

The Danger of Progressive Christianity and the Call to Biblical Truth

In recent years, a movement known as Progressive Christianity has gained prominence within various Christian communities. This approach seeks to reinterpret traditional Christian doctrines through the lens of contemporary culture, often emphasizing inclusivity, social justice, and personal experience. While these emphases resonate with many, there is growing concern that Progressive Christianity may lead believers away from foundational biblical truths. Many who adopt this mindset redefine Jesus into what some call "Fluffy Jesus"—a figure who is only loving, accepting, and always forgiving, without judgment. This distortion ignores the whole character of Christ as revealed in Scripture. Jesus was not only loving and kind, but He also demonstrated righteous anger, rebuked sin, and called for true repentance.

A clear example of Jesus' righteous anger is found in John 2:13-16, where He drove out the money changers from the temple, flipping tables and using a whip. "When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, He found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So He made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves, He said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'" This passage alone dismantles the idea that Jesus was passive or only gentle. He had righteous anger and exercised it when people distorted the truth.

Another example of Jesus' willingness to rebuke sin is found in Matthew 23:13-33, where He openly condemns the Pharisees, calling them "hypocrites," "blind guides," "whitewashed tombs," and even "snakes." He was not afraid to speak the truth, even when it offended. Mark 3:1-5 also shows Jesus' anger when He heals a man on the Sabbath and is met with judgment from the Pharisees. "He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.'" Jesus's frustration was not with sinners who sought redemption but with religious leaders who twisted God's commands. Additionally, in Mark 11:12-14, 20-21, Jesus curses a barren fig tree as a symbolic judgment on spiritual emptiness. These passages prove that the real Jesus was not passive, nor did He tolerate sin under the guise of love.

Jesus suffered and was killed because God does not just dislike sin—He detests it. Psalm 5:4-5 says, "For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong." Similarly, Habakkuk 1:13 states, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing." Proverbs 6:16-19 lists "six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him," including "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict in the community." These verses make it clear that God does not overlook sin, nor does He redefine it to fit cultural narratives.

Pastor and theologian Voddie Baucham coined the term "Pagan Christianity" to describe the blending of secular or pagan practices with Christian worship. He warns that many churches today adopt worldly ideologies under the banner of love and inclusion while abandoning biblical truth. Just as the Israelites repeatedly mixed their worship of the true God with pagan practices, many modern Christians attempt to merge biblical faith with cultural trends, leading to a distorted and powerless version of Christianity. Baucham argues that this syncretism leads believers away from the real Gospel, replacing biblical conviction with feel-good theology.

The only way to combat this deception is to return to Scripture—reading a word-for-word translation, verse by verse, line by line, and evaluating how one's beliefs align with biblical truth. Many who drift into

Progressive Christianity do so because they do not know the Word of God for themselves. Instead, they rely on popular opinions, emotional reasoning, or what others tell them. The Bereans in Acts 17:11 were commended because they "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." This approach is essential for anyone who seeks to discern truth from deception.

Engaging with those who have embraced Progressive Christianity requires a balance of love and truth. Ephesians 4:15 instructs believers to "speak the truth in love," growing in maturity as followers of Christ. 2 Timothy 2:24-25 reminds Christians that "the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, hoping that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth." Correcting errors is not about winning arguments but guiding people back to Christ.

Progressive Christianity presents a challenge to the church, but it also presents an opportunity. Rather than reacting with hostility or fear, believers must respond with unwavering truth and genuine love. Jesus was and continues not to be a soft, passive figure who tolerates sin under the guise of kindness. He is the Son of God who speaks with authority, calls for repentance, and offers salvation to those who truly follow Him. By standing firm on biblical truth and engaging others with love and wisdom, believers can help bring those who have wandered back to the true Gospel.

Addressing Common Questions

1. Isn't Christianity supposed to evolve with culture?

A. While cultural contexts change, the Gospel remains the same. Romans 12:2 warns against conforming to worldly patterns and calls believers to renew their minds in alignment with God's truth. Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Truth is not subject to cultural shifts, and biblical principles are not meant to be adjusted to fit modern preferences.

2. Doesn't emphasizing doctrine over love lead to legalism?

A. Doctrine and love are not opposed to one another. Ephesians 4:15 commands believers to "speak the truth in love," meaning that real love includes standing on biblical truth. Jesus Himself said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). True love does not ignore truth but rather upholds it for the sake of leading others to Christ. Ignoring doctrine leads to a shallow faith that lacks substance, while true faith combines both love and obedience.

3. Isn't focusing on sin and judgment harmful and exclusionary?

A. Acknowledging sin is necessary for salvation. 1 John 1:8-9 states, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Ignoring sin does not bring people closer to God—it leaves them lost. Jesus' message was one of both love and repentance: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). Love without truth is deception, and truth without love is cruelty.

4. Didn't Jesus spend time with sinners?

A. Yes, Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, but He never affirmed their sin. He called them to repent. In John 8:11, after forgiving the woman caught in adultery, He told her, "Go and sin no more." He loved sinners, but He never left them in their sin. Jesus' mission was to redeem, not to affirm sinful lifestyles.

5. What about judging others? Didn't Jesus say not to judge?

A. Matthew 7:1 is often misquoted as "Do not judge," but in context, Jesus warns against hypocritical judgment. In the same passage, He says to first remove the plank from your own eye before helping remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:5). Additionally, John 7:24 clarifies, "Do not

judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." Christians are called to discern truth from error and to hold each other accountable in love (Galatians 6:1).

6. If God is loving, why would He send people to hell?

A. God does not *send* people to hell; people choose to reject Him. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." However, God is also just, and sin must be judged. If someone rejects the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, they are choosing separation from God. Hell is the natural consequence of rejecting God's grace.

7. Why does it matter what I believe as long as I love God?

A. True love for God is expressed in obedience to His Word. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Belief affects actions, and actions shape one's eternal destiny. A distorted view of God leads to a distorted way of living. Proverbs 14:12 warns, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Faith must be grounded in truth, not personal feelings or cultural trends.

8. Isn't God more concerned with how we treat others than with theology?

A. Loving others is a command from God (Mark 12:31), but love is meaningless if it is not rooted in truth. Right theology shapes how we treat others. If we misunderstand God's nature, His commands, and His design for humanity, we will mislead others, even with good intentions. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge." Correct theology is essential because it affects how we live and how we guide others in faith.

9. Aren't Christians supposed to be tolerant and accepting?

A. Christians are called to love others, but love does not mean unconditional approval of every belief or lifestyle. Tolerance, as defined by modern culture, often means fully accepting and endorsing things that contradict God's Word. However, biblical tolerance means showing love and respect while holding firm to truth. Jesus Himself was not "tolerant" of sin—He called people to repentance (Luke 13:3). True love does not ignore sin; it seeks to lead people to freedom in Christ.

10. Why does it seem like so many churches are embracing progressive Christianity?

A. Many churches today are influenced by cultural pressures, seeking to remain relevant and avoid controversy. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 warns, "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. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." Rather than conforming to the world, the church is called to stand apart and be a beacon of truth (Romans 12:2). Progressive Christianity presents a challenge to the church, but it also presents an opportunity. Rather than reacting with hostility or fear, believers must respond with unwavering truth and genuine love. The real Jesus is not a soft, passive figure who tolerates sin under the guise of kindness. He is the Son of God who speaks with authority, calls for repentance, and offers salvation to those who truly follow Him. By standing firm on biblical truth and engaging others with love and wisdom, believers can help bring those who have wandered back to the true Gospel.