

WHY CHRISTIANITY OFFERS MORE THAN PROGRESSIVE CULTURE

HUNGRY FOR AUTHENTICITY	
MEGAN JOHNSON	BLOG SERIES

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Why Christianity Offers More than Progressive Culture

What influences a person's decision to leave evangelical Christianity?

In two words, progressive culture. American progressive culture is attractive to the evangelical Christian because it presents partial biblical truths and disguises them as full truths.

Who is this blog series for?

This series is written for evangelical Christians who find themselves attracted to progressive culture. They find the Christian faith to be intolerant, bigoted, homophobic, misogynistic, and a barrier to the social justice movement. This audience sees little, if any, reasons for staying in the Christian faith. My driving purpose is to convince them otherwise.

What to expect?

In this series, I will tackle the six large tenets of progressive culture: social justice, self-love, feminism, my truth, homosexuality, and abortion. In the first post, I will define the tenet. In the second post, I will address reasons why it is a partial biblical truth and reasons why it is a false ideology. In the third post, I will give reasons why the traditional Christian faith offers more than that tenet of progressive culture. This will be the rhythm for our six tenets of progressive culture.

Stay tuned!

Social Justice: Defined (according to society)

The following post is not satire. This is a direct unbiased presentation of how society defines social justice. In later posts, I provide commentary from a biblical perspective.

The social justice movement is a solution to a problem. The problem lies within American systems' oppressor/oppressed format (i.e., education, government, and corporations). In other words, the oppressor or "the haves" built their successes on the backs of the oppressed, "the have-nots." The social justice solution to such a problem is two-fold. First, those in the oppressor position must accept their role in this problem. They use the term "privilege" to convey this social inequality. Privilege is the idea that some rights or advantages are only available to specific groups of people. At the top of the oppressor list are wealthy, white, heterosexual men. Therefore, if one were to fall into this category, they must admit to their inherent privilege that has placed them in the oppressor position.

Intersectionality is the idea that one may experience privilege in some areas while being oppressed in others. For example, a poor, white, homosexual female is oppressed because she is a gay woman of low socioeconomic status. But she has white privilege; therefore, she is an oppressor in that regard only. Meanwhile, a poor, black, transgender female would be considered wholly oppressed because she is oppressed under all systems. This first step of accepting one's privilege is supposed to be characterized by laborious, painful work. It is necessary for one to feel feelings of guilt, shame, and anger throughout this process.

Second, after one accepts that privilege is rampant in themselves and society, they must join the fight through activism. This next step is modeled after Jesus' life and message in that He stood on the side of the oppressed. There are many ways that one may join the fight. One may provide direct support to those in their local community by volunteering, mentoring, or meeting basic needs. One is also encouraged to read works like books on antiracism. And, one is encouraged to join and contribute to organizations that are instrumental in social reform. Central to social reform is the redistribution of wealth. They advocate for policy that takes from the wealthy and gives to the poor. Because of their deeply held oppressor versus oppressed ideology, they insist the oppressor became wealthy via ill-gotten means. Therefore, his wealth must be taken from him and redistributed to those who do not have such wealth.

Source: "Social Justice Matters." <https://sojourngrace.com/about>

Social Justice: Partial Truth and False Ideology

Partial Truth:

Social justice centers its claim on this concept of “justice.” God is indeed a God of justice; Deuteronomy 32:4 says, “all His ways are just.” In the Old Testament, God showed concern for the poor, the afflicted, the fatherless, the widow, and the sojourner (Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17, 27:19). These people were unable to fend for themselves and had no support system. God commanded Israel to care for these people and made provisions in the Law that provided for them.

Jesus said that those who care for the least of these would inherit the kingdom of God (Matthew 25:34-40). Beyond that, Jesus modeled this behavior by tending to the physical needs of the outcasts of society.

In this regard, the social justice movement’s advocacy and care for the less fortunate align with biblical teaching.

False Ideology:

Foundational to social justice is the concept of the oppressor versus the oppressed. However, the Biblical approach does not assume that those in the oppressor position got there by ill-gotten means. Wealth is not viewed as inherently evil in the Bible. When one loves money over God, then it is sinful (1 Timothy 6:10). God is sovereign over everything, so He determines who is wealthy and who is poor. We are told to steward our wealth wisely, whether it is a lot or a little (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

The second chapter of James is about the sin of partiality. This means that it is sinful to make distinctions and judgments amongst ourselves. Yet, the social justice movement parcels out labels based on gender, skin color, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. The Bible commands no such distinctions amongst image-bearers of God. Therefore, the concept of oppressor versus oppressed is an inherently sinful, human-made concept that has no bearing in God’s Word.

