

Errors in the Modern Day Gospel

by Voddie Baucham

Voddie Baucham critiques the contemporary gospel presentation, emphasizing the need for effective communication and true repentance in evangelism.

Duration: 35:04

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1

Topics: "False Gospel", "True Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker criticizes a preacher who uses manipulative tactics to connect with the audience. The preacher dresses down and uses phrases to make the young adults and 20-somethings feel like he is one of them. He then uses humor and storytelling to draw the audience in, but quickly shifts the message to guilt and legalism. The speaker expresses concern that this type of evangelism is not true gospel proclamation, but rather a checklist of religious activities that make people feel guilty if they don't measure up.

Transcript

Amen. I'm glad I got to stand up after that because they rise up old men of God. Yeah, amen.

Come on. Let's bow together in a word of prayer. Father, thank you so much for just the privilege that we have of gathering in your presence and among your people and having this opportunity to worship you, to enter into this two-way conversation that we call worship, to say some things to you and about you that we know and believe to be true and anxiously anticipate those moments when you speak to us clearly and powerfully through your word to the end that our lives would be touched and changed and transformed, that we might be conformed to the very image of Christ.

That is our prayer. And so we do say, speak Lord for your servants indeed are listening and we desire to hear and to heed what it is that you would say. We pray these things because we believe that they are in accordance with the will and the nature and the authority of Jesus and all God's people said, amen.

Well, it is good to be here. It is good to be back. It is also especially good to be back on this campus and not owe anybody a paper.

Amen. I was at an event not long ago where I saw something that unfortunately is not at all uncommon, but disturbing nonetheless. I saw this unfold as I've seen it unfold numerous times before.

I was at an event that was a very large event in a big stadium with thousands of people. And there were several people who were going to preach that day. I was one of those people.

There was one gentleman who got up and it was his assignment to preach the gospel and give what we commonly refer to in Baptist life as an invitation, an altar call, that practice that we trace back to Charles Finney and his movement in the great, second great awakening. And that's what this individual did. He stood up and he shared and he gave this tremendous altar call and the response was amazing.

And while people were flooding down the aisles to get to the altar, somebody sort of nudged me and said, isn't this awesome? And I could not respond because my spirit was far too grieved to respond at that moment. Because what I saw and what I have seen far too many times was not the proclamation of the gospel, but what I saw was what has begun to pass for evangelism and gospel proclamation in the contemporary age in which we live. What I saw was a man who pushed all of the buttons that we have been so masterfully taught to push.

I saw an individual get up, no Bible in hand, stand there and begin by connecting with the crowd. And because it was a crowd of young adults and twenty-somethings, he decided that, you know, he would dress down and that he would say a few phrases that would let them know that he was one of them. And so this man, who in no way was a part of their generation, was using phrases in order to connect, because that's just what you do.

And after you use a few phrases to connect, you move into another phase. And that phase is when you draw people into the message by being humorous. You draw people in by telling jokes and telling story after story after story that sort of brings them in and sucks them in to what it is that you are saying and causes them to identify you.

Then once you have them there, quickly you must turn the situation. And then you begin to proclaim not the gospel of Jesus Christ, but the gospel of guilt and legalism. You present Christianity in terms like this.

I used to be lost, but now I read my Bible every day. Do you? I used to be lost, but now I witness to people every day. Do you? I used to be lost, but now I pray every day.

Do you? These legalistic terms where Christianity is now a checklist so that the people in the audience, if their list doesn't match the preacher's list, they feel guilty about where they stand with God. After you have turned the message thus, then you bring fear alongside the guilt and the shame, and you talk about the certainty and suddenness of death. When you have your audience sufficiently afraid, you turn once again, and you offer as wide an invitation as you possibly can.

This individual got so broad as to say, if there is anything in your life that is not right before God, you need to be down here. Hundreds came. The event organizers were so excited, but out of the hundreds that came, the last count I had was that the counselors had led about 25 of them to Christ.

But you better believe that on this individual's website the next week, there was this conference, and after this conference, there was this statement, there were hundreds of decisions for Christ. He has to beat away bookings with a stick, and I'm not going to say his name because there are dozens of people who fit the bill. You know who they are.

You may be one of them. You can make a good living if you will learn how to manipulate crowds. And that's all that happened that day.

