

Lost: The Biblical Order in the Church and in the Home

Scott Brown

I rushed to the hospital to pray for a little girl in our neighborhood who had just been admitted with the symptoms of spinal meningitis, which could kill her in a matter of hours. As I entered the emergency waiting room, I saw another neighbor who had cut his finger off in a compressor fan a few hours before.

He had been sitting in the waiting room, with a throng of others, for hours. He was crying in severe pain. I felt sorry for him because I remembered another occasion when I saw a 15-year old boy sit in the emergency room with his toe cut off and was not treated for 7 hours after his arrival.

My son turned to me and said: "papa, why don't they take care of his finger?". I said, "The triage nurse decided the finger was not as bad as the other problems in here".

He said: "Papa, what's a triage nurse?"

I told him that a triage nurse has a tough job. Within seconds she has to decide who to treat first and who waits. She prioritizes instantly. She decides who gets the energy of the hospital staff. She has guidelines to help her decide, and every day people sit in that waiting room in excruciating pain while the true emergencies are handled.

The thoughts here have the approach of a triage nurse.

Some things are life threatening. Some things are devastating. Some things are of such importance that they need resources right away.

The church is in such a state. She needs energy invested in things that are foundational.

I am sounding an alarm.

I advocate that an "in-course correction" is necessary in the church. Modernity has taken its toll, and the Bride of Christ has become more of a reflection of her culture than her Lord and Savior. She has, in her attempts to be relevant, lost some of her basic practices designed to make her beautiful. I want her to recognize (and shed) some of her accumulated practices and attitudes that are harming her precious members:

* She was meant to be constantly "washed by the water of the Word" (Eph. 5:26), but her main occupations have removed her from her means of beautification.

* She has abandoned the basic discipling structures called for by the Apostles, and replaced them with lowest common denominator activities that have devolved her maturity and strength.

* She has structured herself to bypass God's primary delivery system for the knowledge of the treasures of God, and has adopted non- biblical methods for training her children.

The results have been disastrous. We are losing ground in each generation. At this point, we are in danger of almost completely losing the younger generation.

Cold statistics profile the harm:

Those who identify Christ as Savior has been dropping with each generation;

Builders (54 years and above) 65%

Boomers 35%

Busters 15%

Bridgers/Mosaics (4 years -24) 4%

(Source: Promise Keepers conference speaker, Raleigh NC 2002)

This loss is staggering and we will not feel the full impact for at least three decades. If you think the church is secularized now, just wait a few years. Not only will the churches be full of unbelievers, they will be filled with almost completely secularized people, and they will be suffering under an unparalleled brokenness as a consequence of their departure.

Do you have children? There is a forceful tide that is sweeping many of them away to destruction:

* 70% of evangelical youth (involved in a youth group) will leave the church after high school graduation.

* 50% of Southern Baptist youth will leave the faith after college.

* Divorce rates in the most conservative churches in the Southeast are higher than the liberal denominations in every part of the country and higher than those of unbelievers.

We are losing our children

Read the Remarks of T.C. Pinckney who was elected 2nd Vice president of Southern Baptist Convention. He made these comments to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee regarding the state of our youth:

"We are losing our children. Research indicates that 70% of teens who are involved in a church youth group will stop attending church within two years of their high school graduation. Think about that statement. It addresses only teenagers who attend church and participate in the youth group. What does that suggest about those teens who may attend church but do not take part in the youth group, or who do not go to church at all?

In a talk at Southwestern Seminary, Josh McDowell noted that less than 1/3 of today's youth attend church. If he is right and 67% do not go to church and then we lose 70% of those who do, that means that within two years of finishing high school only 10% of young Americans will attend church."

We are losing our youth

"Why is this happening? Many strands go into weaving a tapestry, and surely there are many reasons this tragic departure of our youth from Christ is taking place. However, I believe the evidence clearly indicates that the primary reasons are, first, our failure as Christian parents and churches and, second, the intentional, persistent, and highly effective effort by anti-theists to use public schools to lead children away from their parents and from the church".

What is wrong? We are theologically orthodox. We believe in the authority of the Bible, We are conservative. Our intentions are sincere.

What is the root cause?

I submit that the Biblical order for the church and the home has been unintentionally abandoned. The Biblical equipping structures have been set aside, marriages have been dishonored, and fathers are not personally teaching their children anymore. Exemplary fatherhood has been reduced to taking the family to church and showing up at soccer games and recitals.

What is so disturbing is that the churches are aiding and abetting the abandonment.

The men in our churches, instead of plunging their energy into saturating themselves in God's Word; and training the future business, government and church leaders; and preparing their children to be evangelists, deacons, elders, mentors and "Titus two women"; they spend their strength on activities that ignore their basic roles as leaders and teachers of the next generation.

The result is that we are losing the coming generation to secular lifestyles within the church and massive departures from the church after they leave our evangelical youth groups. As Sally Clarkson has said, "In the absence of Biblical training, our children will follow the way of popular culture".

Biblical order for the church and the home has been lost and needs to be recaptured.

Specifically, we need to reclaim the supremacy (and sufficiency) of the Word of God for the forms and practices of the church, the sanctity of marriage, and the leadership/headship of men in their homes, churches and communities.

The rejection of God and His prescribed methods and roles within the churches have struck a blow to the health and strength of the Body of Christ.

It has marred her beauty and constrained her work in the equipping and transformation of her people. It has dampened her zeal for evangelism and missions.

Chuck Colson has said it well:

"Today the church is in Babylonian captivity, like the ancient Jews in Old Testament times or the church in Martin Luther's day. Not that it is in the clutches of a pagan emperor or a corrupted ecclesiastical hierarchy, but rather in its easy acquiescence to the values of a thoroughly secularized culture" Chuck Colson, *The Body*, p246

The "acquiescence to the values of a thoroughly secularized culture" that Colson speaks about has caused the church to become overburdened with efforts and programs and priorities, which often produce good effects, but will cause internal collapse, because the main things were ignored while service to peripheral things was emphasized.

The triage nurse has been treating the patient with a cut finger instead of the one with a life threatening cardiac arrest.

It is time for reformation of practices and a return to the Biblical order for the home and the church.