Beyond that, the command to care for outcasts of society is an individual command rather than a societal one. This is supported by Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus modeled this by caring for individuals, not focusing on governmental reform. Modern-day social justice is a politicized ideal that aims to use the government to redistribute wealth. If God has called us to steward our finances wisely and give generously, then that is for each Christian to decide. Activism that creates laws and policies to make government coerce its’ citizens is not charitable. It takes away the individual’s act of charitably stewarding their finances and forces them to give to organizations that they may not support, like Planned Parenthood, for example.

Finally, while Jesus cared for physical needs, his primary message was the message of the Gospel, the Good News, that the Kingdom of God may be inherited by those who believe in Jesus Christ. The social justice movement is void of the Gospel message. It calls for activists to fight for their manufactured definition of injustice. It attempts to create a utopia here and now

using government to redistribute wealth for the common good of all. The good news is this sinful world we live in is not a utopia and that we must have eyes for the future Kingdom of God.

Sources:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/social-justice.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/social-gospel.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/critical-race-theory.html>

Social Justice: Why Christianity Offers More

The social justice movement says that the process of accepting one's privilege is arduous, emotional work. Why not put that work toward what God calls us to do? God commands Christians to care for the individuals He brings into our lives. We are to do the work of an evangelist and share the Gospel with these people. Giving up time and resources to care for an individual who needs your help requires more of you than reading books on anti-racism, going on a journey to accept your privilege, or joining an organization that vaguely claims they will dismantle systemic injustices. The Christian faith and the progressive social justice movement both require sacrifice, action, and vulnerability. So, evangelical Christian, it seems like you are willing to put in the work. Do you want to put the work toward what Jesus has explicitly commanded us to do or toward what is currently trendy?

The Christian faith is much more freeing than it gets credit for. Christianity does not require you to accept your privilege, and it does not hierarchically categorize you based on your sex, income, or skin color. Instead, we are all equally sinful. So, Christianity doesn't care how much melanin you have in your skin or how many figures you make. The social justice movement cares about that; we don't. We care that you know exactly where you stand with God in that you don't deserve His love. Yet, despite you doing nothing, He did everything by sacrificing His own Son so that you could live a life free of sin and in perfect harmony with God. Not only that, but God claims that He will deal with all the injustices of our sinful world in His timing. He doesn't ask us to dismantle the evil world in which we live to build a utopia. He asks us to care for the people he puts into our lives that need our help and that need the Gospel.

Self-Love: Defined (according to society)

Today's post is an unbiased presentation of how society defines self-love.

A quick Google search brings up this definition of self-love, "regard for one's own well-being and happiness (chiefly considered as a desirable rather than narcissistic characteristic)."

To expand on this definition, The Brain and Behavior Research Foundation offers, "Self-love is a state of appreciation for oneself that grows from actions that support our physical, psychological and spiritual growth. Self-love means having a high regard for your own well-being and happiness. Self-love means taking care of your own needs and not sacrificing your well-being to please others. Self-love means not settling for less than you deserve. Self-love means accepting yourself as you are in this very moment for everything that you are. It means accepting your emotions for what they are and putting your physical, emotional and mental well-being first."

A self-claimed progressive church called Sojourn Grace Collective in San Diego, California, claims, "Jesus said the most important thing was to love God with all we've got, and also to love ourselves in a healthy way so that we can give that love away to others." This is a reference to Matthew 22:37-39, which says,

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

In sum, society's definition of self-love is precisely what it sounds like. It is the prioritization of loving oneself in ways that support one's physical and psychological well-being. In progressive Christian circles, they claim the purpose of self-love is so that one can carry out Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself."

The self-love movement represents some partial truth but ultimately is a false ideology. Please join me next time to unpack why from a biblical perspective.

Sources:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-l-d&q=what+is+self-love>

<https://www.bbrfoundation.org/blog/self-love-and-what-it-means>

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Self-Love: Partial Truth and False Ideology

Partial Truth: Self-Care

The concept of self-love communicates the point that we are not worthless. This is indeed biblical. We are each made in God's image which brings immense value and worth (Genesis 1:27).

However, it appears to me that the concept of self-love has two facets that are conflated into one: self-care and self-prioritization. The self-care facet represents a partial biblical truth. Taking care of oneself through healthy habits like eating well, being active, getting enough sleep, carrying out purposeful work, and nurturing relationships is biblical. We know that our bodies house the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Thus, we are called to take care of these temples so we may use them to bring glory to God. In this respect, self-care is a good and biblical concept. However, self-care goes too far and is taken too seriously. In other words, we make caring for our bodies an idol. We often do this at the expense of caring for others. This leads me to my next point, self-prioritization.

