

How To Reach Non-Believers Today!

At a church retreat for United Methodist Men in August of 2003, it was reported that in the Memphis Conference, barely over 1200 people had joined the Methodist Church last year. These were supposedly all newly converted Christians and not people transferring from other churches. We hope they all were true believers in God and Christ and some were not just joining the church for other reasons only. Although 1200 new Christians may sound like a good number, sadly this only translates to one new Christian member for every 75 existing members of Methodists churches in the Memphis Conference. Whether or not this is a true growth in Christianity would depend on the number who were true believers and also the number of previous members who gave up on faith that year.

This made me wonder, "What is being a Christian all about?" Is it only about believing in Christ and the gospel solely to save yourself, or is it also about sharing the gospel of Christ with others in order to save them too? What is the purpose of Ministry? Is it to just help others and show them how caring Christians are, or is it to ultimately help others save their lives through Christian conversion? If the gospel of Christ and the hope of heaven are so wonderful, why isn't Christianity growing at a tremendous rate in our country? Why isn't teaching the gospel and the other stories in the Bible enough anymore? Why is it increasingly more difficult for people to have faith in God and the Bible?

I believe that our society has lost the foundation of Christianity and its understanding of the absolute authority of God. This article contains powerful explanations to these growing problems. The information in the following paragraphs has been taken from articles by Ken Ham in his "Answers update" Vol. 10, Issue 9 and "Creation" magazine Vol.25, No.3.

"The church is desperately trying to retain and rebuild the spiritual and moral aspects of Christianity, but it really is a lost cause - unless the church recognizes the fact that the Christian message no longer has a 'physical reality' to connect to. I mean, simply, that the church, by and large, has disconnected the Bible from the reality of history, which is foundational to the moral and spiritual matters they so desperately want the world to accept.

"In the late 1700's and the early 1800's, the idea of long time periods for forming the fossil-bearing sedimentary rock layers was becoming popular. This, in essence, is where the idea of millions of years for the age of the Earth really developed, and is the key to understanding Satan's strategy today. Sadly many church leaders have succumbed to the idea of 'millions of years', and thus have reinterpreted the Bible to fit these eons of time into the Biblical text. The Days of Creation were thus reinterpreted to mean long periods of time. And the Flood of Noah's day was relegated to being just a local event; the Bible's geology was replaced with secular geological history.

"When Darwinian evolution became popular, many church leaders then replaced the Bible's biology (the creation of distinct 'kinds') with secular biological evolutionary ideas. Then the Bible's anthropology (the creation of the first man from dust and first woman from his rib) was replaced by secular anthropology: man descended from some ape-like ancestor. Eventually, the Bible's astronomy was replaced by secular cosmology such as the 'big bang' idea, and so on.

"The church, by and large, progressively gave up the literal history of Genesis and began to capitulate to secular history. As they did, church leaders still wanted to cling to the spiritual and moral aspects of Christianity. So, for the most part, the church held to these (e.g. the message of Christ and the Gospel, Christian morality, etc.), while also teaching its congregations (and the world) that the secular history of the universe could be embraced - so long as God was still somehow involved.

"For a while, this seemed to work. But the church's disconnecting of the spiritual and moral

aspects of Christianity from Biblical history (which involves geology, biology, etc.) had two major consequences:

1. A 'door' was unlocked, something that told the church and the world that the Bible's history in Genesis was not important, and that it could be reinterpreted on the basis of secular history. Future generations progressively pushed that 'door' open more and more, resulting in a growing lack of trust in God's Word.
2. The world that had been influenced by Christian morality began to recognize that if the Bible could not be trusted in its history, then it made little sense to trust it as an absolute authority in regard to spiritual and moral things. Thus, the world began to abandon Christian morality, and build a different worldview more consistent with the secular history.

"Thus, in the world (and even the church), there is a rise in the acceptance of abortion, homosexual behavior, adultery, etc. The church (particularly its older generation) is now looking at the world and is horrified at the increasing immorality and rejection of Christianity. The church battles the world in opposing social ills, and just tells the world to 'trust in Jesus'. But as much as the church tries, it is losing the culture, because it lost the 'war' a long time ago. Because the church gave up the real history of the world and yielded it to the secular, it lost the foundation for the spiritual and moral things it has tried to cling to.

"Most in the church do not understand that we need to re-establish the teaching of geology, biology, anthropology, etc. (From a *big picture* perspective - not necessarily the technical details) in Sunday schools, youth meetings and, most of all, from the pulpit. Until the church understands that it needs to regain and defend its true history, and reconnect the Bible's spiritual and moral things to this history, we will continue to be shocked by how fast the church continues to lose its influence.

"As Jesus said in John 3:12, 'If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?'

"The church must rethink how it is reaching and influencing the culture. Many churches do a good job of preaching and teaching what the Bible says about morality, for example, but increasingly the world isn't listening. Why?

"I believe that the church has largely forgotten to apply 1 Peter 3:15 'But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who ask you to give a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...'. Christians need to give answers - they need to be able to defend their faith wherever it's under attack. And where's the Bible under attack today? Science!

"Generations of ignoring the Bible's history, geology, and so on have caused the church to become so isolated from the culture that it is in effect existing in a 'bubble', its teachings cut off from reality. Accounts like Eden and the Flood are not taught as connected to the flow of factual history. They are generally seen and presented like 'Aesop's fables' - stories with a moral message, but not real.

"So the church can't just teach Bible stories. Christians have to show that the Bible answers the attacks people hear constantly at their school or job. We often hear how fossils and other evidence of 'science' supposedly prove 'millions of years' of history and disprove biblical history, but do we have answers?

It's time that the church started teaching the answers to science questions, not just to spiritual or moral questions. Once people hear answers to their questions about the Bible's connection to science, then they'll be more open to hearing what the Bible says about morality ... and salvation."