

# CONTEMPORARY CHURCH ISSUES

## WEEK 5: INCLUSIVITY, LOVE AND THE CHURCH PART II

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- In this 6-week series we are going to discuss various contemporary church issues. These are issues which may not have pertained to previous church eras, or they have, but in a different way.
- We must remember that there is nothing new to our own time.
- **Ecclesiastes 1:9 “That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. so there is nothing new under the sun.”**
- This means that the issues which face the church today have been faced by the church before. Perhaps not in every era of the church nor in the same way we face them today. But, in reality, there is no new threat to the church; just an old threat packaged in a new way.
- Week 1: Revival and Revivalism
- Week 2: What’s wrong with singing *all* worship music?
- Week 3: Does God speak to us today? If so, how can I know that’s it’s Him?
- Week 4: Inclusivity, Love and the Church Part 1
- **Week 5: Inclusivity, Love and the Church Part 2**
- Week 6: How can I find peace in an anxiety and fear laden world?
- The overall goal of this class is to give theological understanding and practical wisdom on how we can rightly respond to the issues which we are facing today.

### INTRODUCTION

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- Continuing from last week, we are now going to go from the historical path and the seeds which were planted to the modern-day fruit that we see in the evangelical church.
- While there are many “streams” which contributed to the river we are on now, the ones which seem to have the most impact historically are the social gospel and the sexual revolution.
- Both claim to have victims of society who are oppressed by an unjust and corrupt system. Both put emphasis on victimhood, and both see the greatest need to be that of personal freedom and acceptance from the culture.

## THE FRUIT OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL TODAY

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- “Rauschenbusch, Fosdick, and King. All Baptists. Do we ever need their witness today! **I believe churches like Bayshore** carry on that legacy, in more ways than one. In short, God says, “I don’t care about your worship. I don’t care about your piety. I don’t care about your sacrifices. I don’t care about all the churchy and religious stuff you do or say...I only care that you seek justice in the world...That you are filled with compassion and kindness and mercy. And that you walk humbly with me. That you admit that you don’t have all the answers, and in humility, you turn to me, and let me lead you.”<sup>1</sup>
- **How are we to go about doing this?** “They were formed by the compassion, kindness, and mercy of the gospel and out of the overflow of that life, **they sought justice for the glory of God, seeking to build God’s kingdom of earth and not their own.**”<sup>2</sup>
- There are still churches which adhere to the “old” social gospel.

### The Seeker Sensitive Church Movement

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- The man considered to be the idea-man of the seeker-sensitive movement in the U.S. is Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Church in Chicago.
- **How is this related to the social gospel?**
- Hybels “debated” the great-grandson of Walter Rauschenbush, Paul, over the issue of the social gospel. In the end, here is the conclusion:
  - I still like his clarity in linking personal and social religion. "In personal religion," he says, "the first requirement is to repent and believe the gospel." **But then, "Social religion, too, demands repentance and faith: repentance for our social sins."** Faith requires, he said, "a reevaluation of social values." **He says there are "two great entities in human life--the human soul and the human race--and religion is to save both."**<sup>3</sup>
- Hybels began the seeker sensitive movement by taking a poll of neighborhood residents, asking the non-churched what it was about the church that kept them from participating.
- He saw the problem was people were not in the church like they used to be before then.
- In 1975, Hybels planted Willow Creek and started what would become one of the largest and longest lasting movements in church history...**the seeker sensitive movement.**
- Bill Hybels...has a quotation from Mr. Drucker hanging outside his office: “What is our business? Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value?”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://bayshorebaptistchurch.com/the-social-gospel/#\\_ftn8](https://bayshorebaptistchurch.com/the-social-gospel/#_ftn8) speaking on Micah 6:6-8, 2019 Sermon

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/save-souls-or-feed-the-po\\_b\\_65392](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/save-souls-or-feed-the-po_b_65392)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sutori.com/en/story/willow-creek-and-the-seeker-sensitive-movement-ssm--8n7JgK1x4XyVaSrh4SfNg6yd>

