowds and fabricate results. Paul said in Galatians 1:10, "... for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The pragmatic preachers of our present hour should take note of what Paul said in this verse.

I also want to mention today that just because something is new does not mean that it is necessarily bad. For instance, the local church has instituted a Sunday School program into its ministry, which was not part of the early church record. You cannot find Sunday School in the early church. However, God has chosen to use this over the years in a mighty way for the little children. In fact, Sunday School was originally geared around little children and not adults. Well, I don't want you to think that everything must be condemned when a church uses some evangelistic practice in their witnessing program. For instance, at our own street fair we have used an old motorcycle to attract the attention of people and bring them into our tract stand in order to have the opportunity to hand out tracts and talk to these lost people about the Lord. Others have given out free water and there are many avenues that we can use which are honorable and praiseworthy when it comes to sharing Christ with others. There is nothing wrong with these innovative ways designed to talk to people since they do not compromise any biblical principles that deal with God's holiness or righteous ways. Nor do they minimize or do away with the proclamation of clear truth through the God ordained means of Scriptural evangelism, teaching and preaching in the church setting. There is a vast difference between using something as an evangelistic tool and replacing the clear proclamation and presentation of truth with modern forms of entertaining methods that are supposed to help communicate truth to people in a better way than just preaching or sharing clear truth.

What I want you to understand is that pragmatism has to do with incorporating worldly methods into the church practice and the church meetings of the saints. Pragmatism substitutes other methods to take the place of the preaching of the Word of God or at least to enhance and help the Bible to become more relevant to our modern society.

Pragmatism involves compromising with the world system in order to try and get spiritual results. It involves using the world's fads and techniques as an important way to communicate truth within the local church setting. In some cases pragmatism replaces the preaching of the Word of God with other methods, which are said to enhance and communicate the truth in more innovative ways than the simple old-fashioned preaching of the Word of God. This philosophy undermines the power of the Word of God, the working of the Spirit and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. The philosophy of pragmatism is designed to create super churches that are deemed as successful and thriving in God's eyes. But behind this philosophy is man's own wisdom, as we will see in this study.

When the church moves away from the God ordained pattern of preaching the Word of God and thinks that she can win people to Christ by incorporating worldly methods into the local church ministry, it's then that the church has become brainwashed by our secular society and sidetracked from God's original pattern for church ministry. I think many preachers who are caught in the web of pragmatism today should reflect upon what Paul said. We are not out to please people and win the approval of the masses of lost people in the world by adopting pragmatic practices in order to get them into the church. We are out to please Jesus Christ by honoring His Word and holiness (John 8:29). Pragmatism is primarily concerned with results. It's a philosophy that seeks to please man above Christ in its mad attempt to get results. We should beware of becoming focused on results and becoming affected by the success syndrome of our own day and time.

Many churches achieve results with pragmatic practices but we must stop and ask the question, "Are they God's results or man's results? Sadly, they may only be manmade results. We must remember that results can be the results of man instead of the results of God working in the hearts or people (Isa. 3:8; Isa. 55:8; Prov. 14:12; 16:25; Matt. 13:20 compare Acts 2:37; Nehemiah. 8:9). Pragmatism and pragmatic evangelism are the ways of man but they are not God's ways. Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." For instance, pragmatic evangelism, with its various new methods to evangelism, can lead to skewed results. Take the subject of entertaining pictures (films and movies) and other forms of entertainment, which are intertwined with evangelism, such as the rock sounds of a perverted culture and worldly dance. These things might produce the results that man wants but not necessarily God's results. Religious entertainment can be convincing and convicting in a different way than the Holy Spirit's conviction. It's one thing to be convicted by pictures, puppets and programs but it's an altogether different thing to be convicted by the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We must learn to do God's work in God's way so that we can get God's results and not man's results. Whenever entertainment enters into the picture of church life and evangelism a strange brew or mixture of man's pragmatic philosophies is poured into

the same pot with God's Word. When this happens the message can very easily become blurred, distorted, diluted, misleading and hidden behind pictures and man-produced emotional feelings. The mixture of pragmatic entertainment with God's Word can veil truth or take away from the clarity of truth in some ways. The theatrics and spectacular can override the spiritual and produce manmade results instead of God's results. We must remember that God hates a mixture!

Leviticus 10:10

"And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean."

Many today love the flashy, fleshly and irreverent pragmatic approach to worship, evangelism and living. They claim their spiritual successes and how God is working. But behind all the fanfare and theatrical productions and entertainment there is lurking evil and confusion of the worst sort. Someone once said: "Something may appear to be good, but in reality it can destroy some greater good and open the door for more obvious evils." This is true in connection with pragmatism since this philosophy produces worldly Christians, dishonorable practices in the church and a future generation of pragmatic converts that will not honor God's holiness. There is a price to pay for adopting this philosophy of man's knowledge. The face and future of the church is drastically changing because of the infiltration of man's philosophical perceptions and pursuits in this age of ecclesiastical decadence and deterioration.

Colossians 2:8

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

What does pragmatism mean? Let me give you Webster's definition of pragmatism: "Pragmatism is the character or conduct that emphasizes practical results or concerns rather than theory or principle. It's the philosophical movement or system having various forms, but generally stressing practical consequences as constituting the essential criterion in determining meaning, truth, or value."

Pragmatism was associated with the popular movement of John Dewey, which became very influential during the 20th century. It is the system that says man is all-important. He is good and capable of progress. There are no absolutes. The only things that are of value are the things that satisfy me. Man and his circumstances are the basis of all values and ethics and morals. Truth is relative. Anything is true for you if it works and brings pleasing results into your life. What pleases you is right for you. Gratifying results determine what is true. In simplest form and principle, pragmatism is saying this: If it works, then do it. Pragmatism is the old philosophy that says the results justifies the approach that we use. When it comes to pragmatism, results are

everything. And this certainly is what modern day preachers are geared around today – results. They want results at any cost even at the expense of God’s holiness!

Man in his wisdom is telling us that the end justifies the means but God is telling us that the means justify the end!

Joshua 1:8

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein (the appropriate means): for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (the justified end).”

James 1:22-25

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only (the appropriate means), deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (the justified end).”

Deuteronomy 6:18

“And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord (appropriate means): that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers (justified end).”

1 Samuel 15:22-23

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey (the appropriate means) is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion (inappropriate means) is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry... (unjustified end)”

Malachi 1:7

“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar (inappropriate means); and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible (unjustified end).” Malachi 1:10, “... I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (unjustified end).

This is a similar question that many contemporary pragmatists are asking. They are offering polluted bread or their polluted worship up to God and are so entrenched in their worldly ways of worship that they ask, “Wherein have we polluted thee?” This is the sad story of the present day church and its warped and desensitized thinking. To think that horrible and hellish sounding music can be offered up to God as an

acceptable sacrifice to Him and then have Christians come along and ask, “What’s wrong with this type of music?” is a smack in the face of a holy God.

In Malachi’s day they were offering up to God unholy and unacceptable offerings in their times of worship.

Malachi 1:8 says:

“And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.”

Today the church is trying the same thing with its pragmatic offerings of worship, which are directed toward God. The contemporary music of a perverted rock culture is being offered to God as a form of holy and acceptable worship. But God is saying the same thing He said to His people many years ago. I don’t want your blind and unholy worship. The table of the Lord is polluted and contemptible (vss. 7, 12). It is full of disgrace, disrespect and God despises such offerings. “Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person?” The point is this. God will never be pleased with our life when we do wrong in order to do right. That’s why Bob Jones used to say, “It’s never right to do wrong in order to do right.” Generally speaking, we get unjustified results when we do things wrong even though some good may result when worldly compromise is embraced and practiced with the truth. God may bring about some good things but at the same time the results become skewed in many ways because of compromise and sin. The good does not outweigh the bad and create a justified ending. This is because unholy and unrighteous actions can never be justified by God and magnify His holiness (1 Peter. 1:14-15) and bring glory to His name (1 Cor. 10:31).

It’s true that God permitted Rebekah and Jacob to accomplish a proper end but He never approved of the means or the way they did it (see Gen. 27:1-38). The means or process used to get to the end (lying, deception, hypocrisy) was not justified by God nor will any reward come from adopting these improper means. However, God approved the end result in that Jacob was blessed. This is what God wanted. Nevertheless, this in no way gives a sanction or endorsement to practice questionable activities in order to get God’s work done. The characters in our story could have believed God and been obedient to God and ended up with the same results. God does not need His people to compromise truth and righteousness in order to get His work done! God does not need our help to get His work done!

The point is this. God always chooses to accomplish His work in His own holy way and not through the unholy patterns and practices of man (Psalm 145:17). However, because of man’s fallen nature He sometimes chooses to work in spite of his corrupt practices. This does not mean that God approves of man’s wrong and worldly doings. It simply allows a sovereign God to accomplish His overall purposes in spite of man’s

unholy actions. It's false to conclude that the use of questionable and worldly methods (the means) are justified when good results happen. It is better said that God will sometimes bring about certain blessing in spite of man's wrong use of means. But the use of wrong means will never result in eternal reward for our lives (1 Cor. 3:12-16) and will not bring God's true and complete blessing upon our lives (James 1:22-25). Isaac's disobedience will not result in reward. The lying, hypocrisy and trickery of Rebekah and Jacob will bring them no eternal reward. God's true blessing always comes when we obey His Word and reward will be given in accordance with our obedience. In short, it never pays to do wrong (Gal. 6:8-9). Do right!

We must remember today as Christians that if we are walking by faith and trusting God for the end, we must also trust Him for the means to the end. In other words, if we are trusting God for the results, as the Lord of the harvest (Luke 10:2), then we should also trust Him to work when we use the correct means and methods to bring about those results. We must walk by faith and believe that when we do things right that God will give the right end. It's God's way, God's end, God's reward and God's highest blessing!

My friend, the church is diseased today with pragmatic thinking. Pragmatism is a disease or a cancer that has spread with epidemic proportions within church life. And what is being called liberty today is pragmatism. What is being termed as "new approaches to worship" is pragmatism. What is being called "new methods of evangelism" is nothing more than pragmatism. The church is really saying: "We want results and we want them now!"

Pragmatism is the old unseparated adage, which says that the end justifies the means. If we do some evil and good comes out of it, then it's okay to do the evil, and God will not look down upon us for doing it. If there is a good ending then the means employed to bring about this ending must be sanctioned by God. But is this philosophy really true? We will discover that it is absolutely false and detrimental to the cause of Christ and His holy character. May God help the church these days to be delivered from such thinking, that is to say, if the church wants to be delivered!

Jeremiah 5:31 says:

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Pragmatism is the sister to another philosophy called existentialism. In existentialism experience is all-important instead of creeds, doctrines or biblical facts. All existence is in an experience and experience is what is important in life. Experience gives meaning to life and becomes truth to you and for you. In short, existentialism says, "If it feels good, then do it." Both these philosophies ignore biblical standards and principles. And the philosophy of pragmatism is taking the church down to a very low level in its

present existence. These super churches that are being erected today are nothing more than monuments of pragmatism where leadership is geared around filling churches by adopting the methods of the world system. I tell you my friend, unless something is done there will be no end to what the church will try next!

Romans 3:8 speaks of this pragmatic approach: "...Let us do evil, that good may come?" Paul anticipated that Jewish readers would disagree with his statements that God has not guaranteed to fulfill His promises to every physical descendant of Abraham (Rom. 2:28-29). But it certainly is true that not every Jew is going to inherit the blessings. This is because they will not come to repentance and faith in Christ. The setting of this text in Romans chapter three is between Paul and some imaginary Jewish objector who reasons that God will still bless Israel even though Israel has rejected God. Therefore, it's as if God is giving us the okay to do evil for we know that in the end good will come about. This is because God will still bless Israel in the future. The pragmatic Jewish objector would reason this way:

Romans 3:3

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith (faithfulness) of God without effect?"

The pragmatic objector is saying: "Since God is going to be faithful to Israel through His covenant promises then why make such a big thing about Israel's present unfaithfulness to God? It will all work out in the end." The concept of God's faithfulness in spite of Israel's unbelief is developed more fully in Romans 9-11. The point of the argument is this. So what if Israel is primarily in unbelief. It is going to work out for Israel in the end. God is not going to give up on His people. And Paul certainly could respond to the truth that God has not given up on Israel. Of course, Paul agrees that national Israel is not forsaken by God in verse four. He basically says that God is always true and man is a liar. And what has said will come to pass.

Deuteronomy 7:9 reads:

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."

The objector goes on to say:

Romans 3:5

"But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)."

The Jewish objector would say: "If Israel's unrighteousness causes the righteousness of God to shine more gloriously by remaining faithful to His promises, then is not God

unrighteous when He visits us with His wrath or vengeance?” Paul, in quoting these words, is using a typical pragmatic human argument that many use today. The argument is basically this. If by our own unrighteous actions, we can allow God to promote how righteous He is through keeping His covenant promises, then why should we be judged of God? In other words, since sin seemingly benefits God by bringing out His own righteous being and faithfulness, then how could He be righteous in turning around and judging sinners for their sin? It would seem that God is “unrighteous” when taking vengeance. I don’t know why people can’t understand that God is not unrighteous in anything that He does! And when God decides to judge people He will be righteous in doing it.

Well, Paul responds to this pragmatic idea by saying, “God forbid” (vs 6). If there were any possibility of God being unrighteous, then how could He be fit to judge the world? You know, lost mankind will try anything to slip out of God’s judgment. But you won’t escape the judgment of God. You can come up with all of your arguments and tricks but God will have the last say!

Romans 3:7

“For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?”

Now the objector gives another argument. It goes like this: “If someone’s lack of truth (“lie”) enhances God’s truthfulness in some way by the way that His truth is uplifted when placed beside the lie, then how can God in fairness condemn or judge him as a sinner? In other words, since sin seemingly benefits God’s glory by demonstrating His absolute righteousness and truthfulness, then how could He turn around and judge sinners for their sin?”

Man is a schemer! He will try to wiggle out of anything! And He wants to try and get away from God’s judgment. Do you know what man wants? He wants to live as he pleases and still escape the judgment of God! That is the philosophy of Americans today. They want to eat, drink and be merry and then go to heaven when they die. But God says it doesn’t work that way! You will get the judgment that is coming to you. Leave your philosophy books at home! God cannot be fooled by such humanistic reasoning as this! You can’t pull one over on God! What is Paul’s reaction to such silly empty-headed reasoning such as this?

Romans 3:8

“And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.”

