

Greenwood Hills Conference 1989-03

Nehemiah 4:10

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald addresses the challenges faced by the church, emphasizing the dangers of secular influences and the need for a Christ-centered approach to ministry.

Duration: 51:07

Scripture: Genesis 6:18, Judges 7:2, Matthew 10:1

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the negative impact of television on the spiritual temperature of the church. He believes that TV weakens prayer life and distracts Christians from spending time with the Word of God. The speaker also highlights the danger of biblical illiteracy in the church, as it makes it easier for false teachings to spread. He concludes by urging young men entering the ministry to avoid materialism, immorality, and seeking personal glory, and instead focus on serving the Lord faithfully.

Transcript

Chapter 4, and beginning in verse 10. Nehemiah, chapter 4, and verse 10. Then Judah said, The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.

And our adversaries said, They will neither know nor see anything till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease. So it was when the Jews who dwelt near them came that they told us ten times, From whatever place you turn they will be upon us. Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall at the openings, and I set the people according to their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

And I looked and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it happened when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their counsel to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, every one to his work.

So it was from that time on that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor. The leaders were behind all the house of Judah. Those

who built on the wall and those who carried burdens loaded themselves, so that with one hand they worked at construction and with the other held a weapon.

Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. The one who sounded the trumpet was beside me. Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall.

Therefore wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us. So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.

At the same time I also said to the people, Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night, and a working party by day. So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, took off our clothes, except that every one took them off for washing. Last night we were thinking about opposition from without in building the walls of Jerusalem.

And we also started on the subject of problems within. And we spoke about the problem of discouragement. And we had that in the first part of verse 10.

Judas said, The strength of the laborers is failing. That was the first problem, discouragement. The second is in the same verse.

In the version that I read it said rubbish. In other versions it says debris. There is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.

And you can picture it, can't you? The walls having broken down and stones and mortar all over the landscape. I would like to suggest to you tonight that there's an awful lot of rubbish in the evangelical world that's hindering the forward movement of the work of God. And I will name some of those bits of debris to you.

One of them is psychology. Another is humanism. Another is selfishness.

Another is pseudo-scholarship and intellectualism. And I'd like to think first of all with you tonight about psychology. Modernism has come into the church largely through two channels.

One of them is Christian education, so-called. The other is psychology. And you can see that as you trace the history of seminaries in our country.

Christian education and psychology. Much of what I say tonight will not be very popular. Some of you probably will take quite violent exception to it.

However, I am not running for sheriff and I feel that these things need to be said. Modern psychology is not a science. It's a religion.

Modern psychology has 250 different systems of psychotherapy. And there are 10,000 different techniques that are used. And each one claims that it's the only right one.

Incredible, isn't it? There are 250 different systems of psychotherapy. Each one claiming advantage over the other. And over 10,000 different techniques that are used.

There is no standardized system of psychology, secular or Christian. But in the evangelical world today, there is a great movement to combine secular psychology with the Bible. And in order to do that, you take the works of Freud, Jung, Rogers and others and seek to twist and turn them or rather to twist and turn the Bible so that they will integrate.

Freud was an enemy of Christianity who wanted to take vengeance on the faith because of its alleged anti-Semitism. Jung, J-U-N-G, called Christianity myths. Rogers himself dealt extensively in the occult.

And Christian counselors today go to the writings of these men and try to fit them into a biblical context. It's absolutely ridiculous. The problems for which most people seek help today are marriage, family, personal distress, depression and addictive behavior.

Most of the problems that I mentioned are the result of sin. Most of the problems I mentioned are the result of sin. They are spiritual problems, not mental problems.

But, by using such words as mental illness, patient, therapy, the impression is created, counselors create the impression, that man's problems are diseases which can be cured by treatment. This, of course, relieves men of responsibility as far as sin is concerned. That's exactly what they want to do.

I think one of the most condemning features of psychotherapy is that it is completely self-centered rather than Christ-centered. Counselors engage in a subjective ministry rather than an objective ministry. By turning the searchlight in upon the patient, they're aggravating the condition instead of helping it.

There is no victory in self. The psalmist realized that when he said, When my heart is overwhelmed, from the ends of the earth I will cry to thee, Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Dear friends, we need a rock that's higher than I. That rock is the Lord Jesus Christ. But, modern psychology tells the patient, so-called, to cast his anchor inside the boat.