- This is vital because it puts the purpose of the church up to the unsaved, not the Scriptures.
- While 20 years earlier, Robert Schuler championed much of what Hybels would use, he was not the trained businessman that Hybels was.
- It is from Shuler and Hybels that we get the “community church” instead of a denominational affiliation, sermons called messages, non-traditional settings for churches (coffee shops, drive-in’s, etc.), going door to door to find out what the unsaved want in a church, emphasizing leadership training for pastors over traditional theological and doctrinal training, use current marketing strategies to draw people in, etc.

- **How does this all come together?**

- “...like any successful corporation, marketing techniques are employed to get consumers to purchase their product. **Church attendance appears to be the product.** Cutting edge technology, combined with short and smooth sermons, in the midst of an atmosphere that caters to a crowd that wants an upbeat-motivational-friendly church experience is the means to an end.”<sup>5</sup>
- There are more than 1600 churches worldwide from over 70 denominations which belong to Willow Creek Association. Their goal, to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.

- **These churches are nothing more than self-help institutions.**

- **Firstly**, they believe that unbelievers seek the truth. This is the underlying presupposition of this entire movement. Simply put, there are many ideas of truth out there and because we are consumers, we have to make our “product” (Christianity) the most appealing.
  - We are to give the people what they want and then they will come.
  - Hybels believes that after studying all of the faith claims, one will have to choose Christ because of how logical and reasonable it is.
  - In Scripture, unbelievers are portrayed, not as those who earnestly seek God, but rather as the spiritually dead (Col. 2:13), the spiritually rebellious (Eph. 2:1-3), and the spiritually hardhearted (Eph. 4:18). Even though God's self-disclosure through nature and the conscience should cause men to seek Him (Acts 17:27-29), unbelievers have rejected the truth that they know, becoming "futile in their thoughts [so that] their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21).<sup>6</sup>
  - The NT supports this assertion— namely, that sinners do not seek God but rather God seeks sinners. John 3:16 notes that salvation is available because "God loved the world," not because "the world sought God." Even Jesus stated that He came "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.timesheraldonline.com/2012/05/13/the-seeker-sensitive-movement-and-churches/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.biblebb.com/files/gathw.htm>

- Interestingly, the world did not seek Him in return, but rather rejected His claims, nailing Him to a cross. No wonder Christ warned His disciples: "All men will hate you because of Me" (Luke 21:17), and again: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first" (John 15:18).
- **Secondly**, not only does this movement believe that unbelievers can think like believers, but that believers need to think like unbelievers.
  - Rick Warren echoes this strategy, telling his readers to:
  - “Adapt your style to fit your audience. . . . **The ground we have in common with unbelievers is not the Bible, but our common needs, hurts, and interests as human beings.** You cannot start with a text, expecting the unchurched to be fascinated by it. You must first capture their attention, and then move them to the truth of God's Word. By starting with a topic that interests the unchurched and then showing what the Bible says about it, you can grab their attention, disarm prejudices, and create an interest in the Bible that wasn't there before.”<sup>7</sup>
  - We are told in **Ephesians 4:17-18** “**So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. . .**”
  - We are told to stop thinking like unbelievers because their mind is death (Rom 8:6-7).
  - You cannot lead someone to Christ because of their felt needs. There is nothing that you can do to convince someone that they need Jesus in a salvific way.
- **The seeker sensitive church movement is, by far, the most popular way to “do church” today.**
- **I recently watched a sermon from a large church in Grand Rapids who based Jesus’ call to discipleship on the movie Cars...as life is a highway, so is our journey with Jesus.**
- **The sermon (message, talk) is not the focus, the community of the people is.**
- **While I think this is very important, their community is built upon the felt needs of the people not on the truths of Scripture.**
- **This is the logical outcome of the idea of the social gospel.** To build a philosophy of ministry around felt needs and then bring them into the church...**the gospel is not enough, and people need more help.**
- **Ephesians 4:11-12** “**And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. . .**”
- **The purpose of the church...**equip the saints for the work of service and to build up the body of Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 294-95.