But here's what's worse, is that because of ministries like this, hundreds if not thousands of people are being sealed in unbelief. They have neither heard nor responded to the gospel, but because they came to the right part of the room and repeated the right prayer that I have still yet to find in Scripture, they have been told that they are now eternally secure. No wonder I have conversations with people regularly who tell me I went to the right part of the room and I said the right words, yet there is still something missing.

I want to talk to you this morning about the gospel that we preach. If you will, open your Bibles with me to the book of 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

And let's look at the first few verses here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 at this gospel that we preach. Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preach to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preach to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

And He appeared to Cephas and then the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also, for I am the least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God within me, whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." This gospel that we preach, first of all, this gospel that we preach requires effective communication. And I pray that that's why you're here.

I pray that that's why you're in seminary. That's why you're considering this school if you are here today in that regard. I pray that you are not here in order to get your ticket punched.

I pray that you are not here in order to get a better salary or a better job at a better church. But I pray that the reason that you are here is to follow the word that we have in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 15, that we would rightly divide or handle accurately the word of truth. My prayer for you is that that is the goal of this instruction, that we understand the weight of this matter, the fact that the gospel must be communicated effectively.

Now if you know anything about communication, you know that there are three things that are required for effective communication, a sender, a receiver, and a message. Look with me in that first verse. Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel, that's the message, which I preach to you, that's the sender, which also you receive, that's the receiver.

The gospel that we preach requires effective communication. What that means is we have to be senders of the gospel. We must proclaim the gospel.

Whatever it is that we do, whatever ministry it is to which we are called, we are called to proclaim the gospel. Secondly, it requires receivers. And I'm going to say this, and some may be upset by this, newsflash, you can't make anyone receive the gospel.

You see, the reason that we buy into manipulation is because we have bought into this idea that somehow all we need to do is be crafty enough. All we have to do is be manipulative enough. All we have to do is find the right word or the right felt need, and then we can win anybody to Christ, newsflash.

God saves sinners, not you, not me. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not how articulate I may or may not be. The reason we have become manipulative is because we believe that if we can twist someone's arm and make them repeat after us a certain set of magic words in a certain order that magically, regardless of what the Spirit of God has wrought within them, they will be saved, newsflash.

The right words in the right order does not save sinners. Your manipulation does not save sinners. You know, when I came to Christ, I'll never forget, as you heard, I didn't grow up in church.

I didn't grow up going, you know, hearing the gospel. I didn't grow up, and my mother was a practicing Buddhist, and the first time I ever heard about Jesus was my freshman year in college when a guy by the name of Steve Morgan came into a sweaty, nasty locker room and tried to share with me, basically, he thought that I was a sinner because I was part of a Christian organization in my high school called the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. What he didn't understand was that this was just something that our coach did to get more time with us.

He threw us t-shirts and said, we're going to have FCA, and that's all I heard of it. I learned how to, you know, pray the Lord's Prayer after practice, and so we would practice, and he would cuss us up one side and down the other, but after practice, we'd always say the sinner's prayer. Take that for whatever it's worth.

Or we'd say the Lord's Prayer, I'm sorry. You know, and so he came in thinking, well, this guy, you know, knows Jesus. Maybe he can start a Bible study with the people, you know, on the football team.

He talks to me for four and a half minutes and realizes, I don't know Jesus from the man in the moon. He backs up because he had a presentation that he was trying to share with me, which would have helped me connect the dots had I had enough dots. Amen.

But I didn't have enough dots, so he backed up, and he said, okay, this is the Bible. That's where he started. Came back every day for three and a half weeks until all my questions were answered.

One day, I'm there in that locker room, and I'm waiting for Steve to come. See, after the first two weeks, he had taught me how to go find the answers myself, and I wanted to know about the validity of the Scriptures. I wanted to know if they were divine rather than human in origin.

I wanted to know about the person of Christ. I wanted to know about why Christianity and not other faiths. I wanted to know these things.

All of a sudden, one day, I'm waiting for him. It's Friday, November 13, 1987. He's late, and I realize I don't have any more questions.

I'm sitting there in this locker room. Steve's late. I got no more questions.

I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to ask him when he comes, and all of a sudden, I realize something. I believe. So I get down on my face in this sweaty, nasty locker room, and I say, God, that thing you did for

Steve that he's been telling me you want to do for me, now it's good.

I want to tell you something. The best thing Steve ever did for me was that he did not change my prayer. He didn't come in and mess up my entire theology by saying to me, no, you didn't say the right words in the right order.