Apparently some opponents of Paul were falsely accusing him of advancing these types of pragmatic theories, which basically said, “Let us do evil (evil things) that good

(good things) may result.” All Paul could say to those people, who were claiming that he was a pragmatist teaching these types of theories, (“the end justifies the means” or that “good can come out of evil”) was that these kind of people will be damned to hell for all eternity by the just God – “whose damnation is just.” Hell will be full of college professors who have tried to reason away the judgment of God! They will take all of their theories right into the fire of hell!

Well, in this section of Scripture we see pragmatism in full bloom. Pragmatism says that we should be able to do what we want and in the end everything should work out for the good. Even if something is evil by design we can make it out to be good in the end. If something gets good results, then use it, and do it, and expect God to bless you in the end. This is pragmatism. And I must say today that this is the very philosophy that so many are using today in the church. The church today is pragmatic in its use of music and many other methods, which are geared around getting bigger results. Music today has caused what people call “worship wars” and “generation gaps.” This is because the church has come to the place where they can now say in good conscience, or should I say, with a seared conscience, “God can use anything.” I am so tired and disturbed about this pragmatic philosophy that I could eat bullets! Whoever thought that the church would come to such pragmatic conclusions where they would say, “God can use anything.”

The church today is saying that God can use the system’s rock beat, the music of confusion and rebellion, which Satan uses for his kingdom and evil purposes, and get good results with it. God can use something that was created for the evil purposes to promote sex, drugs and control the minds of people. God can use the evil of the world system and bring about good. God can turn anything around so that in the end it will get good results and work for His good. Evil things can now be used for good things. Romans 3:8 says it even better:

“Let us do evil, that good may come?” This is preposterous! It is an absolute absurdity. It smacks a holy God in His face. This pragmatic philosophy flies in the face of God’s absolute holiness and His righteous ways.

Psalm 145:17

“The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”

Deuteronomy 32:4

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

God is not a pragmatist! Pragmatism is a worldly philosophy of man that is full of deceit and trickery. Colossians 2:8 reminds us:

“Beware lest any man spoil you (“lead you astray”) through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

The Bible warns about worldly philosophies, which are designed to bring deception or “vain deceit” into the lives of people. I am aware of the noble desire of many New Evangelicals who want to see people saved. The message that they want to indoctrinate people with is the Gospel. Certainly the Gospel is not full of “vain deceit” like the philosophy of evolution. I understand that they are not trying to deceive people to accept some kind of false message. After all, they want the Gospel to get to lost people. But the pragmatic philosophy and methodology that New Evangelicalism uses is full of deception. Christians can deceive people by getting them to think that Christianity can accommodate their sin and worldly living. They get people to believe that they can be comfortable in their sin when coming to church. This is why they are asking unsaved people what they want in a church. Christians want to accommodate people and send the deceptive message that a person can hang on to the world with one hand and receive Christ with the other hand. This is deception and something that God does not approve of in His Word. God demands repentance or a change of mind and attitude about sin when coming to Christ in faith. We will talk about this later in our study.

God hates all philosophies that promote deception. Therefore, we must beware of using the worldly pragmatic philosophy that says we can use any methodology we want in order to draw people into the church so long as we get the proper results. These approaches are deceiving to people and this is something that God despises. There is a better way to win the lost that does not involve deceptive methods of the world system. It involves sharing Christ through witnessing and prayer. And this takes place primarily outside the church and leaves the results in the hands of the “Lord of the harvest.”

Philosophies like pragmatism are said to be the “tradition of men,” “after the rudiments (arrangement or design) of the world” and “not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). In other words, we should not be swayed by manmade philosophical teachings or even those philosophical ideas and tactics, which are designed to deceive people into thinking that they can love their sinful lifestyle and come to Christ for salvation at the same time. I want to say that when the church uses worldly methods to try and reach people and fill up their pews they are incorporating their own philosophical wisdom into God’s work.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:4:

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

When Paul presented the Gospel message he did not present it with any fanfare or fancy worldly package. He did not use boxes, packages and ribbons. He did not try to

use any philosophical inventions of man (“man’s wisdom”) while sharing the Gospel. You see, man’s wisdom can only reach the mind but God’s wisdom about the cross reaches the heart. Worldly pragmatic approaches to Gospel evangelism are nothing more than the wisdom of man (“man’s wisdom”) which is trying to use tricks in order to win people to Christ. The word “enticing” means “persuasive.” Paul is saying that he did not try to persuade men by his own manmade display of wisdom where he would use big sounds, big words, and big programs to get people saved. Instead, Paul used simple preaching and teaching to get the job done.

Preaching still works! But it was preaching done in the Spirit’s power (“in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”). We don’t need the big bands and break dancing. What we need is the power of God’s Holy Spirit unleashed upon our lives. The emphasis today should not be upon pragmatism but upon the person and power of the Holy Spirit. One of the great failures of the church is that we often try to accomplish with human systems what only God can do. I’m afraid that much of the Spirit’s real power is lost behind all of the pragmatic mist of man’s worldly ideas and schemes to get people saved and into the church!

Pragmatic philosophies are not God’s true wisdom. We must learn to do God’s work in God’s way so that we can God’s results and not man’s results. Pragmatism emphasizes man’s own self-determination to do something without considering separated Bible principles. These philosophies look at self and not at the holiness of God. We must simply remember that God’s ways are not the same as the way we think or evaluate matters (Isaiah 55:8). What we think is wise can be a total flop in God’s sight.

Pragmatic and existentialistic philosophies follow after the pattern of the world since they seek to use worldly methods (good and evil) to bring about spiritual results. And this is the horrendous error of the modern day church. The church is using worldly methods to bring about spiritual results. This mixes the world with the spiritual and we are forbidden to do this according to the Scripture. God hates a mixture.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 gives this timeless teaching of separation:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

I have never heard a pragmatic New Evangelical Christian preach from this text of Scripture. Do you know why? It’s because they have repudiated the doctrine of separation. Can you imagine the apostle Paul walking down the street in his own day

and asking unsaved people what they would like to have in a church so that he can accommodate their worldly lifestyle? Can you imagine Paul the apostle catering to the appetites of the lost? Can you imagine Paul bringing unbelievers into the church and yoking together with them by entertaining them in their own sin and fellowshiping with them while condoning their worldly actions?

God tells us that any mixture between righteousness and unrighteousness or between light and darkness is incompatible. The two cannot be mixed with God's approval. The problem in the church today is that people don't care whether or not God approves of something. As long as they approve of it, that's all that matters. Who cares what God thinks. They are going to do it anyway and misinterpret some Bible verse so that they can find an excuse to do what they want to do. But you can be sure that when you bring the unsaved into the church in order to try and accommodate their worldly lifestyle that you are not only creating an unholy spiritual alliance with the unsaved but also mixing the clean with the unclean or light with darkness. You adopt their ways instead of God's ways. You attempt to mix their darkness with God's light and their unrighteousness with God's righteous ways. And this is exactly what has happened in the church today. Of course, inviting the lost to church does not create an unequal yoke but accommodating their worldly lifestyle and catering to their ways makes a church guilty of this unequal spiritual yoke, which occurs when we unite with the unsaved and allow their lifestyle to affect our Christian living and worship.

One preacher of a large church said this:

"We have put a lot of time and thought into what non-churched people want from a Sunday morning service, and we have concluded that they basically want four things: Anonymity, uncomplicated teaching, a non-threatening environment, and contemporary relevancy."

This is the pragmatic concept of our day. Thousands and thousands of churches have adopted this method. That is why the church today has "aped" or copied just about every fad that secular society has to offer. The church offers talk shows, musical videos, heavy-metal rock, rap, break dancing, bodybuilding, bowling allies, brick smashing, interpretive dance, and stand-up comedian acts. Many people today really believe that unless we accommodate the Gospel and our church services with secular fads and the fashions of our own day and time that the Gospel and the church can't be effective. All of these things are used to supplement the God ordained preaching of the Bible and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We must blow the whistle on this philosophy since it is tearing down the walls of separation between the world and the church and turning churches into theatrical productions where drama takes the place of the preaching of God's Word. This pragmatic philosophy has created merchandising schemes that are overriding and missing the true purpose of the local church meetings.

Acts 2:42 says:

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

My friend, this is why the early church came together. Pragmatism had nothing to do with the early church meetings. Do you know why? It's because the church meetings were not designed to accommodate the unsaved. The early church understood that the assembly was designed primarily for the saved. Their program revolved around teaching the truth, fellowship, communion and the prayers of God's saints. This was their complete program. This was the valid business of the local church meetings. There were no drama or theatrical productions taking the place of the Word of God so that people will become more interested in the church. There were no worldly gimmicks or merchandizing schemes to get people in the front door and keep them in the church. The early church was not concerned about the world's opinion of their church services like so many churches are today. They did not seek to entertain or amuse their pagan neighbors in the services.

One lady asked me what my church had to offer her? I said we don't have anything to offer her but what the church is supposed to offer – the Gospel, the Word, the Lord's table, fellowship and the breaking of bread. I then asked her what she has to offer to Jesus? Another lady asked me if we had contemporary music in the church. She said that she could never worship God where this music was not played. My friend, the church is in a terrible pragmatic dilemma today and it's getting farther and farther away from the purpose of the local assemblies. Let me give you the Pragmatic Bible Version of Acts 2:42: “And they continued stedfastly in Christian Rock Music and eating donuts, and in drama presentations, and in their own way of doing things.”

This is pragmatism. Pragmatism is allowing the Word of God to take a back seat and replacing the important things of church ministry with worldly things or those things that have no value in the setting of church life, when compared to the preaching of God's eternal Word. Pragmatism is using worldly methods to get people in the church and keep them in the church instead of using God's original pattern for evangelism, church meetings and worship. My friend, we cannot improve on the original pattern!

A. W. Tozer said:

“The temptation to introduce new things into the work of God has always been too strong for some people to resist. Misguided people have tried to glamorize church life who think that they know more about running God's work than Christ and His apostles did.”

The pragmatist starts with the wrong question. They ask, “What do the unchurched want” instead of asking the question, “What does Scripture teach about church ministry” or “What does God expect?” The pragmatic approach to church ministry

ignores the biblical priorities for church meetings. It overrides God's ordained purpose for church life and purity.

We need a generation of preachers today who are willing to confront the trends of our own time which are leading the church into practices that are far from biblical standards and guidelines. The fog of pragmatic practices has blind-sighted mainstream evangelicalism to the point that many believers have become numb and completely insensitive to the unholy approaches to evangelism and unsound patterns of church worship.

What's wrong with pragmatism?

There are seven errors of pragmatism which are being promoted today:

1. There is the pragmatic error that says Bible preaching is not enough.

Today pragmatists are saying that we need supplements for Bible preaching and teaching. They have come to the conclusion that the Bible is not enough. Somehow we need various church supplements so that the Bible can effectively work. This mentality has taken the thrust away from the power of God's Word and the power of the Gospel to do the work in the hearts of people.

In Romans 1:16, Paul said:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

My friend, the power is in the Gospel message. It is not in the methods of man! I'm so thankful for this. I don't have to get a power team into the church. I already have the power! It's in the Gospel message. I don't have to worry about methods because I have the power behind the message. I'm amazed at what people think they need to do to help the Gospel reach the lost. Somehow they need a plan or some new evangelistic strategy to reach the lost. Their pragmatic plan is that the unsaved cannot be persuaded with revealed truth. It takes something more than truth to persuade people to turn to Christ. But the Bible says that the power is in the message and not in the method!

Someone had said:

"The Bible is like a lion. You don't need to defend it. Just open the door and let it out. It will take care of itself."

If a lion were let loose in this church today, you would get results. The presence of a lion causes people to react. The same is true about the Word of God. My friend, let me say today that the lion is out of the cage. All we have to do is bring the lion before the

people and the Word of God will do its job in their hearts. We don't need anything else but the lion. The Word of God brings conviction and people to their knees.

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

It is the Word of God that penetrates the heart of man. It is not the pragmatic inventions of man or the other fantastic shows that man puts on today in these charismatic meetings, where people are falling over like drunken fools in the gutter and laughing like the hyenas of South Africa. Today pragmatists are saying that the Word of God and Gospel message does not have enough power to do the work of saving the lost. What we need is more miracles and more demonstrations of God's power. What we need is organ music playing in the background when a preacher is preaching today so that when he gets excited the organ can get excited and do its thing and run up the scale. We need to have sound effects and sound tracts to accompany the preaching of God's Word so that something can be added to the truth and give it a boost. Many churches are starting to sound like hockey games where people are coaxed into getting excited over what's happening on the ice. But instead of watching hockey players they are watching some preacher or theatrical performance in front of them as people skate back and forth on the stage.

I want you to understand today that the power is in the message of the Gospel. And if a man does not believe the bare Word of God then nothing else is going to get him to believe in the truth. Jesus gave this same testimony to the rich man who had died and gone to hell. Jesus said that people who do not believe in the simple truth will not believe when miracles are being done or when organ music is playing or when worldly music is being promoted to appeal to their physical and fleshly senses.

Luke 16:27-31

“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

The rich man was no longer rich. This is because he had died and gone to hell. In any event, the rich man wanted to send a message from hell to those who were left behind. By the way, if we would have mail service from hell back into this world, we would be shocked at what people burning in hell would request in relationship to those who are still living! You might be surprised how a person, who cursed Christ all his life and

made jokes about hell, would want to warn those left behind of such an awful place and fate. Jesus, through Abraham, assured the lost man in hell that even if Lazarus arose from the dead and sent word back to his brothers about the terrible suffering in hell, that they still would not believe. This is because Jesus assumed that if people do not hear “Moses and the prophets” or the Word of God, which was given to them, then they will not be persuaded to change their mind or heart (“repent”). Think of it. Even if someone miraculously rose from the dead and brought them a personal message from the grave people still would not repent. Jesus is saying that only the truth of God’s eternal Word is able to win people to repentance and salvation from hell. If this does not work then nothing else will work.

Pragmatism says, “If it works then use it.” The problem is this. It doesn’t work! This is because only the eternal truth can win people to Christ. Everything else is simply extra baggage and unnecessary. To say that certain gimmicks and methods can contribute to bringing people to Christ is simply a false notion. Nothing contributes to the salvation of the lost sinner except the Word of God and the ministry of the Spirit. Therefore, to say that we need to supplement other things to entice people into believing is a mockery of the truth and the only way to be saved (Rom. 10:17).

What a message this is for the pragmatist of today! We must remember what Jesus said. In essence, if the clear preaching of truth cannot do the job then nothing else will do the job. Everything else is simply a false smoke screen and does nothing in connection with bringing people to Christ. We must win people only with the truth of God’s Word and not attempt to win them in their own neighborhood of sin by adopting their own worldly music and trying to create an electric atmosphere that is supposedly more conducive to get people saved.

