

Progressive Christianity

by Lynn Everett McBride



Progressive Christianity is defined as: a “post-liberal movement” within Christianity “that seeks to reform the faith via the insights of post-modernism and a reclaiming of the truth beyond the verifiable historicity and factuality of the passages in the Bible.”

That’s “journalistic jargon” which is trying to say, “people have compromised and are wanting to compromise the Biblical truths.”

Part of my job is attending church services and presenting the message of prison ministry, along with talking about the need for volunteers.

During the last 10 years, I have witnessed some “unique styles of church worship services.” Most of the time, I will experience traditional styles of worship and I wear a suit and tie. Other times, I am told the service is a casual setting, so I will wear a casual dress shirt and slacks. I have attended what you might call, “rock and roll” worship services, which is a little unnerving. At one church they passed out ear-plugs at the door, since the music was so loud. That was more than unnerving for a guy who has hearing problems anyhow.

Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 9: 20, 22-23, “*To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. —²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*”²³ *I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*”

When I trained under Youth for Christ many years ago, they taught us to “change the method, but not the message.” But what we are seeing today — is changing of the method AND a change in the message.

That is “Progressive Christianity” best defined.

Alisa Childers wrote an article on this subject that was published at her website and in *Decision Magazine*. She points out 5 things to watch out for when dealing with Progressive Christianity. (*used by permission*)

1. There is a lowered view of the Bible

One of the main differences between Progressive Christianity and Historic Christianity is its view of the Bible. Historically, Christians have viewed the Bible as the Word of God and authoritative for our lives.

Progressive Christianity generally abandons these terms, emphasizing personal belief over biblical mandate.

Comments you might hear:

The Bible is a human book...

I disagree with the Apostle Paul on that issue...

The Bible condones immorality, so we are obligated to reject what it says in certain places...

The Bible “contains” the word of God...rather than “is the Word of God.”

2. Feelings are emphasized over facts

In Progressive churches, personal experiences, feelings, and opinions tend to be valued above objective truth. As the Bible ceases to be viewed as God’s definitive word, what a person feels to be true becomes the ultimate authority for faith and practice.

Comments you might hear:

That Bible verse doesn’t resonate with me....

I thought homosexuality was a sin until I met and befriended some gay people....

I just can’t believe Jesus would send good people to hell....

3. Essential Christian doctrines are open for re-interpretation

Progressive Christians are often open to re-defining and re-interpreting the Bible on hot-button moral issues like homosexuality and abortion, and also cardinal doctrines such as the virgin conception and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The only sacred cow is “no sacred cows.”

Comments you might hear:

The resurrection of Jesus doesn't have to be factual to speak truth....

The church's historic position on sexuality is archaic...

The idea of a literal hell is offensive....

4. Historic terms are re-defined

Another word that tends to get a Progressive make over is the word “love.” When plucked out of its biblical context, it becomes a catch-all term for everything non-confrontational, pleasant, and affirming.

Comments you might hear:

God wouldn't punish sinners—He is love....

It's not our job to talk to anyone about sin....

5. The heart of the gospel message shifts from sin and redemption to social justice

Many Progressive Christians today find the concept of God willing His Son to die on the cross to be embarrassing or even appalling. Sometimes referred to as “cosmic child abuse,” the idea of blood atonement is de-emphasized or denied altogether, with social justice and good works enthroned in its place.

Comments you might hear:

Sin doesn't separate us from God—we are made in His image and He called us good....

We don't really need to preach the gospel—we just need to show love by bringing justice to the oppressed and provision to the needy...

Conclusion:

Identifying the signs is not always easy—sometimes they are subtle and mixed with a lot of truth.

Progressive Christianity can be persuasive and enticing, but carried out to its logical end, it is an assault on the foundational framework of Christianity, leaving it disarmed of its saving power.

We shouldn't be surprised to find some of these ideas infiltrating our churches. Jesus warned us, “*Watch out for false prophets who “come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves”* (Matt. 7:15).

2 Thessalonians 2:3, “*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first...*” (NKJV)