He came in that locker room and saw me on the floor bawling like a little kid, and he asked me what happened, and I told him, and he looked at me, and he said, you've been born again. It's not certain words in certain order that saves people. It's not a certain part of the room that saves people.

I have been in places where I have proclaimed the gospel and called upon people to be saved right in their seats, and I have had people come unglued. Why? Because, man, you've got to get them to the front of the room. Why? Who says? Show me that.

As a matter of fact, show me a New Testament church with a room to have the front of. Why did I do that? Here's why I did that. I got so tired of meeting lost people who were on their way to hell but were confused because they came to the right part of the room and said the right words, but they had not been born again.

The gospel must be communicated effectively. A sender, a receiver, and a message. What's that message? Look at what he says, beginning in verse 3. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for sin according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was resurrected.

Now you look there and some people say, well, see, there it is. That's the gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection. Newsflash, a whole lot more said right there than that.

He says that Christ died. Not just anybody died, not just somebody died, but that Christ died, the Messiah, the Anointed One. If we don't understand who Jesus is, we don't understand the gospel.

I had a conversation with a young woman on an airplane once who was reading a book about Jesus. It was a New Age book about Jesus, that he was some avatar and that basically he was connected to God to a greater degree than any other human being ever before in history, and so what we can learn from him is how to tap into that divine aspect of us. So if I had just asked her, do you believe in Jesus? Her answer would have been, why yes, I do.

However, when I twisted it just a little bit, do you believe in Jesus as he has proclaimed in the Bible? Her answer was no. Well, does she believe in Jesus or does she not? Answer is no. I mean, it's just like, you know, you leave from here.

I use this with people all the time. You know, you leave from here and you go, man, we were in chapel today. We had a great chapel today.

It was this guy who preached in chapel today. He's a Bodhi, something, and they go, wait, Bodhi Bacchum? And they go, yeah, yeah, Bodhi Bacchum. So wait, the Bodhi Bacchum.

It could happen. And then you go, yeah, yeah, he was in chapel today. Yeah, it was a great thing, man.

He was talking about the gospel and stuff. They were like, wow, Bodhi Bacchum was in your church? Yeah. And then they say, a little white guy from Mississippi.

Right now you've got two choices. Choice number one is you could say, no, that would be somebody else. Or choice number two, you could say, well, that's your interpretation.

You see, when we're talking about me, that's funny. But that's exactly what we allow people to do with Jesus all the time. We allow them to believe in this warm, fuzzy Jesus who is not the Christ of the scriptures.

I sit with this woman on the plane and I said, what do you believe about my Jesus? And she said, I believe he's a good man and that he's a good teacher and that he's a good prophet. She was through, y'all. I said, come on.

And she said, that's it? I said, okay, let me ask you a couple other questions. There's this guy who lives in me and his name's Bad Bodhi. Usually I try to let him out like once a week, late at night when nobody's around.

But sometimes, sometimes he gets away from me. And this particular day he did. He said, ask her this.

And so I did. I said, do you believe that Jesus is God who wrapped himself in the flesh? And she said, well, no, I don't believe that. I said, okay.

And then Bad Bodhi said, okay, ask her this one right here. I said, do you believe that Jesus is the only means by which man can be saved and spend eternity in heaven with God? And she said, well, no, I don't believe that. And then he said, okay, okay, one more time.

Ask her this. I said, do you believe that Jesus died for sin and that he was resurrected on the third day? Do you believe that he ascended to the right hand of the father? Do you believe that one day he's going to come again to judge the living and the dead? She responded, no. And then Bad Bodhi said, okay, I told you I was through, but I'm not.

I don't want you to ask her anything. I just want you to tell her this for me. And so I told her what Bad Bodhi said.

I said, ma'am, you got issues. She said, what do you mean? I said, well, you said that you believe Jesus is a good teacher. Well, yeah.

I said, but you also said that you don't believe that he's the only way that we can get to heaven. She said, yeah. I said, well, Jesus taught I am the way, the truth, the life.

No one comes to the father but by me. If he taught that and it is not true, he's not good teacher. He's false teacher.

You also said that you believe Jesus was good man. Well, yes. And you said that you believe that Jesus was not God who wrapped himself in flesh.

Well, Jesus said, I tell you the truth before Abraham was, I am. He also said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. He said, I and my father are one.