False Ideology: Self-Prioritization

The self-prioritization facet of self-love represents a false biblical ideology. Recall from the previous blog post, "Self-love means taking care of your own needs and not sacrificing your well-being to please others." In other words, self-prioritization.

In the Bible, God never commands us to love ourselves first or to prioritize our own needs over others. Often Jesus' command, "Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39)" is mistakenly used to support this claim. Loving ourselves, in fact, is very easy and comes naturally for us because it is part of our sin-nature. This command instead means we are to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. Just as we naturally take care of our own needs, we must do likewise for the people God brings into our lives. These people may be a spouse, children, family, friends, or actual neighbors. To care for these people and their needs involves a humbling sacrifice of our time, talent, and treasure, not a self-prioritization of such things.

At the heart of the self-love movement is this idea that we are inherently good and deserve self-prioritization. But this is antithetical to the message of Jesus! Jesus was the antithesis of self-love and the epitome of self-sacrifice. We are so inherently evil that we don't even realize just how evil we are. Even still, Jesus demonstrated sacrificial love by sacrificing His perfect, sinless self for us imperfect sinners (Romans 5:8). Therefore, the concept of self-love is ultimately a false ideology.

Self-Love: Why Christianity Offers More

I see where the self-love movement originated. This movement is highly targeted towards women, especially wives and moms. These groups generally feel under-appreciated and overtired. The self-love movement says, “Wife, Mom, you deserve to take some time just for yourself. You deserve to prioritize your own needs over the husband and children you care for.”

Like we talked about in the previous post, this movement conflates self-care with self-prioritization. A wife and mom absolutely should take the time to care for the temple God gave her. That self-care is vital for her to care for her family.

However, the merging of self-care into self-prioritization is when things get murky. Being a wife and mom does require consistent and daily self-sacrifice. So, if a wife/mom consistently prioritizes her own needs in the name of self-care, she operates outside biblical boundaries. Jesus set the ultimate example of self-sacrifice. Being a wife and mom are opportunities to emulate Christ in the practice of self-sacrifice. Now, of course, this is not just a message for wives and moms. This concept is most certainly applicable to husbands, fathers, and all Christ-loving men and women. This sounds much harder to do than culture’s self-love movement. And it certainly is because it is contrary to our sinful nature.

The enticing nature of the self-love movement is that it promises immediate gratification now. It appeals to our sinful nature in that it prioritizes our own happiness over others. However, consider the short-term and long term consequences. In the short-term, relationships will suffer. A healthy marriage, healthy parenting, and healthy friendships require self-sacrifice. No one wants to be on the receiving end of a self-love obsessed husband, wife, dad, mom, co-worker, or friend.

Most importantly, in the long term, self-love does not lead to salvation. Christianity does not promise such things as immediate gratification and happiness. Instead, Christianity promises eternal life to all who believe in Christ Jesus. As Christ-followers walking in our daily lives, we are called to practice self-sacrifice. To be clear, self-sacrifice by itself does not lead to salvation; faith in Christ does. Instead, Christ’s love in our hearts compels us to take up our cross and to suffer as He did. This breeds a culture of others-focused selflessness versus a culture of narcissism and selfishness.

So, evangelical Christian, is the self-love movement worth it in the long term?

Modern Feminism: Defined (according to society)

If I were to summarize society's definition of modern feminism into one sentence, it would be: modern feminism advocates for women to have equal rights and opportunities to men.

Interestingly, the concept of equality is a subjective opinion. Some believe we have already arrived at equality, while others feel we have a long way to go. A 2017 Forbes article says, "It's abundantly clear that our specific views on these issues are rooted deeply in our own personal and direct experiences, rather than on any data, research, or science surrounding the issues. (In other words, if we've personally faced discrimination, we know beyond doubt that it exists. But if we haven't faced it ourselves, we often doubt that it happens)." Source: Forbes

Before starting this series, I was under the impression that feminism's sole aim was to "dismantle the patriarchy." Indeed, some radical feminists do feel and target their extreme hatred toward men, but they are not in the majority. Instead, I found that the average feminist desires to "pave the way for gender equality." In other words, feminists aim to provide women with skills, employment, and opportunities to be on equal footing with men. In contrast, radical feminism desires to strip men of their rights and opportunities. Modern feminism is more about lifting up women rather than tearing men down.

Modern feminists who have directly experienced discrimination are most passionate about this cause. Look at progressive culture's modern feminist icons like Kamala Harris, Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Oprah, Beyonce, Emma Watson, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, to name a few. Oprah, for example, experienced unequal pay at the start of her broadcasting career. This motivated her to create her own network as well as a Leadership Academy for Girls. Check out the Harper's Bazaar link below for 37 feminist icons and a quick description of their accomplishments.