- The purpose is not for the unsaved...the unsaved hear the gospel from the saints, who are being built up on the church, and then the newly saved join the church.

## The Woke Church Movement

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- Today many have taken the old social gospel and changed into wokeness, critical race theory, liberation theology and progressive or liberal theology.
- The social gospel is which out of the felt needs is the same as the seeker sensitive movement which is now the same as the woke church movement.
- In fact, as Baucham puts it “this new cult [the cult of antiracism] has created a new lexicon...their own cosmology (CRT/Intersectionality...White Privilege), original sin (racism); law (antiracism), gospel (racial reconciliation); martyrs (those since 2020 who were racially profiled and ‘murdered’ by the police); priests (oppressed minorities); means of atonement (reparations); new birth (wokeness); liturgy (lament)...”<sup>8</sup>
  - By the way, there is not “salvation” which someone can achieve. You have an incurable disease (racism) which you must pay for all of your life.
- “The Woke Church is called to three levels of involvement and action: intervening justice, preventative justice, and systemic justice. May God help us to engage at each level of justice, proclaiming His truth to the darkness and righteously acting on His command to seek the welfare of the city.” E. Mason, Woke Church.
- One of the key components of the woke church which is directly from the social gospel is intersectionality. This ideology comes directly from the idea of oppressed / oppressor (Marxism), but with more fervor.

## Intersectionality

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- The logical and normal flow of the social gospel is what we today call *intersectionality*.
- To be honest, this is an ever-changing word that seeks to judge people based on the level of injustice that has come upon them.
  - Must like the social gospel, those who use this ideology are not concerned with the historic gospel message but with 2 things...curing the plight of all who are oppressed and making sure the oppressors pay for what they have done.
- Intersectionality brings our understanding of systemic injustice and social inequality to the next level by attempting to untangle the lines that create the complex web of inequalities. It is also a practical tool that can be used to tackle intersectional discrimination through policies and laws.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Voddie Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 67

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality>

- How have we arrived at a place where students on elite college campuses perceive objective truth as a threat to personal safety and authentic selfhood?<sup>10</sup>
- Intersectionality seeks to bring division between people by placing their oppression status over and above their personhood.
- Intersectionality maintains that who you truly are is measured by how many victim statuses you can claim—with your human dignity only growing through intolerance of all forms of disagreement about your perceptions of self and world.<sup>11</sup>
- **Does this sound familiar?** From last week, in **1907** “This social gospel does not see sin in the hearts and lives of people but innocent people who have been acted upon by people who have power. In a sense, the victims are not sinful, they are pure and free from any wrongdoing. But those in power are sinful and need to be overthrown.”
- Sigmund Freud in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century “people are categorized according to their sexual desires: gay, bi, straight, etc. For many, this is the most prominent truth about who they are...”
- Intersectionality is the expected outworking of what both Rauschenbusch and Freud taught. You have to be able to find who you are, and you are the only one who can determine it. Once you have done that, you know where you are in society and who is against you.

## ENTER ON THE SCENE: HE GETS US

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- How does the most recent ad campaign *He Gets Us* relate to the social gospel, woke ideology and intersectionality?
- In order for the church to reach the people, Jesus must be relatable. This campaign has taken the all-powerful Jesus, God in flesh, and made Him like one of us.
  - Think about the social gospel...Jesus was one who needed the same help that you do.
  - Think about the seeker sensitive...Jesus came to help the felt needs of people.
  - Think about intersectionality...Jesus had many markers that the oppressed have today.
  - With all of this...**He Gets Us.**
- **But isn't that what the Bible says?** Hebrews 2:17-18 “Therefore, **He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.** For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, **He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.**”