He claimed divinity for himself. If he claimed to be God, but he is not God, he might be a lunatic, but he is not a good man. You also said that you believe Jesus is a good prophet, but you said you do not believe that he died for sin, was resurrected on the third day, is seated at the right hand of the father and is

coming back to judge the living and the dead.

Now he told his disciples that he was going to be crucified and that he was going to be resurrected. He also said that he was going to prepare a place for us so that where he is, we may be also, and that he'd come and receive us unto himself. If Jesus didn't die for sin, if he was not resurrected on the third day, if he's not seated at the right hand of the father, if he's not coming again to judge the living and the dead, then that means he prophesied falsely.

He would be a false prophet and not a good prophet. So your problem is this. You cannot believe that Jesus is good man, good teacher and good prophet unless you believe God wrapped himself in flesh, condescended and became a man, died on the cross for sin, was resurrected on the third day, has ascended to the right hand of the father where he sits now to make intercession for us, that he's coming again to judge the living and the dead, and only those who have placed their faith in him and him alone will have access into heaven.

You can't have it both ways. Christ. That's the gospel.

Christ. Not just a warm fuzzy man who will make you a better husband or a better wife. Not just a guy who wants to be your friend.

I don't believe Jesus wanted to be my friend. I believe he wanted to kill me and be friends with what was left. Amen.

But the Christ of the Bible, that he died for sin. Newsflash, the gospel message includes the message that we are sinners. How is it that we say we've preached the gospel but we haven't preached repentance from sin? How is it that we say that? We are sinners.

We've sinned. I know, maybe you've been, you know, influenced by Locke and Rousseau and others who believe that man comes into the world and we're tabula rosa and we're neither good nor bad. We're kind of neutral.

Culture makes us whatever we are. People who believe that don't have kids. Amen.

My first child taught me that all of us are sinners. My second one taught me that some of us are bigger sinners than others. I'm scared of what this third one's going to teach us.

Sin. Sin. People are asking questions about the odyssey.

They're always asking about the evil in the world. I love it when people ask me that stuff. There's evil in the world.

You believe in God. You believe that he's this all-powerful God and he's this loving God. Why is there evil in the world? I love it when people ask me that question.

A lot of times we get scared. Oh God, please don't let him ask me that question. Please don't let him ask me.

I want, God, let him ask me the one about the evil in the world. Please God. And that's not even bad voting.

When they ask me, I just tell them, I say, you know what, before I answer that question, we need to flip it a little bit. Because here's what I want to know. Why is it that you always look up to God and go, God, there's evil in the world.

How could there be evil in the world? Here's what I want you to do. I want you to say, God, I am an evil person. How dare you not consume me? How come we don't ask that question? Here's what I want to know.

Do you really want God to get rid of evil? Because if he does it tonight, we're all gone tomorrow. Problem with the world is you and me. Problem with the world is sin.

We are sinners by nature and by choice. That's the gospel. We don't just make bad choices.

We weren't just raised by the wrong parents. We weren't just raised in the wrong neighborhood. You sell that stuff somewhere else.

It's sin. It wasn't a mistake. You thought about it, planned it out, executed your plan.

And if you thought you could get away with it, you'd do it again. That's the gospel message. That's the message.

For the sake of time, let's look at the rest of this. It requires effective communication. And look at what it says.

In which also you stand requires an appropriate response. He says, it becomes the foundation upon which you base your life. That's the proper response to the gospel.

Not lip service. Not I say these words and continue in whatever I was doing before I said these words. Repentance, a turning from and a turning toward.

We make the message of Christ the foundation upon which we build our lives. It is where we take our stand. It is saving faith, genuine faith, authentic faith.

It is not being in the right part of the room and saying the right words. And here's what's amazing about this. There are some of you who are going to leave from here.

And you're going to say, you know, stuff like, oh, you know, that voting guy, I didn't know he was a liberal. I didn't know he was a heretic. He's making fun of the altar call and all that kind of stuff.

Number one, I'm not making fun of anything. Number two, here's one of the benefits that I have because I didn't grow up in the church. I didn't grow up doing stuff my whole life.

And so I always ask what the book says about it. And there's a lot of stuff that we do that we are committed to that you can't find anywhere in the scripture. And if you want to call me whatever you want to call me, call me a biblicist.

