

Christian Leaders Continue to Drift From the Truth

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman warns against the drift of Christian leaders from biblical truth, emphasizing the need for compassion without compromise and bold leadership in the church.

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:1

Topics: "Sound Doctrine", "Confronting Sin"

Description

Shane Idleman delivers a sermon addressing the importance of standing firm in sound doctrine, even when it goes against popular beliefs. He emphasizes the need for genuine compassion towards those in sin while upholding biblical truths on sexual behavior. Idleman warns against compromising truth for the sake of being liked and encourages confronting sin in love, following the example of true Christianity that extends compassion without compromise.

Transcript

"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3).

It's not my practice to name names, but I was saddened (not surprised) to hear that Rob Bell, founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Hill, Michigan, has come out in support of same-sex marriage during a forum on March 17, 2013 in San Francisco.

In Bell's words, "I am for marriage. I am for fidelity. I am for love, whether it's a man and woman, a woman and a woman, a man and a man. I think the ship has sailed and I think the church needs--I think this is the world we are living in and we need to affirm people wherever they are."

Bell misses the point that genuine Christians have nothing but compassion for those trapped in sexual sin. Those who strongly believe in the Bible and God's will regarding sexual behavior also strongly believe in unconditional love and forgiveness. To say that authentic Christians hate or fear those trapped in the homosexual lifestyle demonstrates a gross misunderstanding of the Christian faith. To "confront in love" simply comes from a desire to honor God and to truly love and care for others. We cannot "affirm" what the Bible clearly calls sin.

The ability to relate to people on their level, show genuine concern, and love them regardless of their lifestyle is the mark of true Christianity. Unfortunately, Christians often embrace one of two extremes. At one extreme are those who insult or who are violent toward those trapped in this lifestyle. Homosexuality appears at the top of their sin list. With this group, there is very little love or compassion. The other extreme excuses this sin and looks the other way. Both extremes are wrong and offer a false impression of genuine Christianity--we must extend compassion but without compromise.

Warning, confronting, challenging, advising, and admonishing are all characteristic of genuine love. Parents warn, confront, challenge, and admonish daily. Truly misled or self-serving individuals would wrongly attribute these traits to "hate-speech."

People like Bell and myself cannot be united because we are divided on foundational issues. This is why we can't "just all get along"--although I wish we could. When people depart from truth, in essence, they are departing from God.

Rob Bell continues, "I think we are witnessing the death of a particular subculture that doesn't work. I think there is a very narrow, politically intertwined, culturally ghettoized, Evangelical subculture that was told 'we're gonna change the thing' and they haven't (gay-marriage). And they actually have turned away lots of people. And I think that when you're in a part of a subculture that is dying, you make a lot more noise because it's very painful."

Rob Bell forgets that truth is narrow; it's not popular. We are not "making a lot of noise"; we are contending for the faith, albeit not always in love. In reality, it's the minority (the homosexual agenda) who is making a lot of noise.

Are those who defend homosexuality, such as Bell, truly loving the homosexual, or are they simply seeking to avoid conflict? If they are more worried about being liked than being truthful, do they really care for homosexuals more than those who are willing to risk their reputation, and quite possibly their safety, in order to speak the truth in love? For example, an online viewer commented on a recent message that I gave, "When I watched the video, 'Same-sex Attraction--Balancing Grace and Truth', I was cut to the heart. I cried out to God to save me...and He did. I'm now trying to minister to my partner who is dying of AIDS." (This message can be viewed here: <http://vimeo.com/47460132>). Authentic Christians love the truth and others to the degree that we are willing to risk the consequences of confrontation in order to help others. This is genuine love, not hatred.

Christian leaders would do well to revisit Jeremiah 23 regularly. Although this passage was written primarily to the leaders in Jeremiah's day, the principle still applies today: "'Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!' Says the LORD...they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness...and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you'...I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied...but if they had stood in My counsel, and caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way...therefore, they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD'" (Jeremiah 23:1-32).

These leaders, like many today, have "perverted the words of the living God" (vs. 36) by not warning, instructing, challenging, and contending for the faith.

As the church falls deeper into self-reliance and further from truth, our need for bold leadership has never been greater. Change will only occur in our nation when there is a strong conviction of sin and humility. We must stop confusing God's patience with His approval and preach with conviction from the pulpits again. "When we become so tolerant that we lead people into mental fog and spiritual darkness, we are not acting like Christians--we are acting like cowards" (A.W. Tozer). "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

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