Before next time, please ponder this question. Why does the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg personify feminist success while her successor, Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, does not? We will discuss this in the next blog post.

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Harper's Bazaar Famous Feminists:

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/g4201/famous-feminists-throughout-history/>

Modern Feminism: Partial Truth and False Ideology

Partial Truth: Equal in Value

God created men and women in His Image (Genesis 1:26-27). This means both genders are equal in value and worth. But then the Fall occurred, and sin infected the world. In God's eyes, women remain equally loved and equally valuable. But in the world's eyes, women have not been viewed in such light.

Therefore, the goal of feminism makes biblical sense. It advocates for women's equality in our sinful and fallen world. To do so, primarily where blatant discrimination exists, is a God-pleasing and honorable mission. To be clear, there will never be perfect success in this department. Equality for women in society may make leaps and bounds. But it will never return to the ideal state of equality before the Fall. At least, not until Jesus comes back and sets up His new and perfect world.

False Ideology: Two Forms of Rebellion

Recall the question I posed in the previous post, "Why does the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG) personify feminist success while her successor, Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett (ACB), does not?"

A Washington Post article titled, "Amy Coney Barrett is a strong woman. That doesn't make her a feminist icon," answers this question. The author acknowledges that ACB is a great role model for women who desire to be married, raise children, and have a successful career. Then she presents a series of questions to determine if ACB is a feminist hero, "Is this judgment making the country a more equal place? Is this ruling supporting *all* genders in making decisions for their own lives, without being encumbered by discrimination? Does this judge accept that women should get to have the same mastery over their bodies that men have always had over their own? That members of the LGBTQ community should have the same rights to marriage, adoption or employment as straight people?"

ACB has failed the litmus test miserably. According to the author, ACB's voting history proves she will use her position as a judge to take away other women's rights. The most threatening rights she will take away are women's reproductive freedom and their right to marry other women. Therefore, ACB is not a feminist hero. On the contrary, she's an enemy of the feminist movement! Meanwhile, RBG was beloved by feminists because her voting record reflected pro-abortion and pro-LGBTQ+ rights.

We learned from this article that two determining factors delineate a feminist from other women: support for abortion and homosexuality. I have two quick questions in response to this. First, how is abortion empowering to the little girls who have been aborted? Feminists are not advocating for those little girls' rights. Just the opposite. They advocate for their mothers' right to end their lives before they are born! Second, is there a way to empower women without discriminating against all pro-life women? Progressive culture preaches inclusivity. Aborting girls and kicking pro-life women out of the feminist club doesn't seem very inclusive.

Ultimately though, getting kicked out of the feminist club should come as no surprise to Christ-followers. James 4:4 says, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." The two factors that distinguish a feminist from a strong woman are the two highest forms of rebellion against God: murdering those made in His image and sexual immorality. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that a Christ-follower cannot label herself a feminist. For such a label (according to progressive culture's defined terms) represents friendship with the world which cannot be reconciled with biblical Christianity.

Keep in mind that I write this series for evangelical Christians who are attracted to progressive culture. My purpose is to show you that being a Christian and supporting the tenets of progressive culture is not compatible. One cannot have one foot in the door of progressivism and another in the door of Christianity. This is what the Bible refers to as being "lukewarm," (Revelation 3:15-16).

Join me next time while we discuss why Christianity has more to offer for women than the feminist movement.

Source:

Washington Post article:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/amy-coney-barrett-feminism-rbg-supreme-court-seat/2020/10/09/824e78be-028b-11eb-897d-3a6201d6643f_story.html

Modern Feminism: Why Christianity Offers More

Christianity doesn't get enough credit for how it empowers women. Instead, it often receives a bad rap for being outdated and misogynistic. But if you look beyond the unbiblical stereotypes, there is much freedom in Christ that empowers the modern Christ-following woman.

First and most importantly, Christ-following women receive the gift of eternal life. One day they will be free of this sinful world and will experience God's original intent of true equality. If a woman experiences discrimination, she can look forward to a day when that will all be washed away. Only Christianity (not any other religion and certainly not progressive culture) provides hope for equality, justice, and a better world. Modern feminism pales in comparison. Feminism offers hope that women *might* experience some equality in the temporary here and now. Christianity provides enduring hope for an eternal future of equality; what beautiful freedom!

Second, Christ-following women have the freedom of choice. For example, she has the freedom to choose a professional career, be a breadwinner, participate in the local community, and hold certain leadership positions in the church. Indeed, there are some biblical boundaries to such freedoms. But there is much freedom in lifestyle choices that Christianity does not get credit for! A woman should remain in tune with the Holy Spirit in making these choices. As a Christ-follower, she has access to God anytime and anywhere through His Holy Spirit. A book by Kamala Harris, a Netflix special on Michelle Obama, and an Oprah magazine cannot do that. The Holy Spirit empowers women in this freedom of choice more so than any feminist icon can.