Sharing God’s Word in the presentation of the Gospel is the only method that Jesus condoned and the only method that Paul used when preaching to the lost. If it worked for them, it can work for us today. Paul did not have organs playing in the background and a dance band designed to attract people. Paul was not a pragmatist! Paul did not believe that the end would justify the means. He believed that the means must justify the end! Paul believed in the correct way about doing things knowing that the right way will always get results – God results. And the means that Paul used in presenting the Gospel was the power of the message and the clear and unadulterated proclamation of the truth of God’s Word. There were no flying trapeze artists and people riding elephants and other circus adventures.

A. W. Tozer also said:

“Indeed, history will show that no spiritual advance, no revival, no upsurge or spiritual life had ever been associated with acting in any form.”

This is true. History does not lie. God's work in the past has always been done through the clear preaching and teaching of God's Word. This is because the Spirit has promised to work through the preaching and proclamation of God's Word and not through drama and nightclub singing.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

I want to say something today that will get everybody mad at me. But I really mean what I'm about to say. What we need today is less production and more preaching! The church was better off before drama invaded its hallowed halls and before large manmade productions became accepted in the local church ministry. When these kinds of things are brought into the church they tend to take the place of the Bible and override the importance of expository Bible teaching and preaching as the effective tool to spread truth.

Ephesians 4:11-12

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

You will notice that when God gave gifted people to the church that there were no Hollywood actors, comedians or professional Christian Punk Rock singers in the list of gifted people given to the church in order to teach truth and reveal truth to God's people. This is because God expected truth to be revealed through His own ordained people and the preaching of His Word which was the responsibility of both pastor-teachers and evangelists.

Acts 5:42 says this about the apostles:

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

Acts 8:5 says this about the evangelist Philip:

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."

You will notice that Philip preached the message of Jesus Christ to the people without film projectors, skits, and PG movies showing people burning in hell. He did not take any of these things to Samaria.

1 Timothy 3:2 gives this requirement to the elders:

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.”

A bishop is not to be apt to create drama shows or have good puppet shows in church. I will never forget when I was refused a pastorate at one church in Illinois because another man, who candidated for the position, had puppet skills that I did not have. I was told that the congregation liked his puppets. Now, I really don't have anything against puppets. Don't go out of here and say that the preacher is a puppet hater. But when puppets take the place of the Word of God then we have pragmatism! It's then that we have worldly methods overriding the Word of God. My friend, you don't know how it feels when a puppet beats you out! The point is this. There were no programs or baited traps designed to get people to listen to the message of Christ and the preaching and teaching of God's Word. It was the preaching of Christ and His Word that God ordained and which brought results in the way that God intended. And whenever you start playing with God's method for sharing truth you get in the way of God and His program.

Pragmatism attacks the power and sufficiency of God's word in evangelism. It sends the message that we need something more than preaching so that people will come to Christ. But this flies in the face of the power of the Gospel message. The Gospel does not need to be disguised or toned down in order to make it acceptable to society. The simple Gospel message is the dynamite of God which will explode and do its work in the hearts and lives of people. That's why we must know what the Gospel is and communicate this message clearly (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Paul did not use all kinds of evangelistic gimmicks, psychological devices or pragmatic methods in his evangelistic outreach, which were designed to take the place of the Word of God or supplement the Word of God in some way.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Paul could have created a drama atmosphere where he had some of his follower's act out a scene where Jesus fed the five thousand. He could have tried to recreate Biblical events when preaching the Gospel so that a larger crowd would come to hear him. But instead he simply preached the truth of the Gospel realizing that everything else was insignificant and secondary to truth. Paul was not a pragmatist. He determined to do only one thing when he came to present the Gospel to a lost and dying world. He presented Christ. He did not use any gimmicks or tricks with his presentation. There were no additives and supplements of drama, dancing and puppets to take the place of

his preaching and steer people away from the clear preaching and teaching of God's Word.

Does this mean that the use of puppets or chalk artistry is wrong when used in a Bible School program? No, it only means that we should not incorporate these things into normal church life in order to draw people into the church ministry and use these types of things as bait to get people interested in God's work. Whenever we use anything to replace God's Word and spark secular interest in the church we become a pragmatist wanting to use approaches that minimize the importance of God's Word. We must remember that these things were not part of the normal church life.

The evangelistic thrust was preaching for this is where the power resided. When a person moves away from power then they are moving away from what is needed to bring the lost to Christ. Paul used the simple, straightforward and direct message of Jesus Christ, letting the Word of God pierce the people's hearts rather than trying to convince them by his own clever showmanship and actions. Many today simply want to supplement preaching with other things in order to charm the senses and emotions of people. But what are we saying when we do these things? It seems that if we say that we need a supplement for God's method of preaching then we are really saying that God's appointed method of preaching is inadequate and that some other method can do something which preaching the Word cannot do.

1 Corinthians 15:11

"Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

It's as simple as this Paul says. We preach and you believe! How much easier can it be! Here is a method that few people want to stick by today. But the simplicity of preaching still works. This is because the power is in the preached message of God's Word. This takes away the confusion of the present day pragmatic movement, which is saying, "We sing Christian Rock Music so we can attract you and then you will be ready believe. We act out a thirty-minute drama presentation and then after it's all done you will be ready to believe. We will show you a thirty-minute movie on people burning in hell and then you will believe. We will take you through a haunted house and scare you to death so that you might believe on Christ." Something is wrong today. What's wrong is that we have diminished the power of God's Word by promoting haunted houses, Christian Rock Concerts, weight lifting power teams and all kinds of pragmatic pathetic stunts. Many have concluded that people need to be baited and also need preparatory steps to help them see truth. They need to see truth through the pragmatic invention of man, which are designed to gain their interest in the Gospel or at least give the Gospel a hearing. Therefore, we must change the service to fit the people's likes and cater to their needs and wants.

There is no end to what is going on today. Some churches are becoming like Las Vegas nightclubs. They are promoting disco and almost every imaginable thing to market people into the church. I read of where one church allowed a gospel singer to dance in a provocative way within the church so that she could use sexuality in a “godly sense” in order to reach the culture. Another preacher began to smoke a cigarette on stage to try and get people to see the dangers of smoking.

But Christians say today, “People will not come into the church if we don’t lure them into the church.” That’s right, they will not come into the church. And do you know why? It’s because they don’t want to be in church! They don’t want to repent of their sins and be right before God. We have forgotten that God has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel and not bring the world into the church (Mark 16:15). Furthermore, God has told us to use His Word and depend upon the Spirit to do the transforming work in the hearts of people. Dear friends, God’s people have always rallied around the Word of God as the only means of powerful conviction and communication to the lost and to the saints who need to be directed in right living. We might recall the days of Nehemiah when the people responded to the Word of God.

Nehemiah 8:8-9

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.”

God’s people in the Old Testament and the church of today need the Word of God to do its convicting and sanctifying work upon their hearts. There is power in the Word of God! The power does not reside in the rock sound of a perverted culture or some drama presentation. It does not reside in some kind of pragmatic preaching that entertains sinners with comedian like jokes and charismatic stories. People return from meetings and say, “My these were wonderful meetings.” What they really mean is that the preacher’s jokes and tear jerking illustrations were fantastic and the theater-like atmosphere dazzled their senses!

When will we learn that the power is in the preaching and proclamation of the Word of God! It is not in the stories and entertainment that we promote. God has ordained preaching to bring the results that He wants and not what man wants! And preaching the Word of God brings results because God has promised to bless faithful preaching.

2 Timothy 4:2 says:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Paul did not tell Timothy to head up a drama club for Sunday morning church service. He told Timothy to preach the Word! Preach the Word – don't be a pragmatist! It's the Word of God that brings conviction, warning and instruction to our hearts and lives. The Word of God brings the necessary changes into our lives.

2 Timothy 3:16

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

The clear unadulterated and uncamouflaged presentation of truth from the Bible is what God has ordained to get results – God results! That's why we need to get the Word of God out today and not be so worried about the gadgets and gismos that so many are using today to try and filter people into the church. The problem is that the church today does not want reproof or correction. Many do not want to be instructed in doctrine and righteous living. But this is what the church needs today as they hear the clear proclamation of truth.

When Peter preached at Pentecost the people were cut to their heart or overwhelmed with conviction. The Word of God did a great work in their hearts and lives. He did not tone down the Word of God or disguise it with some kind of theatrical program. He presented the plain Gospel and it is that Gospel that brought forth conviction in the hearts of lost humanity.

Acts 2:37 says:

“Now when they heard (not saw something) this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

The Word of God “pricked” their hearts, which means that it pierced through their hearts and did its convicting work upon their lives. There were no bands playing in the background or upbeat music. The Word of God did the work without any compromising methods of the world system. Peter realized where the power resided. It was not in the method but it was in the message. Imagine if Peter would have come before these people and said, “Let's have the lights out please and get our movie rolling for the church service.” There would be no power in this simply because God has ordained the preaching of His Word to generate the power needed to convict and bring people to Christ. Drama and other manmade devices should never take the place of the eternal Word of God. James reminds us that it was through the Word of God that we were born again (James 1:18). It was not by human methodology or man's appeals to the emotions. It's the power of the Word of God that breaks through the human heart and shows us our sin so that we can be born again. This is why we need to be concerned about only one thing. We need to get the Word of God out to the masses without the pragmatic allurements which are designed to mystify the unsaved instead of convict the unsaved in their sin and show them their lost estate before God.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 says:

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

The emphasis is on preaching or proclaiming truth by verbal communication and witnessing and not worldly methods designed to defy the senses and produce amazement in people’s lives. Mass productions can move the emotions but not necessarily the heart to repentance. Many times they leave the element of repentance untouched, as we will explain later. For now, let us see that the primary plan for sharing Christ and the Gospel message was day to day witness. I think we must remember that this is how evangelism is to take place. It was not done by mass productions but by the simple witness of God’s people to the world that surrounded them. They did not need a merry-go-round atmosphere to try and charge people up into accepting something. The Word of God did the job. We must beware of using worldly methodology as the means to the end when we must use the Word of God as the means to the end. It’s the preaching and proclamation of the Word of God that brings results in God’s way.

Other methods can breed confusion and complicate the simplicity of the Gospel and get in the way of the truth. The Gospel is not meant to be entertaining! And many times when a church is conscious of keeping up with the world system, which appeals to the flesh and frivolous appetites of the masses, the result is that the Gospel message loses its impact and is somehow hidden behind the glamour of Hollywood. For instance, the rock sounds of a perverted culture do not lead men to truth. Pragmatic methods breed confusion to the listeners. I don’t care what anybody says. Sin does not draw people to Christ. It drives them away from Christ.

Hebrews 2:14-15 says:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

To try and use the same sound of rebellion that has kept the lives of people in bondage to Satan, as a method to bring them to Jesus Christ and His delivering power, is a double standard that defies all acts of sanity. And to call for repentance from sin while entertaining sinners in their sin is the biggest hoax this side of hell! Jesus came to save people from their sins and not keep them in their sins (Matthew 1:21). We have a right to denounce such worldly practices in the church. The reason pragmatism is integrated in the church today is because preachers have no backbone to stand up for what is right. So here is one step against this methodology of using worldly methods to win

people to Christ. People should never be told that they must be delivered from their sins while using the same sound that has kept them in bondage to their sins. Also, we must remember that productions in general can lead people to center their minds on the actors, the costumes and their performance instead of the real message trying to be communicated. They can direct people away from the real truth to the spectacular and the thrill of lights, sounds and curtains without pressing the need for true repentance and faith. Productions water down truth and do not tell the story in a simplified way. They have a tendency to lose people in the flare of emotionalism instead of leading them to true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. C. Macaulay realized the error of pragmatism way back in 1956. He spoke before his time as he saw the inroads of pragmatism coming into the church through various entertaining means. Here is what he said. His words are recorded back in 1956 but are clearly applicable to our present time. "There is also a modern tendency to make evangelism very much a matter of entertainment. The sinner is lured to the evangelistic meeting for the "swell time" that is promised, and the devices of worldly amusement are unblushingly introduced. The appeal for decisions heavily stresses the thrills of the Christian life. Very modern young people are put forward to testify that they are so happy, that being a Christian is one big thrill. Thus, in an atmosphere of entertainment, and with a one-sided picture of the Christian life presented, there is a great response. The sin question has been skillfully veiled, so naturally the young convert is not too much concerned with the ethical involvements of being a Christian."

The simple truth is this. God has not called us to evangelize through entertainment! I believe that entertainment has damned more souls to hell than false religion and apostasy. This may be an overstatement but we must understand the seriousness of the problem today. Pragmatic practices within the church, which are designed to replace the Word of God and its historic central place in the life of the church, violate the law of hearing the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Jesus echoed the same truth in John 5:24 when saying:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

The emphasis on these verses is that faith is to be generated through the clear proclamation of truth without manmade sideshows. This is because there were no rock concerts and church drama clubs designed to supplement truth in the early church. Believing God's Word results in eternal life. Of course, people will say today that we can hear the Word of God presented in some measure through a drama presentation

or through good and godly singing (Col. 3:16). Yes, I suppose that is true. Singing is given as a means of communicating truth to a believer's heart in some measure as Scripture is brought to life in song. But it is not said that singing generates faith in an unbeliever's heart. There may be a place and time for a good musical concert or some recreation of the Christmas story when it does not take the place of preaching and when it is not used to induce people into salvation or to come into the church. However, Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of saving faith being generated through the proclamation of the Word of God without the sideshows of films, songs and drama presentations!

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God clearly expounded from the Bible. That is what these texts imply. In other words, faith comes by clear presentation of preached truth and not by dramatized truth. Faith is not generated in the human heart by hearing a song or seeing some theatrical presentation. Let's get it straight today. Faith does not come by hearing a song, watching a film or by watching a puppet perform in front of you. These are replacements for God's way of evangelism, and when it comes to seeing people saved, they are cheap substitutes that cannot get the job done. And if you have a problem with God's plan for evangelism then wrestle with God and not me.

My friend, if we are going to evangelize we must do it God's way and not man's way or by manmade methods. This is because man's ways always produce skewed results in some form or another where God's way can only produce results that are right and pure.

Proverbs 16:2-3 echoes the truth:

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

You may think that what you are doing is right and good. But God may have a different story than you do about what you are doing. We must search our own heart and see if we have considered God's holiness and righteous plan before engaging in any activity. The Lord really knows what our intentions are in any actions that we do. Many times we deceive ourselves into thinking that something is God's will so that we can have our own way and clear ourselves before God at the same time ("All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes"). It's like one fellow told me, "You can't condemn me for being in a Christian Punk Rock band because I prayed to God about it and He gave me peace about doing it." Well, the Bible says that we can pray selfishly and many times we do so in order to get what we want. But in doing this we ask improperly or in an evil manner.