And that's never provided stability in the storms of life. Psychotherapy has displaced biblical ministry among Christians today. It's a terrible thing.

It has displaced biblical ministry without any proof of its superiority. It has just swept in like a juggernaut. Elders in local assemblies abdicate their God-given role when they turn most people over to professional counselors.

It is not true that elders need professional training in order to counsel adequately. We believe that with the Bible and the Holy Spirit of God, they have the resources in which to counsel people in the subjects that I have mentioned. Now, it's a very interesting thing that in a day when the church is being increasingly psychologized, that some of these secular men themselves are raising serious doubts about the whole field of psychotherapy.

Seems that the church is always a step behind, isn't it? Doesn't it? For instance, here are three titles of books written by professional psychiatrists or psychologists. One is called The Shrinking of America by Bernie Zilbergeld, and I'll be quoting from him in just a minute, tell you what he says. The Shrinking of America.

No Christian, this man. Another is called The Myth of Psychotherapy. The Myth of Psychotherapy was written by Dr. Thomas Szasz, a professor of psychiatry at the State University of New York, Rochester.

The third is called *Against Therapy*, written by a man named Jeffrey Masson. And they're all raising serious doubts as to the effectiveness of psychotherapy and the treatment, the so-called treatment, it gives to people. I think it's in Zilbergeld's book that he tells about a study that was made, it was called the Cambridge-Somerville Study, in which they took a fairly large group of potentially delinquent young people.

They divided the group in two, and they gave psychological help to half the group, and the other group was just a controlled group. They were just left alone. They followed it over the course of years, and the group that had received psychological help turned out to be worse than the other group.

This is known as the Cambridge-Somerville Study. I shouldn't mention I was brought up in Somerville. Some years ago in San Francisco, one of the members of the Board of Supervisors murdered, his name was Dan White, he murdered the mayor, and he murdered one of the supervisors.

He was taken to trial. His lawyers brought in psychiatrists to witness for him, and they witnessed that he had diminished capacity at the time of the murder because he had eaten too many Twinkies. And he received a reduced sentence on that basis.

Twinkies are little sponge cakes with cream in them, is that right? Something like little sponge cakes with sort of creamy, marshmallowy stuff in them. He had diminished capacity because he had eaten too many Twinkies. Dr. Thomas Zoss, professor of psychiatry at the State University of New York, ridiculed the whole process.

How did they know what the man was at the time of the... They weren't there at the time of the murder. He denied that they had any right at all to testify for the offense, and he himself is a psychiatrist. In another study, a greater number of patients who did not have therapy improved over those who did have therapy.

A man named Isink found that two-thirds of a group of neurotic patients will recover or improve to a marked extent within about two years with or without psychotherapy. It's something like saying that medical doctors have most things are better in the morning. And what they're saying is give the people a couple of years, and with or without psychotherapy, they will improve.

And he cited another study which showed a 77% spontaneous recovery rate. And I think this is very important. Zilbergeld, in his book, *The Shrinking of America*, and he's a professional, as they say, psychotherapist, he says in his book that generally, it's just as helpful for a patient to speak to a layperson as it is to a professional counselor.

Here's what Dr. Thomas Zoss says. He says that perhaps most so-called psychotherapeutic procedures are harmful for the so-called patients. All such interventions and proposals should therefore be regarded as evil until they are proven otherwise.

It's incredible to hear these things from secular men while the church is madly rushing after psychological counseling. And it really hurts me to see our young people growing up more anxious to go and major in psychology than in the study of the Word of God. Really hurts.

Because the Word of God is sufficient. It all matters of faith and morals. It's there with the solution to the problems of our life, and people have to go elsewhere to get help.

It doesn't bode well for the future of the evangelical church. If any of you would like to pursue that subject further, or have questions about what I said, you might go to your Christian bookstore and find a book called Psychoheresy. It's written by Martin and Deidre Bobgan.

Very good book. Excellent book. They did their homework, and it's very well documented.

They're not just talking from hearsay. Psychoheresy by Martin and Deidre Bobgan, and very soon they're coming out with a follow-up book called Prophets of Psychoheresy, in which they name names. Because they name names, they're being labeled as divisive.

Well, in that case, Isaiah was divisive, and so was Jeremiah, and so were all the prophets of the Old Testament. But give us men with backbones who stand up and be counted, and speak out the truth no matter what the cost may be. Debris.

There's so much rubbish. Let me give you another illustration of rubbish. Humanism.