Third, Christ-following women are empowered by their relationship with the perfect male figure, Jesus Himself. The feminist movement would not be necessary if every man in the history of the world acted as Christ did. But because of the fall of humanity into sin, this is not the case. Even still, God calls husbands to sacrifice everything for their wives and emulate Christ's example. Some men get closer to the mark, but none are perfect. Only God in the form of Jesus was the ideal model of self-sacrifice. Therefore, despite the poor male figures in a woman's life, she always has the best role model in Jesus Christ of the perfect man.

Christianity ultimately empowers women with hope! She hopes for an eternal future in which she experiences perfect equality. While she rests in that hope, she is empowered with the freedom to commune with God and carry out lifestyle choices that glorify Him.

Two final points...

One, all power and authority ultimately come from God, not a feminist hero. God uses women to open doors of opportunity for other women. Let us not falsely give credit to modern feminist icons for something only God does. In fact, God used women in the early church long before secular society valued their worth. Women such as Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, and Mary (Romans 16) played huge roles in shaping early Christianity centuries before the United States gave women the right to vote.

Two, indeed, modern feminism aims to lift up women instead of tearing men down. But this approach still creates a divide between the two genders. It teaches women to covet the rights and opportunities of men instead of viewing them with Christ-like love and respect. Just like us women, men are made in the image of God. Because of this, men have a great responsibility to treat women with Christ-like love in society, homes, and the church. Similarly, women have a significant obligation to treat men with Christ-like respect in society, homes, and the church. Christianity fosters kindness between men and women, emphasized by our similarities as image-bearers, not our physical differences.

My Truth: Defined (according to society)

Progressive culture's concept of "my truth" is quite vague. It became incredibly frustrating as article after article left me more confused. One source defines it as being true to yourself. As in, listen to your desires and be the person you truly want to be. Another source calls it "a pretentious substitute for non-negotiable personal opinion." Another says, "sometimes you know something is real and happened and is wrong, even if the world says it's just the way things are. It's a call to activism rooted in the individual story, grounded in personal experience." And still another, "it's also a well-known tactic in building leadership in community organizing that allows people who are rarely heard to tell their story, learn that they are, in fact, not alone, connects individual experiences to systemic issues, and helps develop powerful public speakers."

Those words sound cool when strung together in an eloquent sentence. But what does it even mean? Is "my truth" a tool for activism? Is it a tool for connecting people with similar "truths"? Is it a lifelong journey, or is it something you can achieve? Is it something you think or something you do? I am left with so many more questions than answers.

After reading the tenth article, I had to laugh. It hit me! By not having a precise definition, the "my truth" movement is being true to itself. Let me explain. The whole concept of "my truth" is that everyone's truth is relative, as in, it's personal to them. Therefore, "my truth" is in direct opposition to objective or absolute truth. To have a clear definition would put an objective truth label on the "my truth" movement. This is contrary to what it stands for! If there were a precise definition, it would defeat the whole purpose of "my truth." The beauty of the "my truth" movement is that it can be whatever you or I want it to be. To their credit, at least they are consistent with their ideology.

Despite the vagueness, I found two common threads amongst the myriad of articles I read. First, the concept of "my truth" plants itself on the idea that we are innately good. Since we are good, then our truth is good. Second, the "my truth" movement is a way to push back against external worldly pressures. They criticize the world for incessantly sending us messages about who we should be. When we listen to these messages, then it takes us away from us being true to ourselves.

By now, I hope a few fire alarms are going off in your brain. Hidden in the "my truth" movement is a small partial truth enveloped in a load of false ideologies. We'll unpack why in the next blog post.

Source:

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My Truth: Partial Truth and False Ideology

Partial Truth: Anti-Conformity

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will," (Romans 12:2).

The "my truth" movement is anti-conformity. It criticizes the world for incessantly sending us messages about who we should be. When we listen to these messages, then it takes us away from us being true to ourselves. This reminds me of the Romans 12:2 verse above. As Christ-followers, we are to be set apart from the world around us. In a way, the "my truth" movement represents a (small) partial biblical truth because it encourages anti-conformity. The main distinction, as Christians, is that we are to be true to who Christ is, not true to ourselves. Being true to ourselves is to be true to our sinful nature. This leads me to my next point.

False Ideology: Self-Worship

Two apparent false ideologies seep out of the "my truth" movement: inherent goodness and relative truth. Both ideologies lead to self-worship.