James 4:3

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss (improperly), that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Don't fool yourself Christian Punk Rock artist. You still love the old life in Egypt and that is why you pray that you can stay in that kind of lifestyle. You want to "consume it upon your lusts" as James says instead of praying to live a holy life and departing from any form of worldliness. Deep down you pray the way you want to so that you can hang on to your sin with one hand. But God knows that we are deceiving ourselves since He looks at the spirits of people or their inward hearts ("but the LORD weigheth the spirits" – Prov. 16:2). This is a good message for the pragmatic preachers and performers of today who try and condone their worldly practices in the church. Their ways are clean in their own eyes but God may have a different story about what they are doing.

Proverbs 21:2 says the same thing:

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts."

2. There is the pragmatic error that removes the reproach of the cross.

The revival of pragmatism in the church today has caused all kinds of entertainment for unbelievers. The aim or purpose of pragmatism is to try and create a good experience for the lost. Pragmatism attempts to make Christ more palatable to the unsaved. As we will see, this is another reason why we should reject pragmatism. We are never told to make sinners comfortable in their sin! We are never told to make sinners happy in their sin! New methods for evangelism and innovative programs from dancing, karate classes to comedian shows are used to try and grab the attention of lost people. As the church tries to reach the unchurched they are using all kinds of amusements to try and get them in the church doors and win them to Christ.

There is something that we must understand today. The cross of Christ will offend the lost masses. And to try and make the cross and Christianity more appealing to people by pragmatic methods is a subtle attempt to try and cover up the cross that exposes the sinfulness of man's sin.

Galatians 5:11 says:

"And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased."

Apparently Paul was charged with preaching circumcision. Before his conversion Paul zealously proclaimed the need for circumcision and following the Law for salvation. Because of this, some were saying that Paul was in favor of circumcision. But Paul brought up this simple question: Why were Judaizers still persecuting him if he preached the same message they did? If Paul were preaching circumcision as necessary for salvation, then the offense or "stumblingblock" of the cross would have ceased to exist in his ministry. But it had not because people still found the Gospel

message, which proclaims man's total depravity in sin and his inability to contribute anything to his salvation, offensive.

The word for "offence" (skandalon) means a trap or snare. The cross of Christ is not something that the lost world wants to face. Do you know why? It's because it traps man in his sin and marks him out as a lost hell-doomed sinner who cannot save himself. The cross shows that man is a dreadful sinner who is lost and going to hell. The cross tells the story that man cannot save himself but only Jesus Christ, who died in his place, can bring salvation into his life. The cross is an "offence" to man because it offends him or causes him to stumble by telling him that there is nothing he can do to earn salvation. It gives no place to the flesh and his human efforts. The cross spells an end to human works. If Paul were to introduce works by preaching circumcision, then he would be setting aside the whole meaning of the cross.

My friend, the cross takes man to the brink of hell and says, "You must needs come home by the way of the cross. There's no other way but this!" And man does not like the cross because he loves his sin too much or he is too intellectually advanced to understand his need for the cross. He thinks that he is good enough to save his own soul. He thinks that the fate of his soul is in his own hands.

1 Corinthians 1:23 says:

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

The word stumblingblock is the same Greek word translated "offence" in Galatians 5:11. My friend, the cross is a snare to lost humanity because it traps people in their sin and does not allow them to escape from their lost condition. The cross is offensive and repudiated by the lost world. Also, the world looks upon the cross as something that is foolish ("foolishness") because it does not make sense in their own human wisdom. The word "foolishness" is the Greek word (moria) which means silly or absurd. It's from this word that we get our English word "moron."

1 Corinthians 1:18

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

1 Corinthians 1:21 also says:

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

This tells us that the lost world does not view the cross as something that is lovely or beautiful but as an absolute absurdity. The foolishness of the thing being preached refers to the message or word about the cross. Of course, we know that it is not

foolishness, but it seems foolish to the unenlightened mind of man. Man views the cross as something that is silly or absurd. He sees no reason why he needs a cross to save him. To think that a man could die on a cross in order to provide salvation from hell for sophisticated worldly people like us is beyond reason. Yes, it is beyond human reasoning but not God's reasoning. God's wisdom makes mankind a spiritual dunce! You see, the wisest man in the world, who is unaided by the Spirit of God, becomes like a spiritual dunce when trying to understand the cross of Christ and why Christ died. The world does not view the cross as something that is wise but foolish. It sees the cross as something that is absolutely ridiculous and which has no bearing on present day living.

These are Biblical facts that cannot be denied. So what does the pragmatist and pragmatic movement try to do? The pragmatic movement of today tries to entertain lost people in their sins and create electric atmospheres that will cause excitement instead of proclaiming the offence of the cross. And in doing these pragmatic maneuvers they are really trying to remove the offence of the cross and disguise the foolishness of the cross to the lost world. Instead of relying on foolish preaching about the cross to do the work in the hearts of people churches today are trying to supplement this preaching by using other non-confrontational, non-threatening amusements so the offence of the cross does not come across to the listeners. But my friend, this is a travesty upon the cross of Christ! People cannot get saved by entertainment! They get saved by hearing the offending and offensive message of the cross of Christ. And to try and tone down or cover up this message in any way becomes a trick upon the lost which can very easily lead people to embrace Christianity without realizing the offence of the cross.

People can be overcome by the thrill and excitement of the atmosphere instead of coming face to face with the offense of the cross which spells out their dreadful sin and which brings the wrath of God upon their lives. And this becomes nothing more than a modernized trick to try and get people into the church today by toning down the message of the cross. We must understand today that the message or word about the cross should never be disguised and covered up behind manmade gimmicks and entertaining Hollywood-like atmospheres. In doing this, churches try to undercut the cross as it is to be viewed and they attempt to make the cross more palatable to the lost. But this is nothing more than a carnal diversion or way to try and escape the real message and thrust of the cross. To try and repackage the Gospel by taking away the offence of the cross is an incredible hoax to the real message of the cross. Preaching seems to be foolish even to some Christians today because they want to use other methods to try and soft step the Gospel.

Erwin Lutzer, a New Evangelical writer, even sees the trend when he writes: "There is another danger. To make the message interesting, relevant, and palatable to the world, the message of the gospel is often diluted when it is prepared for popular consumption ... the gospel is not exactly entertaining – neither is it a message that

people care to hear. Certainly we should be tactful, but sometimes we are so conscious of our need to keep up with the techniques of the world system (which can appeal to the carnal and frivolous appetites of the masses) that the gospel message loses its impact. All that people remember is that our presentations were not as exciting as the late show.”

When you preach the cross you should not use entertainment to try and cover up its real message, which reveals mankind as a sinner who is going to hell, and who has no way to save his own soul but by embracing the cross. Some people are so concerned about being offensive today that the clear biblical message and meaning of the cross is lost behind the entertainment. You will note that it was foolish preaching and not entertaining preaching or entertaining films or plays that would bring people to salvation. It was the preaching of the cross that is emphasized and not the filming of the cross, which results in entertainment.

A pastor friend of mine in Michigan said that he went to a teen night that was held in some Baptist church. When he went to the teen fellowship he said that they were playing secular acid rock music to try and get the teens into the church so that they could win them to Christ. Now this is what I am talking about today. It is trying to get people into the church by entertaining them in their own sins and lifestyles. It is trying to make sinners comfortable and get them to “feel good” so that they will come into the church. This is the real foolishness that is going on today. It’s the foolishness of trying to make sinners comfortable when we must simply preach the cross, so that people will feel miserable in their sins and so lost that they feel the heat of hell pressing upon their face.

The aim or purpose of pragmatism is to try and create a good experience for the lost and make Christ more palatable to them and make them feel good. But I must say again. We are not told to make sinners feel good in their sin! The Holy Spirit wants us to use the Word of the cross to convict lost people in their sin and about their lost estate before God (John 16:8-11). And it’s not the job of the church to try and interfere with the Spirit’s ministry of conviction by supplementing and soft-stepping the message of the cross through entertaining events. In doing this the offence and reproach of the cross are taken away.

We must also remember that it does not matter what the opinion of the world has toward Christianity and its message. We are never told to use the world to try and pacify or appease what the world thinks about Christianity or how the world views Christianity. Pragmatists want lost people to view Christianity as something that is similar to their own lifestyle and something which can be embraced without much change. This is what makes this philosophy so wicked. They give the picture that Christianity is much like their own lifestyle and that they can hang on to their own worldly loves and still embrace Christianity. But this goes against what repentance

means and the need for the lost person to see himself as a dreadful sinner against God.

Paul said in Galatians 6:14:

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Paul looked at the world as if it were on a cross and the world looked at Paul as though he were on a cross. Both were seemingly crucified and because of this there was a death or separation that occurred between the two opposing forces. This is what Paul is saying. A death and division occurred between the world system and between Paul when he became a Christian. All the fleshly practices and legalistic efforts of the world were set against him when he became a Christian. The things of this world became Paul's enemy when he became saved. A division, death, separation or crucifixion occurred between him and the old way of living. This is because the world hates the light (John 3:19).

You can be sure that when Paul got saved he lost the friends that were of the world. He did not have to get rid of them they got rid of him! This is because true Christianity will in some sense drive the world away from us. When a man is saved, the world says goodbye to him, and he says goodbye to the world. A separation or crucifixion occurs. And lost mankind says that the believer has gone off the deep end, as far as the world is concerned, because he is no longer interested in the world's fleeting pleasures.

1 Peter 4:4 says:

“Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”

You may think that some believers, who are practicing balanced Bible separation, are too fussy and have gone off the deep end. Well, let me remind you that a death or separation has occurred between the two opposing forces of the world system and the Christian. This means that our attitude toward the world should be one of separation since a death has occurred between the two. The cross is a great barrier or dividing line between the world and the child of God. It divides the real from the unreal or true believers from unbelievers. The saving power of the cross sets up a certain amount of antagonism and a boundary line between the saved and the unsaved that you cannot tear down. But pragmatism is trying to tear it down! Pragmatists are trying to remove this barrier or line that the cross creates by going down to the level of lost mankind and attempting to use the world system in order to try and remove the crucifixion or barrier that has taken place. They are trying to minimize the difference between the unsaved and the saved by bringing back darkness into the church, so that the unsaved will not feel the barrier or crucifixion that has occurred.

The world is crucified unto me Paul said and I unto the world. Mark it down as being true. Paul did not use any pragmatic approaches to try and get the world to like him and what he did! This is because he knew that a crucifixion or death had occurred between the two that could never be reconciled! He knew that the world did not like him or his message. And this is the way it will be as you take your stand for the Lord and what is right. If a person is offended by God's truth that is his own problem. It is not your problem. You don't have to supplement various programs and methods to try and lessen the offense of the cross and his attitude toward you and Christianity in general.

John 15:18-19

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. ¹If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Paul realized that it would be an impossibility to try and unite on common ground when sharing the Gospel message because the world had it against him. The world hated him. A division had occurred that would forever sever the world from liking him again, since the believer loves the light and the world loves the darkness! And the sooner we realize this the better off we will be. It would stop all of these pragmatic practices from taking place today. A Christian is never told to win the approval of the world by adopting the worldly lifestyles of the unredeemed. We must accept the fact. A crucifixion has occurred between the two parties. Pragmatism is trying to hide the crucifixion that has occurred between the saved and the unsaved. It is trying to unite the world with Christianity and in doing this they remove the offence of the cross and the crucifixion that has occurred between the believer and the world system.

Something else can be said in connection with the division between the saved and the unsaved. The Bible also teaches that the saved believer who practices evangelism will become the stench of spiritual death to the lost individual.

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 reads:

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

The Gospel produces paradoxical results. As we share the Gospel there can be only two results – death or life. We can be viewed as a stench of death to those who reject the message or an aroma of sweetness to those who receive the message. As a bearer of the message of the Gospel Paul could refer to himself as the "savour" or aroma of Christ. But the sweet aroma would only be smelled by those people who became saved through responding to the Gospel invitation. If a person did not become a Christian then Paul would be like the stench of death itself in their nostrils. Lost people would realize that the Gospel message of Paul was a message of their doom

and damnation if they reject the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. To those who accept the Gospel message, it becomes a pledge of a glorious future; but to those who reject its message, it becomes an omen of spiritual doom. And because of this, Paul himself and His message would not be liked by the vast majority of his worldly audience, because in their rejection of Paul and his message of the Gospel, they would smell the stench of spiritual death. People would view Paul and all Gospel witnessing believers (“we”) as a walking sign of death to them. In a spiritual sense, they would smell the stench of death upon us as we talk to them about the Gospel. They know that to face us and the message that we bear is to come face to face with the reality of their damnation. And when the lost reject our message we become a horrible stench in their nostrils as we represent the message bearer of doom.

This should tell us that the Gospel witnessing believer is not expected to win the world by becoming good smelling to them. If we try to spice up the Gospel message with worldly tricks and schemes we will become less than what God says we are to be toward the lost. We cannot get passed the truth that our personal lives of witness spell death for the lost world. They are not to spell good times and party like atmospheres in order to try and cover up the real stench of our lives to the lost. My friend, we must face the facts. The world of lost mankind does not like us! And we are not told to try and get the world to like us! The Bible says that when we witness for the Lord that we will not be liked because we become the sentence of doom in the lives of those who reject the message! And quiet frankly, people don’t like to think that they are going to hell. But that is exactly where they are going if they reject Christ as their Savior. There is no sweet aroma in that message! And to try and cover up this message of doom and damnation with pragmatic approaches to sharing the Gospel is like trying to put after-shave on a corpse that is ten days old! Let us beware of removing not only the reproach of the cross but also the savor of death from our lives. We do this by trying to perfume the approach of Gospel witness by the incorporation of worldly methods in the church that appeal to the fleshly appetites of the lost world.

3. There is the pragmatic approach of not demanding repentance.

One of the most frightening aspects of the pragmatic approach to Gospel witnessing is the untold story of man’s need for repentance. Many are called to accept Jesus or “try Jesus” without ever having any true repentance occur in their heart. They are not told to really face their sin and come to a place of brokenness over their sin. They never have a change of mind or attitude about their sinfulness before a holy God and how their sin is a stench in His nostrils.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

This text reminds us that a person’s heart must be stirred and grieved about their sinful condition before God in order for repentance or this inward reversal or change of mind to occur over a person’s sinful condition and plight before God. This conviction over sin and sorrow produced by God (“godly sorrow”) can lead to a person’s repentance or change of mind about their dreadful sin before God and their need for Christ. A person experiencing “godly sorrow” will realize that they are a sinful soul before God, be heavily convicted about their sin, know that they are worthy of His judgment, and ultimately turn to God in repentance with the view of hating sin and forsaking sin that is against God. This in return will lead to their “salvation” (deliverance) from their sinful past (2 Cor. 7:10).