I don't think we realize how humanism has even come into the evangelical circle. Sometime, although I don't recommend that you get this book, but if you ever did, the book is called Self-Esteem, the New Reformation by Robert Schuller. And a lot of people think that Robert Schuller is the greatest in sliced bread, you know.

But listen to what he says. Listen to what he says now. The mistake the Reformers made was that their theology was God-centered instead of man-centered.

That's what he said. Don't take my word for it. Please, go get the book and see.

The mistake the Reformers made was that their theology was God-centered instead of man-centered. That is humanism. And it poses as evangelicalism today.

People think that Robert Schuller is just a great evangelical, and people flood to his church in California. If you read further in a book, you'll find that sin is when you have a bad self-image. Hell is the guilt you feel because of that bad self-image.

And the new birth is when you exchange that bad self-image for a good self-image. You say, nobody in evangelical circles--oh yes, oh yes. That's what people are--those are the books that sell in Christian bookstores today.

And we'll say more about that in a minute. Debris. Debris.

Selfism. All of this emphasis on self. Self, self.

I thank God that when I was a kid, I was brought up in an assembly where the servants of the Lord came, and their ministry was Christ-exalting ministry. I can remember one of them saying, a sanctified self is a poor substitute for a glorified Christ. Hmm? Robert Murray Shain said, for every look you take at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.

That is objective ministry. And that's the ministry that brings victory in the Christian life. In fact, it's the type of ministry that Brother David has been giving us in the morning, isn't it? He hasn't been telling you to look within yourself.

When I look within myself, all I find is a pit of corruption. Want to look off to the Savior. Selfism.

Some time ago, I felt a little more mischievous than usual, and I went into a Christian bookstore, and I had a pad in my hand and a pencil in my hand. And I went to the section dealing with self. And I wrote down the titles of some of the books.

And I'd like to read them to you. None of them are found on the back table. Love Yourself.

The art of learning to love yourself. Self-love. The dynamic force of success.

I'm okay, you're okay. Who says I'm okay? That felt like saying, I certainly didn't. A true view of you.

Make friends with your shadow. But you must be pretty hard up for friends. The art of understanding yourself.

Understanding your past, the key to your future. Terrific. My beautiful feelings.

I didn't make these up. Here's another one. You can feel good about yourself.

30 days to a less stressful you. The next one says, You're Someone Special. Do I have to be me? And the subtitle of that one is, Living with Yourself and Liking It.

Dear friends, it was a name that was missing from all those titles. Do you know what the name was? Nothing About the Savior. Nothing About... This is a Christian bookstore I'm talking about.

Nothing About the Savior. No wonder people's lives are coming apart at the seams, huh? When will they ever learn with the Apostle Paul, I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth, no good thing. No good thing.

You have to get your eyes off yourself and be occupied with the Savior. 2 Corinthians 3, 18, But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If that says anything at all, it says we're changed by beholding Him.

Not by beholding self. I call that selfism. Debris.

Rubbish. Is that too strong a word? Rubbish. They don't tell me there's more debris.

Oh yes, there's a lot more debris. TV. Listen, I think it's a sad day when Christians know more about the late night show than they know about Jeremiah.

It's a terrible commentary on our times that people find watching a TV show more entertaining than going to a prayer meeting. Mind you, it's only when you look at it through the eyes of faith that the prayer meeting excels, isn't it? Otherwise, people would rather go to a baseball game or a soccer game. But I tell you, when you look at things through the eyes of faith, it's all changed.

I don't think anything in our generation has lowered the spiritual temperature of the church more than TV. It has an insidious way of helping you to succumb to the chill of your environment. It weakens your prayer life and robs you of time for the Word of God.

And that's what's happening today. The Word of God is largely bypassed by Christians today. And I want to tell you this.

The more biblically illiterate the church becomes, the more easy it is for error to spread. That accounts for a lot of what's happening today. Let me say that again.

The more illiterate, the more ignorant people become as to the Word of God, the easier it is for error to spread. And that's why these men can come on the television and on the radio with the most ridiculous teachings, supposedly Christian teachings, and people accept it. They say, isn't that marvelous? I never saw that in the Bible before.

The reason they didn't see it, it isn't there. But if they had been reading the Bible and studying the Bible, they would have realized, and realized very easily, how wrong the teaching is. I mentioned pseudo-intellectualism in scholarship.

