

Apologetics



*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...
The entrance of Your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:105,130*

What is the Emergent Church?

Apologetics

Apologetics (from Greek *πολογία*, "speaking in defense") is the religious discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse

Contents

These are the areas we will be covering to help you understand our beliefs regarding what is taking place in the Emerging and/or Emergent Church.

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The Emerging Church versus the Emergent Church

Some people use emerging and/or emergent church as representing the same thing. Technically, they are different.

The emerging church, generally speaking, tends to recognize the reality of absolute truth. Many have a high regard for the authority of scripture. They will proclaim the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. To reach the postmodern generation, they change the way they present the word of God. They differ from evangelicals in their methods not their theological positions. They are more cutting edge with their music, media, and other ways of communicating the message of the

The emergent church is a group within the emerging church movement. While the emerging church has changed their method of doing things to reach the postmodern generation, the emergent church has accepted the postmodern world view to the extent of changing the message. They are the latest form of liberalism in that they have chosen to accommodate postmodern thinking. The gospel is based on scripture and cannot be changed and remain truth. If it is changed, the result is a false gospel.

The postmodernists have moved from a rational factual mindset to experiential and mystical thinking. What might be right for one person may be wrong for someone else. There is no absolute truth.

If the Bible is not a source for absolute truth and personal experience can dictate what truth actually is then the gospel becomes meaningless.

Their focus tends to be on building God's kingdom here on earth, which includes working for social justice and environmental causes. It is more about the here and now than eternal salvation. Their goal is building relationships which unite people across denominations and other religions. They strive to reach the postmodern generation for global change through good works within local communities throughout the world. **It may sound good, but is it?**

Inside The Emergent Church

Postmodernism is a world view that is in many ways contradictory to biblical Christianity. Because of this, you find leaders of the emergent church questioning a number of the core doctrines of Christianity. Some have also taken on worldly views that are not compatible with the Bible.

Many changes have taken place and new changes are continuing to appear at a rapid pace. You might walk into a church and find any number of unbiblical beliefs or practices. Some deny the virgin birth while others the miracles of Jesus. Some deny the resurrection and others the second coming. Some say it is not necessary to be born again. Some actually believe that all roads lead to God. This makes Christ only one of the many ways to God. Some have interfaith worship services. A growing number of churches even believe the entire Bible is not the word of God. Some scriptures are and others are not. Some are okay with homosexuality and abortion.

Some believe in latter day prophets and apostles. You may find teachings relating to liberal theology, universalism and even earth worship. The list of unbiblical practices seems to go on and on and continues to grow.

Along with all of these changes there has also been a move towards a more mystical experience with God. Some use principles of eastern religions and gravitate towards supernatural new age beliefs. They tend to put feelings and imagination before biblical truths.

The emergent church has embraced ancient mysticism practices, such as contemplative prayer, centered prayer, breath prayer, practicing the presence of God, prayer labyrinths, going within to find God, visualization practices, meditation, so called Christian yoga, and many other eastern religious practices. A mixture of different religious practices are brought in to deepen one's understanding of being in the presence of God or experiencing God. They strive to reach a higher form of enlightenment.

It's a feel-good Gospel that embraces self-arrival. Many (what they consider) controversial scriptures are left out of teachings and a more positive conversational doctrine of self-help, pop-psychology and culturally relevant topics are taught. Many scriptures are played down and are counted as allegorical and not literal.

Worship services are sometimes infused with worldly music blended with sketchy Christian lyrics. Some resemble rock concerts with state of the art audio and projection systems. Extra props may be used such as light shows, fog machines etc. and references to popular movies and TV shows might also be seen. All this is used to entertain the masses. It's all about using the five senses to dazzle the audience. **It may feel good, but is it?**

What Does the Bible Tell Us About Itself?

Inerrancy of Scripture

Biblical Inerrancy: The belief that the Bible is without error or fault.

A central belief in Christianity is the belief that the Bible is God's inspired Word and therefore without error. In *2 Timothy 3:16* the apostle Paul states "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" The word inspiration in this scripture is the English translation of the Greek word *theopneustos* which literally means "*God breathed.*" From this one scripture alone it is very clear that all scriptures contained in the Bible are the Word of God.

We also read in *2 Peter 1:21* that "*prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*" (*Matthew 24:35, Isaiah 40:8, 1 Thessalonians 2:13*)

Hebrews 4:12: "*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"

Tampering with the Word of God

There are many warnings in the Bible not to alter God's Word. Here are a couple of them:

Deuteronomy 4:2 "*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.*"

Revelation 22:18-19 "*For I testify to everyone who hears the word of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*" (*Proverbs 30:5, James 4:4, Romans 12:2, Matthew 6:24, Galatians 1:10*)

It is very clear you cannot choose to disregard scriptures that do not fit your agenda or that you do not believe to be true. How can a person that believes the Bible to be the living Word of God reject any of it? Either one can accept it all to be true or accept none of it to be true. You cannot have it both ways. We believe our God is capable of getting all of His Word intact to His people.