What Paul is suggesting in Corinthians is that there is a sorrow that works directly alongside of repentance and will result in genuine repentance, which is a change of mind and attitude about a person’s life of sin and separation from God. One leads into the other. There is a change of heart that results in a change of mind about your sinful condition before God. Grief or sorrow leads to repentance and you cannot have real repentance without the heart first being stirred and moved about your sin. In fact, the actual order of the Greek in verse 10 reads, “grief repentance to salvation works.” This actually suggests that grief works in connection with repentance (change of mind) and is needful in spawning real repentance. It is separate and yet a needful starting point for biblical repentance to occur.

Sorrow for sin will produce the volitional aspect of repentance, which is the actual inward change of attitude about your sin before God. A person will come to grips with his sin and be full of heaviness or grief when realizing he is a sinner who has broken God’s holy Law and who stands condemned before a righteous God. To regret or have grief after a “godly manner” (9), “godly sorrow” (10) and “godly sort” (11) means that a person will experience grief over the actual sins, which they have committed in life, when understanding that they have sinned against a holy God (Psalm 51:4; Joshua 7:20; Luke 15:18, 21). This grief or sorrow results from the inner conviction of God and is thus called godly sorrow. The person convicted and grieved about their sin realizes that God is speaking to him, and so he changes or reverses his mind about his sin (repents) and in doing so he takes sides with God against himself and against his sin. There must be a change of mind and inward turning to God away from sin. When this occurs the sinner receives “deliverance” from his sins and experiences a new change of life.

Ray Comfort has said:

“The convicted sinner mourns because of his transgressions; he sees himself as a prisoner of sin; his heart is broken and heavy laden before God – not with the problems of daily living but with the guilt of sin.”

On the other hand, the “sorrow of the world” (2 Cor. 7:10) is not godly remorse that leads to genuine repentance or that aspect of repentance which causes a person to change his mind about sin and turn to God. Worldly sorrow or grief means that a person will be sorry for the consequences that his sins have brought upon his life. He will have regret for what he must reap because of his sins but he does not regret that he has sinned against a holy God. This may be true in respect to even facing hell’s judgment. People might be sorry over the consequence of hell, which sin has brought upon them, but never really have a sorrow over their own sin, which is seen to be despicable in the eyes of God. The person with the sorrow of the world is not sorry for his actual sins, which he has committed against God, but for the adverse results that are brought into his life because of those sins.

I am weary of those pragmatic approaches, which only play upon the emotions of people without ever getting to the sinful heart. Let us beware of these Gospel scams! Modern day pragmatic approaches aim at playing on the emotions of people. But many times they only produce the “sorrow of the world” or some emotional flare that does not lead to real genuine repentance over sin. Today pragmatism tries to scare people by showing pictures of hell on a big screen or they might dramatize hell on the stage so that the audience can see people burning in hell. But many times something is missing in all of these approaches – the need for godly sorrow over sin, which in return produces genuine repentance – an inward turning or change of the heart, which results in a person turning to God and despising their awful sin.

Many people want a free ticket to Heaven in order to escape hell without ever facing their sins, which separate them from God. In fact, they never do inwardly repent or change their mind about their sin, grieving over the fact that their sins have broken God’s Law and separate them from God. Many people stop short of biblical remorse (“godly sorrow”) and repentance simply because they still love their sin and want to hang onto their sins. Men still love darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

The Bible does not teach that repentance unto salvation is reformation or the outward change of living before God. This is the fruit of repentance. The sinner must realize that his acts of reformation are works that do not produce salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). The root of repentance occurs inside the human heart, when the sinner is deeply burdened over his sin and desires freedom and release from his sins, realizing that they are committed against a holy God. Biblical repentance is an inward turning of the heart to God away from the sins that separate a person from God. Godly sorrow of remorse and brokenness over sin accompanies this repentance.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 says:

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols (inward root of repentance which occurs in the heart) to serve the living and true God (outward fruit of repentance which occurs in the life).”

Genuine repentance involves a new attitude about sin. It's not the attitude of a person who desires to keep on sinning because he loves his sin. Sin becomes horrible to the one who is repenting and will bring a person to the place where he will want to turn to God and forsake those sins, which are horrible in God's eyes. We must simply understand that if a person does not change his attitude or mind about his sin and voluntarily desire cleansing, pardon and freedom from sin, then true repentance has not occurred in his heart and this person does not want the salvation that Jesus offers. When a person is not broken over their sin, when they are not willing to inwardly surrender and be freed from their own sin, it's because they have not yet had a change of attitude or mind about their sin. When a person genuinely repents, he will voluntarily change his mind or have a different conviction or attitude about his sinful life and turn to God for salvation. He will have a whole new outlook and way of thinking about his sin. He will experience a voluntary reversal and an inward surrender toward God.

We have movie productions today and books that are supposedly designed to bring many people to Christ. I heard one TV preacher say that a certain new Christian movie on the horrible events of the tribulation period will bring many people to Christ and salvation. I want to say that no movie will bring people to Jesus Christ. Movies designed to scare people do not touch the heart of the sinner who needs to see their sin before God and repent. In fact, movies are the pragmatic productions of men designed to touch the emotions. But God wants us to understand that no movie or 666 campaign or anything else can bring conviction of sin into a lost sinner's heart. What the sinner needs to know is that he has broken God's holy Law (1 John 3:4; James 3:10) and that his sin has separated him from God! Scaring people will not present this picture and leaves the soil of a man's heart untouched about his horrible sin before a holy God!

My friend, a person must realize that his sin has offended a holy God and that his sin is what separates him from God. And he must hate his sin and be willing to inwardly turn to God and want pardon and deliverance from his sinful past. Many times the emotions are stirred and people are frightened and entertained about hell or some other truth about the coming mark of the beast. But this type of emotional stir (worldly grief) does not produce repentance. Please understand that emotional sorrow, which is not centered or based upon a man's own sinfulness before God, is nothing more than a side show that does not bring about true repentance over sin.

There is a marked difference between attrition and contrition. Attrition does not lead to biblical repentance. Attrition is when a person only fears about God's judgment and intellectually believes in a God that will save him from that judgment. They may shed tears of fear about judgment but not tears of sorrow over their sin and horrible state before a holy God. Attrition does not produce real repentance. The greatest tragedy in many pragmatic approaches is that repentance over sin is not made clear. The

listener's emotions can be stirred over some side issue without ever being stirred over the issue that really matters – his terrible sin before God and his need to hate sin and inwardly repent or turn to God away from that sin. In short, sinners are told to accept Jesus into their heart (whatever that means) and try Jesus but all of this manmade terminology falls dreadfully short of having a heart change over sin. Lost people fail to hate their sin and turn to God away from their sin in the realm of their own hearts. I tell you my friend, we are producing a lot of phony decisions through these pragmatic approaches to Gospel witnessing. We want to entertain sinners in their sin instead of telling them that they must hate their sin and repent of their sin before a holy God. We must preach the need for repentance today so that people will be stirred in their hearts and turn to God away from their sinful life.

Luke 24:47

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Contrition, on the other hand, does produce true biblical repentance. This is a deep sense of sorrow and remorse, which comes from a person's awareness of their own sinful condition before God. This is the kind of heart that leads to true Biblical repentance. Contrition is the seed from which repentance grows. David is the perfect example of someone who had a genuine sorrow for the sin that he committed in God's sight. His sorrow was coupled with genuine repentance. God must break our heart if we are going to get right before Him.

In Psalm 51:17 David says:

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

James spoke of the godly sorrow that leads to repentance when he said in James 4:9:

“Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.”

Judas, on the other hand, is a prime example of a remorseful person that did not have genuine godly sorrow. He produced the sorrow of the world. Judas was not sorry about the results, which his sin brought upon the Lord Jesus. He was remorseful because of the terrible harvest, which he himself reaped from it. He was also sorry that he was caught in the act of sin. His sorrow did not grow into repentance.

Matthew 27:3 records the attitude of Judas:

“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.”

You will notice several things about this repentance of Judas. First, it was only after Judas saw that he was in the frying pan that he repented. Second, the Bible says that he “repented himself” and not to God for salvation. Third, the word for repentance in this verse is “metamellomai,” which means to regret or have grief. Judas did not express genuine repentance or change his mind about his actions and life. Rather, he regretted that he was in such a terrible predicament and that he had to face the consequences of his own sin. Fourth, Judas went out and committed suicide and died. Second Corinthians 7:10 says “the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Such was the case in the life of Judas.

Remember Esau? The Bible says that Esau was emotionally stirred because he had lost the birthright blessing. What does the Bible say about him?

Hebrews 12:17

“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

Esau was not weeping about his sin of giving up the birthright for the gratification of one meal. He wasn’t weeping about his sin at all. He was weeping because he was a loser! He tried to get his father to change his mind (repent) about the whole account, but it was too late. All the tears of Esau were deceptive and manipulative. They were designed to express grief for the loss of something and the desire to get it back. There was no grief over his actual sin.

They have a name for these kinds of tears. They are called crocodile tears. They are not tears that are created because of a person’s deep awareness of their own sin before God. Rather, they are tears that flow down the cheeks because of remorse over one’s predicament in life and their own hardships, which sin has caused. The child, fearing the paddle, cries, “I’m sorry, please don’t spank me!” Of course the child is sorry many times because he is going to get an old fashioned whipping. That is why he is crying crocodile tears. There is a vast difference between conviction over sin and the fear of consequences because of your sin.

My friend, I’m not merely doing this study on pragmatism to expose something that is wrong. I’m doing it because I love the lost souls of people! These poor lost souls are dying in their sin and going to hell. And when people are not being taught to hate their sin and repent before a holy God who hates sin, then they are not getting saved. They are no more saved than Adolph Hitler. And you may want to escape Hitler’s hell by saying some prayer for salvation without ever repenting of your own sins before God and turning away from those sins in the realm of your own heart by possessing a different mind and attitude toward those sins. Without true repentance you cannot be saved.

I think all of this should send a word of warning to us about great emotional appeals today, where people are stirred up and when they shed tears over saddening stories and plays or dramas. We must beware of the psychological devices such as tear-jerking stories, comedian like performances and other worldly methods used to supposedly attract people to Christ. Many people have emotional responses to flashy displays and programs, but never really repent of their sin. They never see their sin as an awful stench before God and as that which separates them from a holy God. They never hate their sin and turn to God by changing their mind or attitude about their terrible sin before the presence of a God who hates sin. Many people today are the products of pragmatism. They are actually proselytes of pragmatism instead of converts of Christianity.

People today can respond to false issues and emotional side issues that bypass the true Gospel message and the acceptance of Christ as Savior. They might walk down an isle in response to some emotional plea or program not knowing about their own lost estate before God and their need to repent of their sins and place faith in Christ. I know people who have walked down isles who are no more saved then the man on the moon! One man told me that he walked down an isle and in his own words he said, "I did that!" I asked him, "Did What?" And he proceeded to say that he walked down the isle and asked Jesus into his heart but had no idea what that meant.

The sad thing about all of this is fearfully true. In walking down an isle people can simply be responded to some particular program that was given to them to follow. People can look at their salvation as doing something instead of repenting over sin and believing on Someone! People look at themselves as doing some outside action (walking down an isle) and rely upon following a prescribed program or pattern or some kind of outward action for their salvation, instead of repenting of their sin and relying on Christ alone to save them. People talk about walking down isles. But the fact is this. Their actions of walking down some isle can almost become some kind of meritorious act to them, which actually bypasses repentance and faith in Christ altogether. Their action overcomes their need for Christ.

Dr. Chafer said this about pragmatic converts:

"If questioned carefully, the basis of assurance with all such converts will be found to be no more than a consciousness that they have acted out the program prescribed for them."

When Jesus was explaining the parable of the sower He warned about the danger of false profession without any true repentance. The seed in this parable refers to the truth being sown and the soil represents the types of hearts that it falls upon.

Matthew 13:5-7

“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.”

Jesus goes on to interpret what He meant by this portion of the parable.

Matthew 13:18-22

“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon (at once) with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

You will note that Jesus is referring to the type of heart that the Gospel seed falls upon where there is no true root or repentance that has occurred over sin. When there is no root it means that there is no deep conviction over sin, change of mind about sin and no genuine personal response to the offer of salvation. The response of this person is like many pragmatic responses going on today. There is no root in them. There is no genuine repentance occurring in the hearts of many so-called decisions for Christ. People do not experience deep contrition over their sin and come to the place where they despise or hate their sin in God’s sight and turn to God wanting deliverance from sin. Many people do not want to turn to God for salvation by inwardly repudiating their sin before God.

By way of application we might conclude that the pragmatic sower or preacher of today might be overjoyed thinking that his preaching was very successful. But the pragmatist must learn the deeper lesson that it is not good when the message is received with some kind of emotional response (“with joy receiveth it”). The emotion is not enough. The heart might be stirred to sorrow of a different kind instead of the sorrow that leads to repentance. There must be conviction of sin, contrition, and repentance. The message must find root in the heart. It is far more promising to see a person weeping his way to Calvary in repentance over his dreadful sin before God then to see him walking down the aisle of a church light-heartedly in response to some emotional appeal that leaves out sin.

William MacDonald said:

“The shallow earth yields a shallow profession; there is no depth to the root. But when his profession is tested by the scorching sun of tribulation or persecution, he decides it isn’t worth it and abandons any profession of subjection to Christ.”

How true it is today! And I believe that today we have many decisions for Christ that simply have no root. The response of repentance before God is totally missing. In the midst of the thrill and the excitement, which is connected with entertainment, there may be the call for a decision to trust Christ. But real repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is lost in the midst of the lights, sounds and smoke of manmade pragmatic allurements.

Jesus went on to say in verse twenty-two:

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”

The Gospel seed also falls upon the heart of people who want to hang on to the world and their sin with one hand and try to accept Christ with the other hand. Of course, this is not a response of true repentance. A person who does not want to see his sin as a horrible and terrifying thing in God’s holy presence will decide to hold on to his sin. For this reason, when the world with its allurements and riches press upon his heart, he will demonstrate his unrepentant heart by becoming unfruitful or unproductive in his life. He will go back into the mud hole where he came from!

My dear friend, let me ask you a very pointed question. Are you a product of pragmatism? Have you supposedly done something or accepted some message or tried something or prayed some prayer about Jesus without every seeing your own dreadful sin before God, and where you actually turned to God for salvation because of your sin, which separated you from God? Many people, who were deeply stirred by some program, filled with alarm and moved to tears by some picture, are now in hell! Likewise, many people who have prayed certain prayers and responded to emotional appeals are now in hell! The reason is because they never possessed a godly sorrow or conviction over their own sin, which brought true repentance into their heart.