<sup>10</sup> <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2020/04/intersectionality-and-the-church/>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

- Yes and no. Why did Christ come? He had to be made like men so that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest. **He did that so that He would be the propitiation for the sins of the people.**
- In other words, without Christ's humanity, He could not atone for our sins. Without His divinity, he would have given in to temptation and not be able to rescue those who are tempted.
- **Why is the humanity of Christ emphasized?** "Because we want to be relevant. To be relevant to people, we must look and sound like something people outside Christ can RELATE to. In the church, we use language, imagery, and music that is familiar with the culture. Because we want to reach people in our community. If Christians don't look and sound like normal people, how can we find an opportunity to tell them about Jesus? Because we want to create a place where lost people find Jesus."<sup>12</sup>
- The broader church that looks like the world can only produce a Jesus who looks like the world. The question is, can a Jesus who looks like the world, reach the world?
- We are told on the He Gets Us website that the goal **"is to move beyond the mess of our current cultural moment to a place where all of us are invited to rediscover the love story of Jesus. Christians, non-Christians, and everybody in between."**<sup>13</sup>
- **Does this campaign desire someone to go to church?**
- No. He Gets Us simply invites all to consider the story of a man who created a radical love movement that continues to impact the world thousands of years later. There are many churches and Christian groups that can help people who are spiritually open to understand more about who Jesus was and why his words and life are relevant today.<sup>14</sup>
- Fiscally speaking, over \$1 billion has been spent (or will be over the next 3 years) to show Christ as a rebel, an immigrant, a man filled with love and righteous anger, an inclusive man who welcomes all.
- **He is used as an example, not as a Savior.**<sup>15</sup>
- If we take this ad campaign to its logical end, it is saying that Christians and the church have gotten it all wrong. Humanity needs to be like Jesus, act and love like Jesus, not the church.
- Watching these commercials, we are left knowing what culture wants to believe, not what they need to.
- This is unfortunately just another ad for man's social justice without talking about the differing ideology that is behind what they are talking about. It is clear they support CRT and intersectionality.
- **There are two questions which need to be asked: 1. Can you separate Jesus' compassion from our sinfulness? 2. Is there any place for pre-evangelism?**

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.kccwired.com/2018/04/14/why-does-the-church-look-and-sound-more-like-the-world/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.patheos.com/blogs/womantowoman/2023/03/selling-christ-can-he-gets-us-get-results/?utm\\_source](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/womantowoman/2023/03/selling-christ-can-he-gets-us-get-results/?utm_source)

<sup>14</sup> <https://hegetsus.com/en/is-this-a-campaign-to-get-me-to-go-to-church>

<sup>15</sup> [https://natashacrain.com/7-problems-with-the-he-gets-us-campaign/?utm\\_campaign=shareaholic&utm\\_medium=facebook&utm\\_source=socialnetwork](https://natashacrain.com/7-problems-with-the-he-gets-us-campaign/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=facebook&utm_source=socialnetwork)

## CHURCHES TODAY

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- How are churches viewing the perceived needs of people who claim to be oppressed today?

### Episcopal Church<sup>16</sup>

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- With an estimated 2.3 million members, the Episcopal Church is open and welcoming of the LGBTQ community. The Episcopal Church does not condemn homosexuality.
- Episcopal Church, states, “homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the church.”

### The Anglican Church<sup>17</sup>

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- “For the first time, the Church of England will publicly, unreservedly, and joyfully welcome same-sex couples in church,” Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell said in a joint statement. “The church continues to have deep differences on these questions which go to the heart of our human identity,” the archbishops continued.