Inherent Goodness

The Bible continually teaches us that we are not inherently good (see the first source below for at least 100 verses on this topic). We are born sinful. We instinctively know this too. We know that we have natural tendencies to be selfish, lie, and think poor thoughts. How does this make us inherently good? Do we ignore the junk by pretending it doesn't exist?

Progressive culture especially does not like the word "sin." It carries too much shame. I listened to a message by the progressive church "Sojourn Grace Collective" in San Diego to understand more. The message by Kate Christensen-Martin started with anger at the traditional church. She says that the church shames us into believing we are sinners. This shame is described as lethal because it tells us we are flawed and not worthy of love and connection. Because of this, we believe we are not worthy of God's love.

I would agree with this! Sin is contrary to God's nature, so we do not deserve the love of a perfect, sinless Father. This is, in fact, true. The natural flow of this message would be to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. God loved us so much He sent His son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. When we place our faith in Christ, we are dead to sin and alive with Christ. We are not good by ourselves; this we instinctively know. Instead, Christ in us is what makes us good! Now, that's some Good News!

Unfortunately, though, Kate's message alters this good news. She describes Jesus as being the new archetype for humanity – oneness with God. As in, Jesus set a new example that we should follow. Therefore, she concludes, "You are Jesus today in your life. The good news is that you are good, you are worthy of love and belonging."

This is a form of self-idolatry, becoming a god unto ourselves. It's attractive, and people leave the church to hear this message because it feeds our inherent selfishness. Of course, we want to hear that we are inherently good; we love worshipping ourselves. This form of heresy, though, completely nullifies Jesus' work on the cross. It also ignores the work of the Holy Spirit who brings us into truth. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and points us to the Way, the Truth, and the Life which is Christ. Kate's message does not lead to repentance, and it certainly does not point us to Christ. Instead, her message leads to perpetuating self-worship and ignorance of the sin in our lives.

Relative Truth

I did a whole blog series on relative versus absolute truth. If a detailed look at this topic interests you, I recommend reading that here. For now, let's explore it from a 30,000-foot view.

A common argument for relative truth is, "look at all the moral diversity in the world; how can one truth be right?" This is faulty because it is merely an observation, not an argument. It would be like a child saying, "Teacher, everyone in the class got a different answer to the math problem, so there can't be a right answer." There is one correct answer to the math problem; just not everyone got it right.

This appeals to the world in which you and I live. Take something as simple as an apple. An apple is an apple; an apple is not an orange. An apple cannot both be an apple and an orange. Now, take something more complex like rape. Rape is either morally good, or rape is morally bad. Rape cannot be morally good and bad at the same time; it violates the natural law of non-contradiction.

Yet, if we take the "my truth" movement to its' logical conclusion, one could argue that "their truth" is that rape is good. By nature of relative truth, this is a non-negotiable personal opinion. If everyone has their truth, then there is no universal truth. This goes contrary to how God made us. He made us in His image and placed a universal truth of good and bad morality on our hearts.

Relative truth is a form of self-worship. It violates the universal truth placed in our hearts and worships our fleeting selfish desires. It gives us permission and acceptance to be whatever our truth is that day. If we want to actively engage in sin, then it can be dismissed as "living my truth."

Join me next time to discuss why evangelical Christianity offers more than the "my truth" movement.

Source:

https://www.openbible.info/topics/sinful_nature
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<https://hungryforauthenticity.com/free-resources/>

My Truth: Why Christianity Offers More

Christianity offers more than the "my truth" movement for three reasons:

1. It sows unity versus discord.
2. It breeds a culture of kindness versus narcissism.
3. It provides a way out.

Unity vs. Discord

I recently heard a piano tuning analogy that explains this concept well. Imagine a room full of pianos. How do you tune all the pianos to be in sync with one another? A tuning fork! If you tune each piano to the tuning fork by consequence, all the pianos will be in tune together. This is similar to how Christianity unifies. Being a Christian means we tune ourselves to the tuning fork, which is Christ.

Consequently, this method sows a culture of unity as we all fix our eyes on a common goal and a universal standard. In contrast, progressive culture has no tuning fork; the "my truth" movement is a perfect example of this. Each person tunes themselves to their standard. This leads to everyone being out of tune and lacking harmony with one another.

Consider this, what if "my truth" conflicts with your truth? Who wins? Whether progressive culture likes to accept it, they cannot be entirely consistent with their ideology. For example, the "#metoo movement" cannot simultaneously co-exist with a "my truth" culture. What if the men who abused and molested women felt that was "their truth?" If there is no standard of truth, then progressive culture can't criticize and judge people for their truths. Yet, we instinctively know that men molesting women is wrong. That's because the moral code of right and wrong is written in our hearts. Therefore, progressive culture's "my truth" movement breeds chaos and disunity because it lacks a universal standard.