Many people who claim to be saved have never really hated their sin and saw their sin as something that has separated them from a holy God. They never have inwardly turned to God for salvation by turning away from their wicked sin in the realm of their own heart. They merely had an emotional stir over something they saw on a big screen, they prayed a prayer that did not reach their own sinful heart and produce real repentance in their heart. They may have been asked to do something without having any inward repentance over their sin. Oh the tragedy of pragmatism! To entertain sinners in their sin speaks volumes against repentance. Pragmatism acts as a barrier or some kind of manmade effort or front, which is designed to soften the picture about man and his need for repentance.

We must show people their sin by exposing their sinfulness beside the Law of God, which has condemned them to an everlasting hell.

1 Timothy 1:9

“Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.”

The evangelist Ray Comfort also said:

“Some believer’s may say, ‘I don’t need all this Law business to get decisions. My message is, Turn or Burn!’ Well, preach hell without the Law and you will get decisions, but those who come will come in fear, rather than repentance.”

How true this is! The Law is designed to bring the conviction of sin upon the hearts of lost people. And this is what is needed today – real conviction over sin. When sin is left unaddressed and when repentance or a change of mind about sin has not occurred in the heart, then salvation has not yet come to a person’s life. I think that some small children might fall into this category. Many times young children claim to have accepted Jesus into their heart (whatever that means) but have not come to the realization of their own dreadful sinfulness before God and their own need for Jesus Christ. In time, they may be pricked in their hearts and realize their sin before God and repent of that sin by inwardly turning to God for deliverance and away from their horrible sins. Until this is done people have not been saved in the biblical sense.

Didn’t Jesus say in Mark 2:17:

“They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Man must realize that he is incurably sick before God from a spiritual standpoint because he has broken God’s moral Law and is separated from God. Without this inward acknowledgment and change of attitude or heart about his sin he cannot be saved. There needs to be a different attitude and mindset about sin that take place in a person’s heart. Man needs a repentant heart, where he hates his sin and inwardly decides to turn to God for salvation, possessing an inner desire to turn away from those sins, which separate him from God (1 Thess. 1:9). This is the only true repentance that leads to conversion and salvation.

4. There is the pragmatic error that tends to focus on man’s needs.

Sadly, it has become stylish to present the Gospel as something other than a remedy for sin. Salvation is offered as God’s plan for a wonderful life, a means of fulfillment, and the answer to all of life’s problems. Much of modern-day evangelism has become nothing more than trying to adapt the Biblical message to fit with man’s perceived human needs. For many the Gospel has become nothing more than a formula by which people can have a happy and more meaningful life. All these things are true, but they are the byproducts of redemption, not the main issue. When we use them as bait

to try and get the unsaved to accept Christ they can very easily miss the real need of the Gospel, which is to extend a remedy for their sin problem before a holy God. The Gospel is repackaged as a guarantee of fulfilling a man's wishes rather than calling him to repentance because of his sin that has separated him from God.

The Gospel is viewed as a ticket by which people can avoid life's pains and how they can experience life's pleasures. The Gospel is being presented as something man receives so he can get what he wants instead of man learning about his sin problem before God and his need to repent of that sin. The prosperity gospel or wealth and health gospel has been running rampant in our land and promises financial wealth and health to people. This in return becomes a stimulus for the lost to embrace a gospel that promises wealth and health for their lives. It is a false gospel that lacks the element of man's sin before God and his need to have his sins forgiven through a substitutionary sacrifice. By adopting the Gospel to this present age, men have crippled the Gospel.

People are offering Christ today as a religious tranquilizer that will meet their problems. They are trying to use Jesus as some kind of escape from their predicaments of life. They are using the Gospel as a lottery ticket that promises them a life of wealth and health. And they present these things before people as the true Gospel that they need to embrace. And sadly, they get them to make a decision for Christ on this need-fulfillment, health and wealth basis. The offer of the Gospel has become what we might call a manward focus and not a Godward focus. This occurs when people present the Gospel and talk about man's psychological needs and how Christ will help man's human needs and recover him from his human problems, hurts, poverty and ill feelings. This is a pragmatic trick going on today in the name of evangelism. The sad result of this approach is that many people make a decision for Christ so that they can get their needs fulfilled but not their sin forgiven before God.

Robert Schuller sketched what has been called the pragmatist's manifesto when he said: "For the church to address the unchurched with a theocentric (God-centered) attitude is to invite failure in mission. The nonchurched who have no vital belief in a relationship with God will spurn, reject, or simply ignore the theologian, church spokesman, preacher, or missionary who approaches with the Bible in hand, theology on the brain and the lips, and expects nonreligious persons to suspend their doubts and swallow the theocentric assertions as fact. The unconverted will, I submit, take notice when I demonstrate genuine concern about their needs and honestly care about their human hurts ... For decades now we have watched the church in Western Europe and in America decline in power, membership, and influence. I believe that this decline is the result of our placing theocentric communications above the meeting of the deeper emotional and spiritual needs of humanity."

My friend, this is the pragmatic “needs gospel” that is being promoted today. The problem with this approach to evangelism is that it leaves sinners in their sin and unsaved before God. If you leave out the “theocentric” as Schuller suggests, then you will have nothing left but a manmade gospel that is tailored for man’s perceived special needs in the 21st century.

John 6:26

“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

Many people want to make a decision for Christ in order to get their bellies full! But this is not true or genuine saving faith in the Christ who saves sinners from their sin and damnation. This is a need’s gospel that clouds the real Gospel message of how Christ has come to save lost sinners. When it comes to the Gospel message there is one need that man has; it is his need for deliverance from sin and salvation from hell.

Jude 1:23 states the evangelistic thrust when saying:

“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

And yet, many tracts and much preaching of today revolves around how God will meet the needs of people if they come to Christ. The hook is baited by telling man that God can and will meet all of their physical needs and keep their cookie jar full if they come to Christ. All of this “needs epidemic” is simply a pragmatic diversion from the real Gospel message about sin and man’s lost estate before God.

5. There is the pragmatic error of telling man what he wants to hear.

Preachers have become very pragmatic in their preaching today. This means that they have tailored their messages to the point that they do not offend people in their worldly living. We must remember that the preacher has been called to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. But over time many preachers tie themselves in knots and find themselves customizing their messages so as not to offend people. It’s as if the people are reaching out to the preacher and writing his sermon notes and telling him what to preach so that they can hear what they want to hear!

2 Timothy 4:2-3 talks about this last day pragmatism:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”

Pragmatic preaching is preaching that is designed to accommodate people and make them feel comfortable. It is preaching that is voted on by the people and which is deemed acceptable among religious people who have no time to be reminded about their sin and wayward spiritual living. The word “itching” means to “tickle” or “scratch” and ear so you might cause the ear to itch. I tried out the experiment on my own two ears this week to see if the Bible is really true. I tickled my years very lightly and they began to itch. And do you know what, I needed to scratch them. I found out that the Bible is true after all! The “itching ears” refers grammatically to the people. And it describes those people who desire to hear preaching for their own gratification. They wanted to have their itching ears scratched by the preacher so that they can be satisfied.

Kenneth Wuest said:

“These who set themselves against Pauline theology are dominated by their own private, personal cravings. Those cravings consist of the desire for personal gratification.”

The point seems to be this. Many people have itching ears to hear bedtime stories instead of expository preaching. And the preachers give to people these stories and scratch their ears so that their itchy ears can be satisfied. In other words, many people want preaching that satisfies their own cravings for things that disagree with God’s truth. You know, the fact that a preacher has a large congregation is not always a sign that he is preaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he is scratching people’s “itching ears” and giving them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear about sin and repentance. People want you to tell them the things, which they want to hear, rather than facing the truth. Many pastors bow to the wishes of ungodly congregations who only want to hear what pleases them. But we must remember that there can be no change without challenge!

Many people have an itchy ear that needs to be scratched by teachings that will produce pleasant sensations and leave them with good feelings about themselves. And their desire to hear this kind of preaching dictates what the preacher will say. If he preaches to scratch their ears then nobody is offended and everybody can sit down and have cookies and milk. They can leave church singing, “Everything is going my way!” Under those conditions, people will dictate what men preach, rather than God dictating it by His Word. Furthermore, Paul suggested that these people who do not want to hear unpopular doctrine will have no problems finding teachers who will give them what they want to hear (“heap to themselves teachers”). This no doubt refers to how people will be “church tramps” or “ecclesiastical hitchhikers” roaming about finding preachers who will give them exactly what they want to hear. There will be an overabundance of preachers ready to give these people what they want. The demand will create the supply of these types of preachers.

2 Timothy 4:4

“And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

The lust for inoffensive preaching today will cause people to turn their ears away from the truth to myths or fables that do not support the truth of God’s Word. People come to church and they want to hear “Goldy Locks and Three Bears” or “Alice in Wonderland.” They don’t want to hear doctrine. It is but a short step from “itching ears” to turning one’s ears away from the truth. Once people have rejected the truth, they turn to fables (myths). These are no doubt religious myths or falsehoods that will tell people that they are “okay” the way that they are living and that they will not be held accountable before God. They are the myths that baptism saves people and that everybody goes to heaven. They are the myths that teach man’s innate goodness (humanism – self-love) and that Jesus was only a good man or scholar. We know that man-made fables will not convict people of their sin or make them want to repent! The result is a congregation of comfortable people, carnal Christians, professing Christians and unregenerate people who are listening to comfortable, religious talks that contain no Bible truth that really challenges their lives.

Pragmatic preaching is everywhere today. And wherever there is no challenge to the people to repent of their sin and change their lives for God’s glory, it’s then that you can be sure that pragmatism has established itself in the preaching. Pragmatism gives to people what they want to hear instead of what they need! Many preachers have grown cross-eyed by looking at the congregation in order to see if the message is suitable to the people. Many preachers have fallen into the trap of pragmatism. And every Sunday, as they preach watered down messages, they try to tip toe through the tulips, so they don’t disturb anyone in their sin.

6. There is the pragmatic error that says God needs help in saving souls.

The modern church of today claims that we need to have drawing techniques to get people into the church so that they will hear the Gospel. These pragmatic programs involve such things as Christian rock music, secular rock music, dramatic plays, dramas, bowling alleys, fitness centers and eating cafes. Recently I was reading how one church was planning to put a McDonald’s in their church building so they could attract people to the Gospel. Without these approaches the claim is made that certain people would not get saved that need to hear the Gospel and be saved. The pragmatic theory holds that certain people need to be lured into the church by a certain rock sound, a certain electric atmosphere and Big Mac sandwiches or else they will never get saved. People need to be baited so that they might be reeled into the church and listen to the Gospel. Of course, this is a false premise and misunderstanding about the salvation of lost people, as we will reveal.

Pragmatism becomes a subtle deception to the sinner since his sin is more or less covered up by pragmatic practices. In fact, it can become fatal since the glamour of the presentation and similarity of the sinner's own lifestyle can override the Spirit's teaching about the sinner's sin before God and his need for repentance (John 16:7-11). We must remember that pragmatic practices are not necessary in order to bring people to salvation. Many times they become a hindrance instead of help.

George Sweeting, another New Evangelical, also sees the problem:

"Remember that it is Christ and his gospel that save. You cannot save. Christ will. Do not deceive the sinner. Do not give him a stone for bread. He needs Christ, only Christ, all of Christ, and Christ offers himself through you."

Many people today think that modern evangelism must involve 21st century productions and performances so that people will get saved. This is a false premise. In Scripture we find that evangelism always occurred without techniques and special programs. It was an everyday normal experience taking place in the lives of Christians outside the church. Pragmatists have made evangelism an issue that must involve special functions and practices within the church. But this is not the way evangelism was carried out in the early church.

Richard Halverson said:

"Evangelism never seemed to be an issue in the New Testament. That is to say, one does not find the apostles exhorting, scolding, planning, and organizing for evangelistic programs. In the apostolic Church, evangelism was somehow assumed, and it functioned without techniques or special programs. Evangelism happened! Issuing effortlessly from the community of believers as light from the sun, it was automatic, spontaneous, continuous, and contagious."

Pragmatists of today claim that people will not come to church if we don't offer something that they want. But this reasoning is flawed for the simple reason that it's not the business of the church to get the unchurched into the church! Church meetings are not supposed to be designed for unbelievers. It's the business of the church to get themselves out in the world so that the unchurched will be saved and gladly come to church without pragmatic performances. Pragmatic preachers are saying today, "We can't get them into the church without this music." That's right, you can't. And do you know why? It's because they are not supposed to be in the church! They are not ready to come into the church. This is because they love their sin too much and do not want to repent and become a Christian. Therefore, they are not ready to come into the church.

It's not our job to entertain sinners in their sins within the hallowed halls of the church. It's our job to go out into the world and take sinners the message of salvation that comes through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. We are not told to try and lure

people into the church for evangelistic purposes. Rather, we are told to take the message out to them so that they will be saved and have the desire to come to church.

Mark 16:15

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

1 Thessalonians 1:8

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

Acts 8:4

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

The early church went everywhere preaching or proclaiming the Gospel message. It does not say that they brought people into the church by showing films, singing Christian Rock Music songs and having power team performances to attract people. The simplicity of Gospel evangelism is that the church was to go out into the world with the simple Gospel message and win people to Christ in their day-to-day witness and normal activities of living. We do not build a McDonald's in the local church to attract people. Instead, we are to go to McDonald's and be a witness for Christ. Evangelism was not primarily geared around the local church level. We have forgotten this in our age of pragmatism when churches are trying to accommodate the lost within the church so that they might be deemed successful and relevant to society.

Evangelism was primarily done outside the church and never was geared around religious plays and Hollywood productions within the church. It primarily dealt with sharing Christ outside church ministry. You don't bus the unsaved into the church and give to them what they want to hear. You bus the saved out into the unchurched masses so that when they get saved they will want to come to the church on their own effort and not need worldly pragmatic tricks to get them there. We have the busses going in the wrong direction today!

C. Summer Wemp said:

“We build big beautiful churches with cushioned pews, air-conditioned auditoriums, robed choirs, and well-trained preachers and then advertise, ‘Come and hear,’ when all the time God says, ‘Go and tell.’”

We must also remember something else in the midst of this pragmatic revival. It is not pragmatism that wins people to Christ. It is the Lord of the harvest!