Scholarship, when combined with spirituality, is great. Scholarship without spirituality is dangerous. And I think that's what Kelly meant, William Kelly, when he said there are no men less to be trusted than scholars.

What he meant is this. If I have a lust for scholarship, if I want my name to be known as a scholar, sooner or later I'll have to start compromising the truth of God in our present environment. And I'll have to start speaking out of both corners of my mouth at once.

I won't take a dogmatic stand on the great truths of the Scriptures. I'll be ambiguous about many of these things. And we find a lot of that today.

Presbyterian scholar was questioned on the word for baptized, baptizo. And he said the primary meaning of baptizo is to immerse, but it's never used in its primary meaning in the New Testament. Please help Brother David, he's having a problem down here.

That really is what he said, that it's never used in its primary meaning in the New Testament. I thought that was ridiculous when I read it. Business methods and the work of debris, huh? Rubbish.

Introducing the marketplace into the house of God. And really that's largely what has happened. When you think of the money-making trafficking that goes on in Christian circles today, it all goes back to a man named Judas who said, what will you give me? That's the attitude.

What is there in it for me? And no wonder the world says with deepest scorn, all the church wants is your money. I tell you, I thank God for local fellowships of believers and for Christian workers who look to the Lord alone for the supply of their needs and do not engage in this sort of trafficking. Debris, fads and fancies.

It must have been last year when I was here when we were notified, quite dogmatically, that the Lord Jesus Christ had to come back in the rapture in 1988. Did you read the book? Thousands of copies of the book were written. And many Christians really felt that his arguments were very persuasive and that the Lord Jesus would come.

I think it was in September, wasn't it? But September came and went and the Savior is still in heaven. Fads and fancies, rubbish. The prosperity doctrine.

Do you hear the prosperity doctrine on radio and on the TV? If you give to the Lord, he's honor-bound to make you wealthy. Well, he is, but not in material wealth. In spiritual wealth, soul prosperity is the best prosperity.

But they mix the Old Testament and the New Testament and engage in all kinds of twistings and turnings until the money starts rolling into their coffers. I call these things rubbish. One of the last things that I've been asked about was books that were coming out on dominion theology.

Reconstructionism, it's called. And the whole idea is that our job as Christians is to take over the governments of the world. Well, I know some Christians who've taken the government over their own country.

They have done a very good job of it. I think if I could quote Kelly once again, he said, Christians have never engaged, have never aspired to rule in this world without bringing dishonor on the name of Christ and disrepute on themselves, shame upon themselves. That's something to think about, isn't it? I can think of some so-called Christian politicians in our own country that they aspire to rule.

He said, Christians have never aspired to rule without bringing dishonor on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and shame upon themselves. And what shall we say about all of the hype and glitz and theatrics connected with evangelical Christianity? I see some dear young people in our audience tonight don't think this is New Testament Christianity because it really isn't. I think of the personality cults, how works, supposedly works of God are built around men.

It's all man, man, man. And I stand back and I think Satan is really achieving his goal. But I want to tell you something, God won't stand by and permit it.

God will not share his glory with another. Some years ago Chuck Smith was speaking, I think of the graduation exercises at Columbia in South Carolina. And his message was a very simple one.

It was divided into three parts and it was this. Don't touch the money. Don't touch the woman.

Don't touch the glory. Hmm? That's a message to remember. Don't touch the money.

He was speaking to young men going into the Christian ministry and warning them against the danger of materialism. Don't touch the woman. You think of the scandals that have arisen in our country within the last few years and the terrible disrepute it has brought upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Don't touch the woman. Don't touch the glory. Somebody has said, it's wonderful how much a person can accomplish for the Lord if he doesn't care who gets the credit.

But of course in another sense we do want to care who gets the credit. I've already mentioned money grabbing. Money grabbing.

What about the wave of false professions that sweeps across our country? I mean if you read the statistics of our Christians in the country you'd be encouraged, but don't take them too seriously. You'll remember that a few years ago at a great rally in New York City a gangster was converted, wasn't he? And he went right back to his life of crime. And someone rebuked him and said, look, you profess to be a Christian and you're living the way you always live.

He said, there are Christian cowboys, there are Christian actors, why can't there be Christian gangsters? And you don't hear about him anymore. He's kind of faded into the shadows. False professions.

Rubbish. Obsession with numbers. I don't know whether this is just the United States, but it certainly is here.