Kindness vs. Narcissism

I see progressive culture touting and promoting "kindness." Yet, their "my truth" movement breeds a culture of self-worship (see previous blog post for reasons why). This is narcissism, the exact opposite of kindness! Christianity exhorts kindness as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); this means kindness is not inherent to our sinful nature. The Holy Spirit counsels Christians daily to act in ways of kindness towards others.

A Way Out

Now that we've broken down the "my truth" movement, I hope you have come to the same conclusion I have. It is chaos, makes no logical sense, and is contrary to how we operate in society.

Most importantly, the "My Truth" movement does not offer salvation. In fact, progressive culture does not believe that we even need saving. The "my truth" movement completely disregards what we instinctively know about ourselves. It provides a superficial façade to cover the junk in

our lives. It teaches people that they don't need a Savior; they are their own Savior. This creates many paths and sows confusion. Someone's "truth" may be that they are "spiritual" and their good works will get them to heaven. Someone else's truth may be that they follow Buddha or Brahma or Science. They do this to what end? What's the purpose of "my truth?" It provides ignorance of our sin and immediate gratification of our selfish and sinful desires. That's about it. Unfortunately, this teaching has dire eternal consequences.

Traditional evangelical Christianity offers a way out, though - salvation! Christianity teaches us what we already instinctively know - that we are messed up. Yet, it provides a way out through Christ's work on the cross! Faith in Christ leads to eternal life in heaven, where we will be free of our selfishness and sinful desires. Not only that, but faith in Christ gives us freedom here and now. Placing your faith in Christ is much more freeing and life-giving than the demands of progressive culture. Progressive culture places the burden on you to be your own arbiter of truth. Yet, Jesus says that "his yoke is easy and his burden is light" (Matthew 11:28). We do not need the unnecessary pressure and burden of concocting our own truth when we already have "The Truth" (John 14:6).

The Delusion of Bodily Autonomy: Homosexuality and Abortion

Homosexuality and abortion are clearly two hot topics. I remember doing debates on them in junior high. And now I'm well past junior high, and they remain hot topics to this day. I've been putting off addressing these for some time because what's new to say that hasn't been said?

By way of reminder, this blog series is written for evangelical Christians who find themselves attracted to progressive culture. They find the Christian faith intolerant, bigoted, homophobic, misogynistic, and a barrier to the social justice movement. This audience sees little, if any, reasons for staying in the Christian faith. My driving purpose is to convince them otherwise. American progressive culture is attractive to this Christian because it presents partial biblical truths and disguises them as full truths. So far, we've discussed these tenets of progressive culture: social justice, self-love, modern feminism, and my truth.

However, these last two topics, homosexuality and abortion, don't fit my blog formula. Initially, we defined the tenet and talked about how it's a partial biblical truth but ultimately a false ideology. Afterward, I shared why Christianity offers more. But homosexuality and abortion are different. First, I don't feel the need to define them. We all know what they are. Second, whether you agree with it or not, the Bible is very clear that it does not condone homosexuality (Lev 18:22--24, Rom 1:27). The Bible is also very clear that human life begins in the womb (Ps 139:13-15) and condemns the killing of innocent life (Jer 7:6, 22:17). There are no partial biblical truths here.

So, the only thing we need to discuss is why Christianity offers more than homosexuality and abortion. This is tricky because I know that progressive culture is quite persuasive. Specifically, the slogan, "My body my choice," comes to mind. Progressive culture teaches bodily autonomy - that our bodies are our own. Thus, we can do with them as we would like. They say men can have sex with men and women can have sex with women. After all, it's their bodies. They also say that women can abort their babies during pregnancy. After all, it's their body and their choice. Now, this makes sense if you believe that you have bodily autonomy. But consider this excerpt from Chuck Swindoll's Mark Commentary,

"The world is not ruled by humanity; ours is not a democracy in which people hold the reins of power. The world is a dictatorship in which Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Fallen humanity is held sway by a delusion that men and women have absolute autonomy to think and act as they desire. The fact is, however, they are unwitting victims of that enemy of God, "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2)."

The concept of bodily autonomy is, in fact, a false delusion! The fight for homosexual and abortion rights under the idea of autonomy is a scheme of the enemy. It's a way he falsely empowers humans and leads them to use their bodies to disobey God (i.e., homosexuality and abortion). The enemy is clever because he makes them believe they have power, and it is their choice. But they are puppets in the end, and he's controlling the strings.

Conversely, God clearly tells us that our bodies are not our own. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God with your body." As Christians, we are aware of this concept, but we either don't hear it enough, or we don't truly internalize its meaning. Plus, let's be honest, our bodies feel like our own. After all, we control our bodies; we decide how we move them, use them, and feed them.