Luke 10:2

“Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”

God's in control of the results of the harvest and not man! God is the Lord of the harvest and not man! You would almost think today that people view pragmatism as the Lord of the harvest of lost souls! Without pragmatic methods it seems that evangelism will fail. But we must remember that the Lord is in control of the results of the harvest and not man! As Lord of the harvest He sends people out into the world so that they might be compelled to win people to Christ. And as Lord of the harvest He is in control of the results - not man! As the Lord of the harvest He convicts the sinner and compels him to come to Christ – not man through His pragmatic inventions designed to draw people to Christ. It's God who gives the increase and not man!

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 says:

“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

You can't make it any clearer than that! It's God who gives the increase – not pragmatism! You would think today that without the worldly methodology of man that the whole evangelistic structure will collapse. But this is unsound reasoning since it is God who works in the hearts of lost humanity and brings lost people to Christ. We are only the vessels. What man needs to do is get out of the way and let God work on the heart! He needs to stop all of these worldly methods designed to draw people into the church and manipulate them to think that Christianity embraces their own lifestyle. Man needs to get out of the way and let God convict the sinner of his lost estate and sinful ways without trying to cover them up. It's God who gives the increase and not the pragmatic schemes of man.

Matthew 16:18

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Jesus said, “I will build my church.” It won't be man with his pragmatism and little plans to try and get people saved. Man cannot build the church with his conniving plans to integrate the world into the church, so that people will come to church and supposedly get saved. It's God who builds the church by compelling lost people to come to Christ as He convicts them of their sinfulness and lost estate before His presence (Acts 16:14 – “Lydia ... whose heart the Lord opened”). Pragmatism will not open the hearts of lost people. Only the Lord can do this! This is God's work – not man's work. And God does not need help in getting people saved! We need to once again understand that it is God who does the convicting and convincing of the heart. All the sideshows and

methodology of men will not convince any person of their need for Christ. We must let God do His own work in His own way.

We rejoice when souls are saved but we rejoice even more when souls are saved in a right setting where God's holiness and righteous standards are maintained. Pragmatism with its worldly methods does not honor God's holiness. God wants to save people in His own holy way and not in some kind of pragmatic way of compromise. Let us never forget that people will also get saved when we do things in God's way. This is because God gives the increase. And we can be sure that people will come to Christ without aiding error, heretics or worldly methods. The evangelism of lost sinners should be promoted in the context of a right setting where God's holiness is vindicated.

Psalm 145:17 says:

"The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

If God is holy in all of His ways then we should also seek to promote holiness in all that we do. We are not to promote the salvation of souls at the expense of God's character or holiness. What does God think when true Gospel preaching churches and apostate churches are working together in various committees to try and get people to attend some giant ecumenical rally? What does God think when we incorporate Satan's end-time rock music into our church services in order to try and gain a following? These are the pragmatic attempts of man trying to do God's work in his own carnal way instead of doing God's work in His holy way!

Isaiah 55:8

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord."

We must remember that whenever we divert from God's holy pattern and compromise we create confusion on every corner and find ourselves always going further than we first intended to go. Pragmatism is like a roller coaster. When you start going down the hill there is no stopping the ride. And for many churches the pragmatic ride continues to move downhill as they try to incorporate many programs and unholy worldly methods, which are designed to attract people and somehow do the work that the Scriptures and the Spirit only can do. Pragmatism flies in the face of God's holiness. But God's holiness compliments all true evangelistic outreach since by holy living we are to outwardly demonstrate how God has changed our lives and how different we are from a world that has no moral compass or spiritual values.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Light penetrates through the darkness and provides the correct atmosphere for evangelism to take place. When the church evangelizes it should seek to be a light bearer and not accommodate the darkness through pragmatic worldly music and other worldly techniques that mimic the dark side of life. We must let our light of holiness shine before lost men and not allow the darkness to confuse the sinner who is still in his sin. The church is called upon to reprove sin and not condone sin in any phase of its life or ministry (Eph. 5:10-11).

Jesus also said in Matt. 5:13:

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

Salt preserves and hinders the spread of corruption. As we live the Christian life and evangelize we must maintain right doctrine and not compromise God’s holy standards of purity. Saltiness speaks of preserving right teachings and righteous actions so that we can have an impact upon a lost world. This is why the subject of living righteously was mentioned in the previous verses (Matt. 5:10-11). The salty way of living is the holy and righteous way of living. Christianity is to preserve truth and the holiness of God in every way – in both doctrine and outward righteous practice. God’s people should preserve truth and godly living in the midst of a decadent and decaying society.

We must remember that salt not only preserves but also makes people thirsty. As we live a different lifestyle, a righteous lifestyle that is radically different than the unsaved world, some people will manifest an interest in our holy pattern of living and we will be able to impact them in a positive spiritual way. Holy living can create a thirst in the hearts of unsaved people so that they might desire what we possess and have – salvation and a different way of life. But remember this. If salt loses its flavor it is good for nothing! When Christianity becomes like the world in outward practice it loses its holy testimony of light (Matt. 5:14) and its effectiveness to make people interested in God’s plan of salvation and new way of life.

In short, when Christians become like the world they are good for nothing because they no longer preserve God’s holy and righteous path of separation and maintain the difference between light and darkness. They are good for nothing because in the end the lost world sees no difference in their lives and sees no reason to become a Christian. So Jesus says that we must let our light of righteous, holy and transformed living shine brightly (Matt. 5:16) instead of hiding it under a bushel because of shame and reproach for the cause of Christ (vs. 15). Hiding our holy light or Christian testimony under a basket is another way of saying that we lose our salty flavor. We lose the holy impact that we can have on others.

This is why pragmatic evangelism, which adopts the world's standards of living, is not biblically based evangelism. True evangelism is to be done by saints who are living separate from the world system and who are not willing to adopt the world's standards of living (1 Peter 1:15; 3:15). Evangelism is to be done in a sanctified way where God's holiness is maintained and where God's people are unlike the world. Unholy pragmatic productions, which are tied in with evangelistic efforts, confuses the sinner. The lost sinner is expected to repent of sin while at the same time he is being entertained in the same types of atmosphere and sinful sounds of a perverted culture, which he loves and wants to embrace as a sinner.

1 Peter 2:9 says:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

The church wants to mimic the darkness today instead of coming out of the darkness. Many want to try and mix the darkness with the light. The church must not forget her calling! She must remember that Scriptural evangelism thrives in an atmosphere and environment where God's holiness is maintained.

Colossians 4:5

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.”

God intends that a vast difference be seen in the lives of believer's as they seek to live holy (1 Peter 4:4; 1 Cor. 3:3; Lev. 20:23). As stated above, this distinction between light and darkness can be advantageous in pointing others to Christ. This occurs as the unsaved witness how Christ can change the lives of people and how He can free their own lives from sinful bondage and those practices, which have been destroying their lives. This thought of holiness brings us to our final pragmatic error.

7. There is the pragmatic error which tries to mix the holy with the unholy.

- a. This approach of mixing the holy with the unholy goes against God's standard that forbids mixture.

The priests of the Old Testament were told to never mix that which was holy with the unholy. Leviticus 10:9-10 says: “Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.”

The New Testament has taken the priestly typology and turned it around and applied it to the church. The church is pictured as New Testament priests who are to offer up

sacrifices to God (Hebrews 13:15). Like the Old Testament priests the New Testament priests are to never mix the holy with the unholy in their priestly acts of worship, works and activities. This involves a constant application of God's principles of separation to our lives so that we do not allow the unholy activities of the world to blur the distinctions between what is holy and unholy. Furthermore, we do not want to minimize the holiness of God and His hatred for all sin. God hates a mixture of the holy and unholy.

As a New Testament priest we must remember this as we seek to worship and do the work and service of the Lord. Those things that are clearly unholy and which are used by Satan and for His purposes should not be united with those things that are used for the advancement of Christ and His purposes. For instance, when we try to unite the world's music with words that have a Christian message we become guilty of this very thing of trying to mix the holy with the unholy. When we try to use worldly methods that please the public in the church services we are trying to unite the preaching of the Gospel and Christianity with the unholy practices of our pagan neighbors. But as a New Testament priest we are told to offer up "good" sacrifices to God, which magnify His holy character. This must be true in our own personal lives and corporate church worship.

Hebrews 13:15-16 says:

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

You will notice that doing good ("to do good") is part of our New Testament priestly response to God. This means that we must always present our sacrificial service and worship to the Lord as something that is good, holy and wholesome and which magnifies His holy character. As a New Testament priest, offering up sacrifices to God, we must be able to lift our service and work up to God and present it to Him as the holy and righteous God. We should not deceive ourselves and think that God will accept unholy worship. God does not accept strange fire upon the altar (Lev. 10:1).

- b. This approach of mixing the holy with the unholy goes against the axiom tied to regeneration or birth.

Job 14:4 asks this rhetorical question with a simple and straightforward answer. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Clean things cannot come out of unclean things! Job recognized the axiom or self-evident truth that clean things cannot come out of unclean things. This was true in the realm of natural birth as he speaks about in this context. An unclean mother who is a sinner by nature cannot bring forth a clean son who is not a sinner by nature. The same principle holds true in the realm of all spiritual things. You cannot take something that is evil or unclean by spiritual design

and use it in order to give birth to something that is spiritually clean. Job recognized that this was impossible. The pragmatist says that it is possible as he tries to make the world's musical sound acceptable by putting Christian words to the music. The pragmatists adds the names "Jesus" or "holy" or "sacred" to his worldly actions and programs to try and suggest that spiritually bad things can be turned around and become good things. This is a travesty upon the Word of God and a complete mockery of God's holiness.

- c. This approach of mixing the holy with the unholy goes against the principles of separated Bible teaching.

The Bible teaches that there can be no agreement between incompatible realms and incongruous relationships. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 once again reads: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

Incompatible Realms

1. Unequal religious yoke between two contrasting parties
2. Righteousness cannot mix with unrighteousness
3. Light cannot mix with darkness
4. Christ has no agreement with Satan and his evil workings
5. The believer can have no part with the unbeliever in connection with the unholy way that he lives
6. The temple of God (our body) cannot mix with idols that rule our lives.

Incongruous Relationships

As a result of incompatible realms between holiness and unholiness, these verses portray how inappropriate or incongruous relationships take place when trying to join together that which is holy with that which is unholy. This is seen in the words: "yoked" (unequal bonding) "fellowship," (sharing) "communion" (joint-participating), "concord" (agreement), "part," (portion) or "agreement" (joint coalition). These words suggest inappropriate and unsuitable relationships that offend God's holiness. Inappropriate or incongruous relationships can occur between people (saved and unsaved) because of the diverse practices of each party (holy vs. unholy) as illustrated by the differences between righteousness and unrighteousness or light and darkness. Because of these

incompatible realms and incongruous relationships, we must remember that we cannot become unequally yoked or tied together with those who promote unrighteousness, darkness and spiritual or religious idolatry from truth.

We are told that we cannot unite with unbelievers in religious endeavors since their philosophy and moral bent is altogether different than the believers. And you will note that we are never told to create these “unequal ties” because in doing so we would “touch the unclean thing” or in some way “fasten” or “adhere” ourselves to that which is evil. God does not want us to participate with the unclean things of a pagan society that would pollute our lives and bring shame to His name, since we are to be His holy vessels.

There are many unclean things in this world, which can overtake our lives and pollute us from a spiritual standpoint and leaven our churches in the process. But as we remember to practice these separated ecclesiastical principles about incompatible realms and incongruous or inappropriate relationships, we will constantly evaluate whether or not something is clean or unclean, righteous or unrighteous and light or darkness. Furthermore, we will never think of bringing unbelievers into the church and yoking together with them in a religious meeting, let alone a service that is geared around their own worldly desires and tastes – “the unclean thing.” Of course, inviting the unsaved to church to hear a Gospel message is one thing that God would never condemn (1 Cor. 14:23). However, catering to their worldly philosophies and promoting their own worldly agenda in the church becomes a clear violation of God’s command for separation. When we do this we bond together with the unbelievers and their worldly practices and seek to revolve our services around their lifestyles and wants instead of what God wants – holiness!

Let’s state it very clearly. Believers should never bond together with unbelievers in a religious setting and seek to promote their own lifestyle in the church setting in order to please them (pragmatism). This defies the separated Bible principle of incompatible realms between the holy and unholy, righteousness and unrighteousness and light and darkness. It also completely ignores the separated Bible principle of incongruous relationships between the saved and the lost, which are formed by participating with and adopting the lifestyle and belief systems of the unsaved within the ranks of the church. When the church thinks that she must do God’s work in a fleshly way to cater to the unsaved in the hallowed church sanctuary, she has grievously failed to make a separated distinction between the holy and unholy and commits a breach of God’s command for separation between the saved and unsaved.

Lastly, the church who promotes such things as heathen music and fleshly displays of dancing in its sanctuaries touches the “unclean thing” of a perverted culture as they attempt to join together with the unsaved and please them by adopting their own lifestyle in the church. Pragmatism has caused the church to commit a violation or

breach of God's holy contract of separation. God's holiness demands that we make a constant distinction and steer clear of all incompatible realms of living and inappropriate relationships. God's people should want to uphold His holiness in the churches and all those relationships that are established and condoned within the church. Believers should strive for excellence and desire to be vessels fit for the Master's use!

2 Timothy 2:21 says:

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

The question is not, "Does it work?" but "Is it holy?" Is God pleased with the method? God demands a distinction between the holy and unholy! God demands a distinction between righteous things and unrighteous things and holy things and unholy things. Let us make the distinction. Let's be clear about it. Can God use anything as the pragmatist so lightheartedly says? The answer is a resounding, "No!" If God can use anything then God can use Cocaine, Playboy magazines and homosexuality for his glory. How absurd and ridiculous and unintelligent this argument is! God can only use holy things that honor His character and name. He never uses that which is unholy and unfit for spiritual use. And we must remember that God only uses the true Gospel to win people to Christ (Ps. 145:17; Rev. 15:3; Lev. 1:44-45; Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:13). God does not use the unholy pragmatic inventions of men. These are sideshows that have no value at all in connection with the salvation of the lost sinner. While presenting the Gospel, God's holiness must be honored or vindicated. God's holiness cannot mix with anything that is unholy by design or else the entire procedure becomes contaminated or tainted with evil.

- d. This approach of mixing the holy with the unholy goes against the requirement to maintain reverence for God.

The church has digressed to the point, where things that were once deemed as unholy in God's house and in God's sight, are now seen to be holy. There was a time when those things, such as the perverted sound of a rock culture and dancing, were shunned and not permitted in God's house. This was done out of reverence or respect for God and His house. To bring worldly dance and music into the church so we can accommodate the lost is a lack of reverence toward a holy God and His house. Many Christians are so concerned about what the unsaved think of their services that they no longer take stock in what God thinks! We are reminded of the requirement found in the Old Testament for the meeting of God's people.