### United Methodist Church<sup>18</sup>

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- It’s Sunday morning at a progressive church. The pastor introduces himself, states his preferred pronouns, welcomes the congregants, and then announces the arrival of the guest preacher—the drag queen performing under the name of “Ms. Penny Cost.” It is explained that Isaac Simmons (the man in drag) is a first-year seminary student and candidate for ordination in the United Methodist Church. Simmons will explain why he “gets dolled up” during the children’s sermon, before delivering a message to the whole congregation denouncing capitalism.

## INCLUSIVITY OF THE CHURCH

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- Churches must not only be inclusive in words but in their public actions as well. Queer members should participate in all of the same social and spiritual rituals offered to straight people in order for a church to be unbelievably and inconceivably inclusive. **One way my congregation has sought to grow as an inclusive community was by ordaining to the gospel ministry our youth minister, the church’s first openly gay ordinand.**<sup>19</sup>
- “What is at stake in this debate is nothing less than our love for troubled people and the very gospel of Jesus Christ.” Make no mistake about it, the capitulation on the false category of gay Christianity and the

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-episcopal-church>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/253597/church-of-england-votes-to-bless-same-sex-couples>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.afa.net/the-stand/culture/2022/11/drag-queens-and-the-queering-of-the-church/>

<sup>19</sup> Royal Lane Baptist Church, Dallas, TX



acceptance of new “ministries” such as Living Out and Revoice demonstrate that the LGBTQ+ proponents are planning to bang on the same door, use the same rhetoric, and demand the same equality that has been shouted loudly through this social justice conversation from the beginning.<sup>20</sup>

## What’s being said about the lovelessness of the church?

- In addition to the suggestion of this national mandatory homosexual “tolerance training,” in public schools, several homosexual activists said that Bible-believing Christians here in America and around the world were guilty of having the blood of these young “gay” teens and students on their hands, because of their “antiquated” and “misinterpreted” beliefs from a “made up book of stories” called the Bible.<sup>21</sup>
- For parents and caregivers, there is a need for increased awareness of the way negative religious statements about being LGBTQ can impact a youth’s risk for suicide as well as the likelihood that the youth chooses to “come out” to them.<sup>22</sup>
- I would agree with that statement! If we are putting people down or calling them names for what they choose, we are, in turn, no better.
- As believers we know that every person is made in God’s image, regardless of the choices they make.
- If you are presenting one group of sinners as too far gone or unsavable, it reveals more about your own heart and thoughts of God than anything else.

## What should the response of the church be to this community?

- The inclusivity of the Lord was unambiguously and consistently accompanied by his summons to conversion. The inclusivity of Christ was that all could hear the gospel, but all needed to repent.
- From the earliest time in Jesus’ ministry, we are told in Matthew 4:17 “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”
- Any unconverted person who comes into the church should feel welcome, but not comfortable. Jesus did not strive for people to feel included, but to find their true inclusion in the kingdom of Heaven.
- I like the way Josh Buice candidly puts it *the next generation needs the gospel rather than another cheap pragmatic trick.*<sup>23</sup>
- The boundaries which God has put in place are there for our protection and for His glory. We are not to do anything or whatever it takes to save people. We are to do what God commands.

<sup>20</sup> <https://g3min.org/social-justice-biggest-threat/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.movieguide.org/news-articles/bullied-to-death-are-christians-to-blame.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/religiosity-and-suicidality-among-lgbtq-youth/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://g3min.org/the-next-generation-needs-the-gospel-rather-than-another-cheap-pragmatic-trick/>

- If our goal of saving people takes a priority over our theology, the church will be guilty of all sorts of things that Jesus would never commission them to do.
- The church does not need a tactic to draw in the crowds, it needs to depend on the Scriptures to be enough.
- We are in the exact same place that Luther was only 500 years ago. The church today needs a recovery of the power, authority and sufficiency of the Word of God.
- Paul's words to Timothy when he was in Ephesus were not *become like the Ephesians so that you can win them to the Jesus! Make Jesus like them so that they can relate to Him!*
- No, Paul says in **2 Timothy 4:2...Preach the Word.**