

Most Serious Problem That Exists In Our Churches Today

The most serious problem that exists in our churches today is the distortion of the meaning of the Bible. The reason this has to be the most serious issue is that the Bible is the only way we can know God and every truth that our God wants us to understand. There is no other source that we can trust. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4, the apostle Paul warns us to avoid all other strange doctrines,

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. 1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NASB)

Colossians 2:6 gives us this warning,

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

Also 1 Timothy 4:1 warns,

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will

fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. 1 Timothy 4:1 (NASB)

So, the world's philosophies and false religions deceive and do not give us wisdom that leads one to God and to eternal life. So, why would we distort the Bible in any way? If we do, then we have introduced our own wisdom. 2 Timothy 3:16 says,

All Scripture is inspired by God. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB)

2 Peter 1:21 tells us that the Holy Spirit moved men to write Scripture. No other book was written by God. It is the only source of truth. So, if we distort what He has written, then we are not teaching truth. It is a simple and fundamental fact that when truth is distorted, it is no longer truth.

First Reason the Bible Is Distorted. But sadly, the Bible is sometimes treated not as truth but as a book of opinions. Consequently, Bible teachers are more

concerned to make the Holy Scriptures non-controversial or even sensational. On some occasions, they want the Bible to agree with the culture or to accommodate their own viewpoint. That was the problem with the nation of Israel. The Old Testament contains many



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examples of Israel rejecting what God had spoken because they did not agree and then looked for priests or prophets who would speak pleasant words. Isaiah 30:10-11 is a sad example,

For this is a rebellious people, false sons,
Sons who refuse to listen
To the instruction of the LORD;
Who say to the seers, "You must not see visions";
And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us
what is right,
Speak to us pleasant words,
Prophesy illusions.
Isaiah 30:10-11 (NASB)

We are experiencing the same issue today. For example, some believers do not like the truth that God is sovereign and controls everything. So, they teach the doctrine of Open Theism which says that God does not know all things. Some Bible teachers claim that there is no hell because they cannot believe that a loving God will not ultimately allow everyone to go to heaven. The list of disagreements includes almost every book, chapter and passage in the Bible. But how can this be if every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and He teaches us the meaning of Scripture?

Second Reason the Bible Is Distorted. The Bible is also *distorted*, even when the Bible teacher is truly willing to submit himself to what God has written, because some have a poor grasp of Scripture and the original languages. As a result, they may miss the meaning of a verse or a passage. This is often true of a new Bible teacher. They do not yet have a solid grasp or understanding of the messages of each book of the Bible. So, they do not know how they are interconnected. Consequently, it is difficult to develop an accurate systematic theology, especially the doctrine of future things which affects the understanding of almost every book of the Bible, especially the gospels and Jesus' parables. As a result, even an inexperienced Bible teacher, who desires to faithfully teach the Scriptures, will miss subtle points that can dramatically change the meaning of a verse or passage. This is almost unavoidable.

Third Reason the Bible Is Distorted. A third reason the Bible may be *distorted*, even though the Bible teacher is truly willing to submit himself to what God has written, is that he takes insufficient time to seriously study. Some years ago, a denomination took a survey of their pastors and discovered that the majority of them began the preparation for their Sunday morning sermon on Saturday night while watching television. Then on Sunday morning their sermons typically last 20-30 minutes. The sad message is that a cursory reading of Scripture usually fails to reveal the actual meaning of a passage of Scripture. A cursory study of a passage usually will fail to reveal important points that were not initially obvious. That can change the meaning and ultimately the application of the purpose of the passage. It takes time to understand the Greek or Hebrew words. It takes time to ponder why God wrote a particular passage. What is the subtle meaning that might be missed? Sadly, inexperienced teachers fail to understand that long hours of study will usually "flip on the light switch" of the understanding of the passage. The point is Bible teachers need to ponder what God has written. The apostle Paul wrote this to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15,

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a
workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately
handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

The message is clear. Whether you teach or not, study hard in order to know the truth.

Fourth Reason the Bible Is Distorted. A fourth reason the Bible is *distorted* is that the Bible teacher wants to give an application that is not truly supported by the verse or passage he is teaching. This is an easy trap to fall into for everyone, especially for a teacher who wants to make his message powerful. The application may be biblical, but it may not be supported from the passage he is teaching. Sadly, he may be emotional about his application and hope the people will be thrilled; but God will not be pleased if the teacher does not accurately reveal what God wrote. I know a pastor who on Resurrection Sunday morning read a passage

from the gospel of Luke about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then he ignored the passage and never taught about the resurrection of Christ. He presented an application that did not exist in the passage of Scripture nor was it about the resurrection of Christ. Why did he do that? He said that he wanted to do that. He was looking for an application that did not exist in the resurrection passage. The passage in Luke was only a springboard to some message that he wanted to give the congregation. He distorted Scripture.

Also, when some believers read or study the Bible, it is easy to fall into the trap of seeking some emotional encouragement, something that is uplifting, an application that will make their life better, or solve a problem. If the passage does not seem meaningful, some believers will jump from one passage to another in the hope of finding encouragement. As a youth, I remember flipping from one Bible passage to another looking for encouragement. Sadly, I was not thrilled with the privilege of just being able to read the words God wrote. I was more interested in an application, than just seeking to understand what God wanted to say to me.

Conclusion. In summary, we are experiencing a trend where Scripture is treated as opinions that God used to encourage the Bible teacher and others. This standard of teaching makes the Bible teacher the authority of what God wrote as he pursues something to teach. What will happen to you if your pastor distorts the Bible? What if he is wrong about salvation? Will your spiritual growth be hindered?