One brother wrote me recently, the fever for numerical growth, I feel, is perilous. It's an out-of-focus goal tending to de-emphasize spiritual quality at the expense of quantity. We are commanded to obey.

God alone gives the increase. And how very true that is. You think back over the history of God's dealings with men.

Numbers. The flood. Eight people saved, and all the rest perished.

Gideon's army, reduced, reduced, reduced. What? More glory to God if a small contingent of men can go into battle and come through victorious. Even the Lord Jesus himself, he chose what? Twelve disciples.

That wouldn't go over very big in Christian media today, would it? He didn't choose 1,200. He didn't choose 120. He chose twelve disciples.

He's not looking for heads. He's looking for hearts. He's not looking for quantity.

He's looking for quality. He's looking for men who hate sin, men and women who hate sin, and who love God with all their hearts. It's interesting how many men from other fellowships have seen this and spoken quite frankly about it.

E. Stanley Jones says, I loathe this scramble for numbers leading to collective egotism. Hmm? I loathe this scramble for numbers leading to collective egotism. One of the great Protestant denominations in 1984 had a great convention and they had adopted as their slogan I guess it was in 83 the convention was held they had adopted as their slogan a million more in 84.

And the day came for this new program this new evangelistic program to be announced and many of the ministers were sitting up there in the platform and the name was announced to great applause a million more in 84. One of the ministers turned to another and he said if we get a million more like we have now we're sunk. Vance Havner wrote actually we need a thinning instead of a thickening.

Gideon had to thin his troops and a similar procedure might help God's army today. That's interesting isn't it? We don't like that. But you know that's what the Lord did.

Have you ever noticed the Lord first wooed and then he winnowed. He would extend the invitation and the multitude would follow him and he'd go many men forsake not all he has he cannot be my disciple. He first wooed invited men to come to him but he didn't put all his best berries on top of the basket.

He told them the whole story from the very beginning. Jesus thinned his crowd as recorded in the 6th chapter of John and doubtless there were many another occasions. To get today the persecuted minority has become the popular majority.

And he says in another book this is the age of goofus of trickery hocus pocus freaks sleight of hand now you see it now you don't. Everything is done with mirrors everything is measured by how big and how loud everything must be huge gigantic colossal super duper even the new drugs are wonder drugs you take

them and wonder what will happen next. In such a time it's hard to interest people in plain old obedience and faithfulness.

Even Christians must be entertained at church the light of truth is looked at but not walked in and being hearers but not doers men are blinded by excessive light too much light will blind as surely as not enough. And I like what Tosa said and I'm just going to close with this this paragraph comes to me all the time he says I believe in saints. I've met the comics I've met the promoters I've met the founder who puts his name on the building so people will know he founded it I've met converted cowboys not too well converted I've met all kinds of weird Christians throughout the United States and Canada but my heart is looking for saints.

I want to meet the people who are like the Lord Jesus Christ actually what we want to not to have is the beauty of the Lord our God in human breasts. A winsome magnetic saint is worth 500 promoters and gadgeteers and religious engineers. Isn't that true? Let me read that last sentence to you again.

A winsome magnetic saint is worth 500 promoters and gadgeteers and religious engineers. A woman by the name of Anakin Yance was executed in 1539 and on the day before her execution she wrote her last will and testament to her infant son and in that last will and testament she said where you hear of a simple cast off little flock which is despised and rejected by the world join them for where you hear of the cross there is Christ. I'll read it again.

Where you hear of a poor simple cast off little flock which is despised and rejected by the world join them for where you hear of the cross there is Christ. I really believe that those who are determined to go outside the camp following the Lord will always be a small despised segment of the Christian church. A speckled bird in the evangelical community.

But join them where you find the cross for there is Christ. Shall we pray. We think of you looking down on the world tonight on what poses as Christianity with all of what we've called hype and glitz and theatrics all so foreign to the lowly Lord Jesus Christ all so foreign to what he taught and the way he lived.

Lord we confess the sin of the church as our own sin tonight. We would just eat the sin offering before you tonight and say we have sinned. We have departed from your word.

We've taken up psychology and given it the place that only the scriptures should have. We've allowed humanism to come into the church and into our thinking. And all of this rubbish that we've been going over tonight all of this debris that hinders the work of God on earth forgive us Lord.

Help us to cast it aside and help us to go forth pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. For we ask it in his worthy and precious name. Amen.

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