That's what you call me. And if you want to hold onto things just because they are the way they've always been, then you hold onto them. And I'm not saying that you're godless if that's something that you do.

But can I at least say this? You'd better go to the scripture and be able to have a theological answer for whatever it is you choose to do. We make it the foundation upon which we build our lives. Here's the last

one.

Unless you have believed in vain in the time that we have remaining, let me deal with this. Because there's a lot of people out there who are sort of confused about this. They say, see what that means? That means if you don't hold onto this, you're going to lose this.

If you don't hold onto it, you're going to fall away from it. First John 2, there's one area that makes this clear. Those who went out from among us, the reason that they went out is because they were never of us.

If they were of us, they would have remained. In other words, if you've got it, you're staying. Let me be clear.

I believe wholeheartedly in the eternal security of the believer. And let me just state that unequivocally. I believe if you are saved today, you're going to be saved tomorrow.

I believe that he who began this good work in you is going to see it through to completion. Let me say it another way. I don't believe you can lose your salvation.

Oh, we hear that and we just get so upset. Oh my goodness! Did he say that? People are going to go out and commit murder now because he said that. Newsflash, if the Holy Spirit doesn't have the ability to restrain people from such actions, either number one, he's not all that I thought he was, or number two, they don't have all they said they had.

It's not what he's saying here. Here's what he's saying. First Corinthians chapter 15 is an argument for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is a polemic against those who are arguing that resurrections don't happen. And basically here's his argument. Number one, resurrections do happen.

Number two, the resurrection of Jesus Christ happened. And number three, it is the capstone in the arch of Christianity. You have no Christianity without the resurrection, although there are some who would like to have it both ways.

What he is arguing is this, not that if you do bad things after you believe the gospel, you're not saved anymore, but if you believe a bad gospel, you weren't saved in the first place. That's his point. We don't get to go to the Bible and pick and choose what it is that we like about God and hold on to that and discard everything else.

Let me read something from you from a man who decided that he would do just that. Bishop Jack Spong writes in his book, *A New Christianity for a New World*, I do not believe that Jesus entered this world by the miracle of a virgin birth or that virgin births occur anywhere except in mythology. I do not believe that a literal star got a literal wise man to bring Jesus gifts or that literal angel sang to hillside shepherds to announce his birth.

I do not believe that Jesus was born in Bethlehem or that he fled to Egypt. I do not believe that the experience Christians celebrate at Easter was the physical resurrection of the three days dead body of Jesus. That man's lost.

He calls himself a Christian, but he's not one. That's the bottom line. If you still have a close with this, look at Ephesians chapter one, because this gospel that we preach has to be communicated effectively.

It requires an appropriate response and it will bear lasting fruit. It will save you completely. Chapter one, look at beginning at verse 13.

And him also, you after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed you were sealed in him with the Holy spirit of promise, who was given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of his glory. Newsflash. There's been a down payment made on me like earnest money.

When you go and buy a house, see when you go and buy a house, you write a contract and you put earnest money with your contract. And what it says is this, I'm giving you this contract and my earnest money. If I do not come on closing day to redeem the house with the rest of the money, you get to keep my earnest money and sell your house to somebody else.

What God has said to me is this, I'm putting earnest money on you, boy. I am putting down a payment on you so that you know that you're mine. And so that you know that I'm going to redeem you in the last day.

Now, the earnest money that God put down on me was this the spirit of God, which means that if God decides not to come and redeem me on that day, the earnest money that he loses is the third person of the Trinity. The only way I can stop being saved is if God stops being God. I did not save myself.

I do not keep myself. This gospel that we preach must be communicated effectively. It must be.

This gospel that we preach requires an appropriate response. This gospel that we preach will have lasting impact. We preach the gospel.

God saves sinners. God keeps sinners. If you believe that, then act like it.

Let's pray. Father, what an incredible gift and opportunity and privilege we have to proclaim your gospel, that Jesus the Christ died for sin according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was resurrected on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that because of that, sinners can be saved. Not because of our manipulation, not because of our arm twisting, not because we've figured out how to put the right elements in the right place in order to elicit the right response, but because you save sinners, because you use the foolishness of preaching and the gospel to do so.

May we be faithful to that, and may that faithfulness bear much fruit. This is our prayer and the earnest desire of our very souls. And we ask it in the strong name of Jesus, the lover, redeemer, savior, keeper of our souls.

Amen.

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