

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

9 February 2014

Topics

A.M. Bible Class: Jesus Arrested (John 18)

A.M. Lesson: In God's Presence (Psalm 73)

P.M. Lesson: New Heaven and Earth
(Isaiah 65)

Wednesday: Moab Revolts (2 Kings 3)

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

Dumping Tradition

Rick Boyer (compiled)

You already know that the American Church today is trying to find a balance between the traditional and the contemporary. Some churches have a contemporary service and a traditional service, too. What should we do? Have both kinds to suit older and younger worshippers? Or is one truly better than the other, meaning we should dump one and embrace the other? Or are we just in a natural transition from the old way to the new way? How do we decide?

I've not yet heard a clear explanation of why we're moving away from old church practices to new ones. The usual answer is, "We're trying to reach the new generation." But nobody seems to know exactly who the new generation is, or when their generation started. After all, new people are born every year. And what does it mean to "reach" them? Are they reached when they start attending church regularly? When they get saved? And is there research or experience to show how people

are supposed to be reached? How do we know if we're doing the right thing? Are we doing new things just because they're new? Does this make any more sense than doing old things because they're old?

I encourage you to evaluate traditions in music, dress, and other areas with an honest mind. Remember that if any idea has been kept around for centuries it usually means that it has served a purpose well.

A tradition is a bridge between generations. In this context, I believe there is value in singing songs that our great-grandparents sang in church. It's an excellent way of passing on values to the coming generations. Good lyrics transmit good theology from parent to child and grandchild. Beware of watering down our doctrine by conforming our music to the fashions and trends of modern society.

There's another problem. God doesn't want sinners to be comfortable in church. He wants them to be convicted. Check out 1 Corinthians 14:24-25:

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you. [NASB]

I've been under conviction plenty of times and I can tell you, it's anything but comfortable. I think what God is trying to say is that our church services should be so filled with a sense of God's holiness that unbelievers who may enter will be convicted of their sin. That's not going to happen very well if the believers look, act, and talk just like their godless neighbors. No difference, no conviction. And if we dumb down the music from that which exalts the majesty and beauty of God to contemporary stuff with high volume and low message content, we can't expect our unsaved visitors to see that we have a lot to offer them that they can't get from YouTube.

All this is not to say that unsaved visitors shouldn't be made to feel *welcome*. Of course they should know that they are welcome and loved in our gatherings. But feeling loved and feeling comfortable are two different things. They should feel loved because of our warm and

accepting welcome. But they should feel convicted by our holy behavior, our beautiful, melodious music, and our solid, high-protein preaching.

Rick Boyer. *Take Back The Land: Inspiring a New Generation to Lead America*. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2011) 197-198, 204, 205, 218.

I am reading a book about tolerance. The writer has noticed that the definition of tolerance has changed. Traditionally, tolerance meant to accept that a different or opposing position exists and deserves the right to exist. In contemporary use it often means believing the other person's view is true, or at least as true as your own. The writer says, "We move from allowing the free expression of contrary opinions to the acceptance of all opinions; we leap from permitting the articulation of beliefs and claims with which we do not agree to asserting that all beliefs and claims are equally valid." It seems the church is criticized a lot for its Scriptural preaching. The preaching is characterized as intolerant. We need to be aware that engaging in debate or making a claim that one doctrine is right while another is wrong is not intolerant in the traditional sense but is intolerant in the contemporary sense. Here's an excerpt from the book. -ns

Tolerance

D. A. Carson

Expressions such as "freedom of religion" mean very different things in different parts of the world. In the West and in some other parts of the world, it presupposes not only the freedom to practice one's religion without let or hindrance, but equal status before the law, freedom to convert to another religion or no religion, and freedom to proselytize in favor one one's religion within the bounds of open debate and dissemination of information and arguments. But in most Muslim nations, and certainly wherever *Shari'a* law is applied, non-Muslims may convert to Islam, but Muslims may not convert to anything else. There will always be sanctions, and in the most extreme cases the sanction is death. The claim that Islam at its heart is already a religion of peace and tolerance does not stand up very well if one applies this simple twofold test: (a) Are members of the *ummah*, the people of Islam, free to convert to some other religion without fear of sanctions? (b) May members of *any* religion or no religion propagate their beliefs as openly as Muslims do?

Once one understands these realities, the perennial accounts of what happens to Muslims who wish to abandon Islam are understandable. After becoming a "democracy," in the sense that it's citizens had cast a democratic vote, Afghanistan, whose constitution is based on *Shari'a* law, prosecuted Abdul Rahman for the crime of abandoning Islam when he became a Christian in 2006. The death penalty would have been imposed had it not been for massive international pressure. Rahman was released in March 2006 and accepted asylum in Italy.

In Muslim countries where the interpretation of *Shari'a* law is not so strict (e.g., Malaysia), the sanction imposed on, say, Malays who abandon Islam in favor of another religion will certainly include lengthy spells of enforced indoctrination, possibly prison terms, and a variety of social and fiscal restrictions. For example, two ex-Muslims converted to Christianity will not be able to marry, because they remain unregistered as Muslims and may marry only as Muslims (even though Chinese Malaysians who are registered from birth as Buddhists or Christians may marry their co-religionists). In Jordan, the North Amman Shari'a Court annulled the marriage of Mohammad Abbad, the Muslim convert to Christianity, on the ground that "marriage depends on the [Muslim] creed, and the apostate has no creed" (22 May 2008). This result stands even though Jordan's constitution affirms freedom of religion, and its penal code does not specifically outlaw apostasy. More broadly, when world leaders fear violence, bombings, and widespread killings because of the prospect of burning a copy of the Qur'an, but do not fear that there will be violence, bombings, and widespread killings because of the prospect of burning a copy of the Bible, what does that tell you about tolerance levels of the two respective religions?

D. A. Carson. *The Intolerance of Tolerance*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 2012) 69-70.

News

February 16, after services and before potluck, we will have a congregational meeting in the auditorium.

Gracie Mitchell (Happy's wife) passed away on February 6th, in Des Moines, Iowa, where she and Happy lived.

Back issues are posted at <http://saffordchurchofchrist.org>



Prayer List:

Healing: Della Phillips, Harold Boling, Ben Atchley's family, Jerry Robinson's mother Norma. Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Faye Atchley, Nicolas and Annie Self, Jonda Gardner, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.