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they won't see us waving from such great heights

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The Emerging Church

Posted on March 29, 2009 by Jon

I usually try and wait until my thoughts on a subject have fully percolated before I blog on them. I've been told that I'm rather direct in the communication of my thoughts and opinions, so if I come across loudly, I try to make sure I've at least thought through what I'm shouting.

However, this post contains some thoughts that aren't fully percolated, and as a result, may not be totally articulate or well-formed. Nonetheless, I feel a sense of urgency in communicating something on the subject.

There is a movement of young Christians happening right now. If you read my blog, and only my blog, you'll have caught pieces of it. But there's lots of other people out there who are much better equipped to lead and communicate this movement. If you think I'm alone in my desire to move away from a useless unChristianity, toward something that better resembles the life of Christ — something that is acted out in tangible ways — you should probably find some other

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(better) blogs to read on the subject.

The reality is that for my generation, Christianity is not an issue of denomination or tradition or strict rules. Its about whether or not Christ's message of grace and redemption makes a difference. Ours is a world where absolutes are rare, and where social responsibility is almost a religion of its own. If there are two-dozen faith-based systems, all apparently offering a path to eternal bliss, then what sets us apart? And if your local homeless shelter is run by agnostics, and not Christians, then what are we demonstrating about love?

So if there's an emphasis of late on new methods, new styles of worship, new activities or venues, a renewed interest in community and relationship, on meeting people where they're at, instead of demanding that they change first so that we're comfortable around them, I don't consider that a bad thing. In my opinion, its about time.

However, there's a danger that comes along with that. In an effort to make Christianity more "relevant" — or more palatable, there's also a significant movement to strip our faith of anything that might be offense to someone who doesn't believe what we do. At the forefront of that movement in North American culture is something called the Emergent Village.



The Emergent Village is a loose organization of young professing-Christian leaders having "conversations" about what they really believe. Asking questions like "do we really believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven?" or "Is hell really real?"

Now, I love asking questions, and debating the mysteries of

our faith. And the Bible leaves some things up for debate — I think God left some questions unanswered so we could pursue Him intellectually. But some questions He's already answered very clearly for us. His Truth is there to accept, or deny. And if we accept Christ, then we have to accept what He says was true.

Cause here's the thing: if we make Jesus a liar, then what we offer is a lie. The point of Christians demonstrating grace in their communities — helping the homeless, reaching out to those in need — is to point toward God's Grace in sending His son as the ultimate sacrifice for us. If we decide to paraphrase Christ, or the absolutes that He delivered through His words, then our actions are hollow. They cease to be communicating a love greater than ours, and simply become ways for us to feel better about ourselves.

If that's the extent of our pursuits, that's fine. But if there really is hope beyond the human condition, then the Truth that leads to it has to have been established by someone beyond the human condition. Us humans are way too good at rationalizing truth into any shape that pleases us.

As [Marc Driscoll](#) says (much more eloquently than I) the methods go in the open hand, the message in the closed hand. Paul the Apostle said, "I become all things to all people that I might win some."

The point is, the church needs to change. The members of our churches need to change. We need to be real and relevant and impactful in our communities. We need to demonstrate Grace and Truth in ways that are meaningful to those around us. Our methods must be *timely*.

But the message? It hasn't changed, and it cannot change. Our message is *timeless*. And those who attempt to twist it

into something more comfortable, or leave out the parts that make us conscious of our need for Jesus, are deceivers and false prophets.

Religion means finding something better than yourself to believe in. Not following blindly, but not changing things to escape changing yourself.

PS: [Here's a completely secular video](#) that takes a look at the Emergent Movement. Please note the link, above, to Driscoll's talk on the same subject to understand the differences within this movement — some are actually good. One is clearly from the Deceiver.

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4 thoughts on “The Emerging Church”

Marti says:

March 31, 2009 at 7:49 am



Your PS brings up something that is a problem for Christians in the U.S. (“completely secular”). Our government has made it just about impossible for Christians to get involved...at least officially as “Christians”. Thanks to PC, we cannot “exist”, especially where there are any government dollars, or even effort involved. We MUST be secular, and this is a REALLY bad example for young people trying to live a Christian life. Sad...

Jon Wise says:

March 31, 2009 at 7:59 am



Is this a recent change, Marti? Because it wasn't two years ago that Nicole and I, along with Barb and Jamie, took a dozen kids to work in a publicly Christian soup kitchen in Schenectady, where there was a separate chapel where a sermon was taught after every meal. I'm confident they received government assistance.

On another occasion we went to a clothing bank (in Colonie, I think), also publicly Christian, that was run by a pastor — who prayed before every meal. Not affiliated with any church, they relied on public support.

There aren't many governments that would turn down help for the needy of their society from Christians — even if it means those Christians are going to share their message. I doubt Mrs. Obama would kick anyone out of the soup kitchen she visited, if they showed up claiming Christ.

But even if the government doesn't appreciate or support Christian endeavors, it doesn't change our responsibility. And it was never their responsibility to teach our young people about it.

Marti says:



March 31, 2009 at 3:11 pm

It depends on whose toes you step on. If someone is “offended” by what you do (or usually say) and make an issue of it, then all H... breaks loose. We now have to be very careful how we help out. Everything has to be done “by the kids” because anytime an adult does much more than drive them around, someone thinks “church work” is being condoned by the locals. The paperwork alone is getting horrendous...

Dave says:



April 1, 2009 at 1:24 pm

I agree with you Jon... good to hear your “outspokenness” being a relief to my soul as well. I love to question things, but as you stated, the “truth is the truth” and has stood as that for 2000+ years. Things happened about 300 years ago like this too in the Age of Enlightenment.. people thought they could “out-think God”. It’s sad to say that people hold to some of those ideas now. Keep up the revelations...

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