Psalm 89:7 says:

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

Hebrews 12:28 also reminds us:

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

It is no secret that the practice of pragmatism has lost sight of the whole need for reverence in God’s house. It has sidestepped the whole requirement for reverence and respect for the Lord in His own house. With the revival of pragmatism there is no end to what man and his methods will produce in the local church. In his mad craze and pursuit to conform to the world system (Romans 12:2), with the view of supposedly winning people to Christ, man has forgotten about reverencing the Lord in His own house. Paul reminded the Corinthians that God’s house was not to be used for their own fleshly living and profit. It was not to be a place where they could do their “own thing” and have their “own fling” and forget about reverencing God.

1 Corinthians 11:17

“Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.”

1 Corinthians 11:21 goes onto explain some of the terrible things that were going on in the Corinthian church because they had lost respect for God’s house.

“For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.”

A drinking party is hardly the best way to prepare for the Lord’s Supper! Hoarding food and forgetting about the poor in the church is certainly not the way to express love for all people - rich and poor. These terrible sins marred the local church testimony as they lacked reverence for God’s house and His holy ways. Let me add today that a rock concert and the booming sounds of a pagan and perverted culture is hardly the way to show reverence in God’s House!

Judges 21:25

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

When man gets to do his own thing and what he thinks is right in his own eyes (pragmatism) it’s then that the church becomes a place where God and His holy ways are no longer revered. It becomes a place of fleshly practices that are somehow eventually looked upon as holy. When something is left go long enough and overlooked instead of judged, it will eventually become the accepted norm (1 Cor. 5:6). Pragmatism leads to various types of fleshly and unholy practices. And man deceives himself by camouflaging his sinful practices as holy practices so that he can get his

own way. In the end, all of these pragmatic manmade efforts lead to a lack of reverence and respect for God's holy house. It's clear that all of the rock music left in the church today and the modern practices of charismatic confusion (slayings in the Spirit, laughing in the Spirit) are nothing more than pragmatic practices that strip the church meetings from reverencing a holy God.

Lehman Strauss has said:

"But many of the saints are disturbed and concerned about some of the self-styled, flashy combo groups who move from church to church with a new dress and a new beat that has no serious and reverent sense of God."

What About Paul's Statements on Evangelism?

In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul stated:

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

1 Corinthians 10:33 he says:

"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Certainly Paul did not have in mind what the New Evangelical pragmatist thinks he had in mind. Many will claim that Paul was talking about adopting new evangelistic methods to accommodate the unchurched masses or the unsaved people so that he could win them to Christ. They extrapolate from these words that Paul would have used every method available to him in his own day and time if he could win people to Christ with that method. They also argue that if Paul were living today he would use any modern method available to him to reach the lost.

We have already seen that Paul did not use different outward methods of evangelism when presenting the Gospel in order to draw people to Christ. He did not change his outward method in presenting the Gospel. So what did Paul change as he reached out to the lost? The texts clearly indicate that he changed his own personal standards for living. He gave up his own personal rights so he would not hinder the weak conscience of the lost. Paul changed his own personal life so that he might be effective in his witness.

1 Corinthians 10:32

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."

1 Corinthians 9:19

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."

Paul was not using these statements as an endorsement to use worldly methods or pragmatic approaches in his ministry. Nor is Paul referring to identifying with the lifestyle of the lost so that he might somehow be seen as one of them or understanding of their sinful lifestyle. Rather, these verses are saying just the opposite! Paul is saying that he gave up his own personal freedom or liberty so that he might reach out to the world by not offending their local customs and practices. This was a loving response and not a pragmatic compromising response. Paul is talking about sacrificing his own personal agenda in life or his own interests so that he might not offend others in his outreach ministry. This loving action of Paul involved forsaking certain personal liberties in his own life. It did not include adopting new methods that were worldly and contrary to God's holiness. It involved forsaking certain personal practices in his own life but never involved taking on new practices that were mimicking the world system.

It seems that Paul always sought to honor and respect the non-sinful customs of people who lived in a certain area. He did not want to violate the honored local customs of a society that did not dishonor the Word of God. And he chose to limit himself in this way to not hinder the work of God from getting done. Paul would never conform to the world's culture in evangelistic outreach since he condemns this action (Rom. 12:1-2). But Paul would and did conform to the personal customs of people that did not reflect the pagan world around them and which could be embraced without offending God's holiness.

For instance, if a person wanted to witness to those people in a marina he may want to purchase a boat to get to know the people and have inroads into witnessing. If an American missionary wants to witness to Chinese people, he must learn something of their customs and be able to, in some measure, identify with these people in their cultural setting, so he can better communicate the Gospel to them. It's also true that sometimes in our personal witnessing we can share similar interests with an unbeliever (baseball, football, motorcycles, etc.) and identify with them in some cultural practice. This can be used as a springboard to witness. Going fishing with an unbeliever is a perfect opportunity to share Christ with him. Think about it. You are out in a boat, in the middle of a lake, with an unbeliever. What a perfect opportunity to talk about the Lord.

Both Jesus in John chapter four (the woman at the well) and Paul (Acts 17:22-23) would at times tailor their evangelistic preaching (not the message) to fit certain audiences by using certain illustrations dealing with their local practices and surroundings. But all of this did not change the overall outward methodology or approach to evangelism, which was to simply preach the Gospel clearly and promote truth without any outward worldly compromise. It is an incredible hoax on any Scriptural passage to say that Jesus or Paul changed their outward approach or methodology to present the Gospel. We don't see Paul bringing weightlifters with him and karate experts to smash bricks over their heads and walk on coals in order to

entertain audiences. Where do we see Paul trying to incorporate worldly methods into his evangelistic approach?

A. W. Tozer said:

“Heresy of method may be as deadly as heresy of message.”

Why is this? It’s because we establish a wrong message when using pragmatic methods for evangelism. It’s the message that God uses anything and is pleased with everything and is not upset about anything. That is a distortion of His holy character! God never chooses to use unholy methods or unholy things in His work. If you think that He does then you have a wrong view of the holiness of God.

Tozer said this during a Mid-America Keswick Conference message held in October 1954: “Again, there must be a return to New Testament methods ... We must go to the Bible for our methods as well as our message.”

Pragmatism is a misguided philosophy. It is trying to do a spiritual work with carnal means. We must remind ourselves that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

The old saying by E. M. Bounds is still true:

“The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.”

Christians are trying to use the same sinful rebellious sound of the world system that Satan uses for his own agenda and purposes and somehow magically turn it around so that they can use it for God’s purposes. When presenting the Gospel they will try and entertain sinners with the same noise or sound that people love and have allowed Satan to control their lives with. What a double standard and hypocritical maneuver this is! New Evangelicals want to call all separatists hypocrites for exposing error and sin. But if the shoe fits then wear it! That’s what I always say. To call sinners to repentance while entertaining them in their own sin is the height of hypocrisy! It undermines the very holiness of God and what He expects from vessels who want to honor Him.

What are the results of presenting the Gospel with a focus on pragmatism?

1. Failure to separate the light from darkness.

We have just seen this in our last point. God calls the church to holiness. But if the church fails to distinguish between the light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 John 1:5-7) then the church will begin to do what’s right in her own eyes (Judges 17:6) and digress in a downward spiral into the quicksand of worldly living and carnal practice. In the end the darkness will attempt to replace the light and the light of holiness will become hidden under the bushel of man’s pragmatic worldly methods.

2. Future saints being schooled in worldly living.

We must remember that what we win people with is what we will need to keep them with. Multitudes of churches are using worldly methods to get people inside the doors and they will need to continually supplement these methods to keep these people. Furthermore, when people are saved in an environment that promotes worldliness they will be disciplined in the way of worldly living. This in return becomes an issue of carnality in the lives of God's people where they attempt to walk like the unsaved world (1 Cor. 3:3). Today there is a mass exodus out of Fundamentalism into the New Evangelical stream of pragmatic compromise. It's getting worse and will continue to do so. The only way to counteract this spiritual epidemic is to teach young converts the principles of Bible separation (2 Tim. 2:2).

A. W. Tozer was also recorded when saying:

"Any objection to the carryings on of our present gold-calf Christianity is met with the triumphant reply, "But we are winning them!" And winning them to what? To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denial? To separation from the world? To crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To a despising of the world's treasures? To hard self-discipline? To love for God? To total committal to Christ? Of course the answer to all these questions is no."

3. False decisions for Christ (emotional responses without repentance).

People might have a lot of emotional fizz without substance or root – real repentance (Matthew 13:18-22). Also, people can respond to the spectacular element but find no room for repentance in their heart toward God (see John 2:23-25). Furthermore, a person's faith can be misdirected in that it seeks to place faith in a Jesus who meets their needs or a Jesus who can do the miraculous or a Jesus who can fill their bank account or a Jesus who can heal. These are all diversions from true faith in the crucified and risen Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 one again says:

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but the wisdom of the cross, which is the power of God. It would be fair to say that the faith of many stands in the wisdom of men instead of the power of God. This is because many are following the pragmatic gospel, which says that people should express faith in a Savior who can meet their needs and help them to overcome their problems in life. They are to express faith in a Jesus who will put a band-aid on their wounds. Many are disillusioned and possess a

faith that is far from biblical faith, which is a personal response to the person and work of Jesus Christ on the sinner's behalf.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

This is the kind of faith that results in the salvation of an individual or delivers him from coming judgment. It is a total trust in Christ for salvation. If a person is to be saved they must possess true or genuine saving faith in Christ. What is the definition of saving faith? Saving faith is when a person actually turns to God for salvation by placing all of his trust or reliance in Jesus Christ to save him from hell. When a person believes or has faith in Christ he will make a personal or individual response to both the person and work of Jesus Christ, as stated in the Gospel message, and receive eternal forgiveness for all his sins and salvation from hell. It's God's grace that saves the individual. Faith in Christ is the way that God's saving grace is received.

Acts 16:31

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

A seeking sinner must believe that Jesus died and rose again for him personally, bearing all of his sins and judgment, and then receive the saving benefits of that provision which Christ has made for him. There needs to be this personal response or decision (trust, reliance or dependence) in what Jesus has done for the lost sinner. Genuine belief always involves this personal response to what Christ has done for the individual. However, many are called to express faith in Christ for different reasons. They might want to place faith in Christ so they can start a new life, turn over a new leaf or find a new guide and helper in life. They might be called upon to express faith in a Jesus who can meet all of their needs, fill up their bellies and bank accounts, make them physically well and fix all of their problems in life. Many people want a Jesus that can patch them up instead of save their soul. This is the pragmatic Jesus presented in the modern gospel.

In addition, there is a type of popular evangelism today that almost hypnotizes people into making decisions for Christ but gives them no sound basis of faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus becomes like a product that people can purchase. Decisions are forced upon people without the awareness of their own sinfulness before God or their understanding of what they are doing. This is spurious evangelism.

Consider some timely words written on the wrong use of methods in evangelism. They are written by the late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer: “It may be conceded that genuine results are sometimes obtained even where misleading methods are employed; but

there may be great harm done as well. Far too little has been said on this point. Some of these evils should be mentioned.”

I must say “Amen” to this conclusion. And we have tried to expose some of these evils of pragmatism in this study. I must say again. The end does not justify the means. The means justify the end! The way you present truth is the kind of results or end that you will get. And we must remember that wrong preaching brings wrong results! Wrong evangelism brings wrong results. And many people get off the train exactly where they got on the train. When all is said and done they find themselves at the same train station without any real repentance in their heart. Pragmatism is concerned about what the end will be in relationship to attendance and outside interest in their pragmatic services. But in reality we should be afraid of what the end might be if the Gospel is not given its rightful place and upheld as the only tool to bring people to Christ.

1 Peter 4:17

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

The only way you can obey the Gospel is to believe in the Gospel message about Christ’s saving work and allow it to be applied to your own life. This is how you obey the Gospel. To disobey the message is to reject it; and to obey it is to believe it as the Scripture verifies (Acts 6:7; Romans 16:26; 1 Peter 1:22). In any event, we should be concerned what the end will be for a person who fails to repent and receive Christ as Savior through faith in His finished work. It’s not that the end justifies the means. Rather, it’s what the end will be for those who are not told to repent of their sins and believe the true Gospel message!

What will the end be for those people who are deceived or confused by pragmatic practices, which give the Gospel a backseat or three minutes at the end of a drama presentation? What will the end be for those who respond to some emotional plea that stems from a rock concert, which is designed to entertain people in their sin? What will the end be for those who fail to repent over their sins because of poor Gospel presentation in pragmatic meetings? What will the end be for those who were caught up in the bright lights of pragmatism instead of the light of the glorious Gospel? What will the end be for those who are confused about salvation through the pragmatic methods and maneuvers of men? What will the end be for those who are told to accept another Jesus to resolve their problems instead of the crucified and risen Lord who died for sin? I tell you, the end will be hell for all those who have been sidetracked from Gospel truth through pragmatism.

Dr. Vance Havner said it best when he made this conclusion about pragmatism:

“The idea that we must imitate the world in clothes, language, and music to make the gospel attractive is not divine but demonic. To begin with, the gospel was never meant

for entertainment. The sin against the Holy Spirit lay in ascribing the work of God to the devil. Is it not equally possible to ascribe the work of the devil to God? I do not believe that the spiritually sensitive soul can equate gospel jazz and hippie hootenannies with the hallelujahs of the redeemed.”

Is there not a resounding ring of truth to what Vance Havner has said? It is true that Satan is trying to deceive people by blinding their minds from Gospel truth (2 Cor. 4:4). He is trying to steal the seed from the hearts of lost humanity (Matt. 13:19). But it's equally true that man with his pragmatic attempts can in some measure stop “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” from shining in all of its brilliancy. This is done by the repeated attempts to dull the message through many pragmatic maneuvers other than the straightforward preaching about the cross, man's sin, separation from God and his personal need for repentance and faith in Christ. It's seems very probable that men can aid the devil in doing his own work of blinding people by creating pragmatic entertainment and services that do not demand genuine repentance and faith in the crucified and risen Savior.

Man can aid the devil's work when he entertains sinners in their own sin and shows no difference between the holy and unholy. This breeds confusion in the minds of unbelievers about repentance and true Christianity. We work with the devil (2 Cor. 6:15) when we try to cover up the “offence” of the cross and the “foolishness” of preaching in order to manipulate people into trying Jesus for some other reason. Many Christians are not only ignorant of the devil's devices; they are using the devil's devices in evangelism. In doing these dastardly and even cowardly pragmatic acts we have in some measure turned the work of God into the work of the devil. Beware: “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).