But God is clear that to wholly follow Him, we must give up the false idea of bodily autonomy. Our bodies are essentially on loan to us from God. We are no longer our own because we have been bought with a price, the shedding of Jesus's blood on the cross. We house God's presence, the Holy Spirit, inside our bodies. Therefore, the purpose of our bodies is to bring glory to God. In other words, our life's goal is to seek to please Him by becoming more Christ-like (2 Cor 5:9). One fundamental way we do this is by submitting to his authority and exemplifying godly obedience in our thoughts and actions.

Satan's promise of bodily autonomy sounds like the better bargain. And it certainly is attractive. After all, God calls for us to be obedient to Him by fighting the sinful desires of our bodies. Meanwhile, Satan gives us permission to roam free doing whatever we want with our bodies. But thank goodness for us, Christianity offers more in the long run.

Christianity offers more because in the end, when we live with God in eternity, we will receive new bodies, uninfected by sin! These bodies will be perfect. They will not have disease or be tempted into sin. In fact, obedience to God will be easy. We will have bodily autonomy because everything we do with our bodies will glorify God. We don't think about or talk about this nearly enough. We can look forward to having perfect, incorruptible, and imperishable bodies one day. This is good, hopeful news!

Unfortunately, for now, we live in the enemy's world where he falsely promises bodily autonomy. In the meantime, we must treat our current bodies, not as our own, but as God's. It most certainly is going to be challenging. After all, it is a fight between our flesh and God's Spirit in us (Romans 7). Beyond the internal battle, there is a war going on between the enemy and God's people as he tries to tempt us into sin (Eph 6). But, God has entrusted you with your body to serve Him, not yourself, not progressive culture, and certainly not the enemy.

Closing Remarks

I have a few closing remarks as I wrap up this blog series...

2 Timothy 4:3-5 says, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

I’m unsurprised that Christians are attracted to progressive culture and leave the church because of it. This 2 Timothy verse shows that this is not a new phenomenon. The enemy is deceptive and cunning. He uses partial biblical truths and disguises them as full truths. It’s a clever plan that many have succumbed to.

Progressive culture is undoubtedly attractive. After all, it promises social justice, self-love, relative truth, women empowerment, and bodily autonomy. Who can compete with that? It’s everything that our sinful flesh desires. To top it all off, Christianity gets a bad rap. We are labeled intolerant, bigoted, homophobic, misogynistic, and a barrier to the social justice movement. So, perhaps it’s just easier to go with the flow of progressive culture than being that weird Christian, Bible-thumper who’s just stuck in the past. If you agree with this thinking, I have two thoughts to share with you.

First, we have this misconception that to be anti-cultural, you must attend rallies, have bumper stickers, and berate anyone for not agreeing with you. This type of person, unfortunately, captures media attention and mischaracterizes Christians. It is possible to adhere to God’s standards gracefully and calmly. Let’s be honest, progressive culture has and will likely continue to win on this side of eternity. That doesn’t mean we roll over and give up. But it also doesn’t mean we need to be combative in our interpersonal relationships. When the situation presents itself, whether with a coworker or during a dinner conversation, you go with God’s standard. For example, unborn babies are defenseless so when given the opportunity, defend them. And God clearly defined marriage as between one man and one woman. No human or government has the power and authority to redefine what God has made clear. So, when given the opportunity, defend God’s definition of marriage.

Second, unfortunately for us, eternity isn’t talked about a whole lot. Eternity feels far away and intangible. But Christianity is all about hope. The Old Testament hoped for a Savior. Then Jesus came. Now, we hope for eternity where we can spend forever with Him. The rub is that it doesn’t feel real. This life you and I live feels very real. But traditional Christianity offers more in the long run, aka eternity. It doesn’t promise much here and now like progressive culture does. But, if we faithfully hold onto the hope of a future perfect eternity, we will not be disappointed in the long-term.

One last thought...

Why would I spend time writing this blog series? After all, I know that these blogs likely fall on deaf ears. The population I really want to hear this message probably couldn’t care less about it.

For me, I have personally grown from this experience. It's been a way I worked out my faith and thought through culturally relevant topics. The process of studying each tenet of progressive culture and contrasting it to Scripture has given me confidence. I feel more confident speaking about these topics because I've thought through them critically and biblically. Had I not done this, my default would be to repeat a few one-liners that I memorized from some podcast.

And, more significantly, I hold onto the hope that perhaps one person is changed by it. I hope that God uses these words from this tiny little blog to bring someone back from their wandering. But that's up to God, and I'll let Him sort that out.