Important Question to Consider

Does sounding good and feeling good make it right?

A.W. Tozer wrote, “So skilled is error at imitating truth, that the two are constantly being mistaken for each other. It takes a sharp eye these days to know which brother is Cain and which is Abel.”

Yes, it sounds good to work with other religions to help feed, clothe and build shelters for those that need it. And what could be wrong with promoting brotherly love and peace?

These types of service projects are often the driving force for interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue can be defined as embracing members of other religions for the purpose of finding common ground in the values and goals we share and the similarities between faiths. This also can be a step towards ecumenism, or in some cases it is already. How can we join in with groups that actually despise our beliefs or deny our Lord and Savior? *(2 Corinthians 6:14-15)*

A major problem would be if the Great Commission is left out. *Matthew 28:19-20* “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” and in verse 20 Jesus says to teach them all the things that He commanded. In *Jude 1:3* we are told to defend the faith. If you don’t share the truth of salvation are you really loving/helping others? If you don’t stand up and contend for your faith are you pleasing God?

It also may feel good and sound good to use all means possible, including using ancient mysticism, to try and feel close to God. What could be wrong with using anything, regardless of it’s origin, if we feel it will bring us closer to God? Some might say, we are not worshipping another God, we are using their methods to worship our God.

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The problem is the Bible is very clear that we are to separate ourselves from pagan religions. *Deuteronomy 12:29-32* “...do not inquire after their Gods, saying, ‘how did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the Lord your God that way...” *1 Corinthians 8:5-9* states “For even if there are so called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many Lords), the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” We live and serve Jesus Christ alone!

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It can absolutely feel good to get inspired by music, props, trendy productions etc. One problem is that some contemporary Christian music is patterned after worldly music. Spiritual/sacred music should be different, set apart to a holy God. As Christians, we need to be the ones setting the standard not trying to copy the world’s standards.

The presentation seems to have become more important than the message. Though the music itself has become more professional, all of the surroundings of the performance seem to be lifted up much higher than the genuine reason for the worship. It seems the reaction to current worship services is sometimes about the same as current secular concerts. Is it a good thing to be in a mindless trance swaying to the beat of the music? It seems to have become more entertainment than true worship of God.

Would it not be better to be sober minded and in awe of God as one is reminded of His mercy and grace by biblically sound worship music?

In *John 4:24* we read that “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” If you worship without spirit and truth, as soon as the emotions are over, you are left with emptiness. We need knowledge of the God we worship. The more we learn about God, the deeper our worship. The truth of God brings honor to God. Our worship should reflect the fruit of the Spirit found in *Galatians 5:22-23* which are “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*”

What takes place in Christianity must be biblically sound. If what is taught or practiced does not line up with the word of God it is definitely not okay.

Warnings to the Church

Apostasy: from the greek word apostasia, means defection, departure, revolt or rebellion.

Spiritual apostasy threatened the Body of Christ in biblical times and continues to do so.

In *2 Corinthians 11:13-14* the apostle Paul describes an apostate this way, *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”* He warns in *Acts 20:29-31* that after he leaves *“savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”* He continues in *Galatians 1:6-7*, *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”* Timothy also warns of future apostasy in *2 Timothy 4:3-4*, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they having itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”* (*2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 Timothy 4:1, Matthew 24:11*) Jesus Himself warned *“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”* (*Matthew 24:11*)

What Can We Do?

True believers need to wake up and realize what is going on. We were warned apostasy would become rampant and what to look for. It is clearly all around us.

We need to realize that we are in a battle. In today’s world biblical absolutes and an exclusive way of salvation are viewed as being intolerant, narrow minded, destructive, judgmental etc. We need to strive to follow the example of the apostle Paul. He made it clear he was not seeking to please men. His goal was to please God regardless of what others thought. (*Galatians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:4*)

It is imperative to be prepared for the battle by putting on the whole armor of God. This is described in detail in *Ephesians 6:10-20*.

Matthew 7:1 “Judge not, that you be not judged” is often used by false teachers and their followers. But in John 7:24 we read “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

Yes, it is important not to attack others, not to judge unfairly, not to act “holier than thou” and not to be unloving. But it is equally important to defend the faith. In *Jude 1:3* we are told “...to contend earnestly for the faith...” (*Ephesians 5:11-13*)

Self righteous judgment is always wrong! Remember to come from love when speaking with others. Never forget “*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*” (*1 John 4:8*)

Go to the Word of God. Knowledge is powerful. *Romans 15:4 “For everything that was written in the past for our instruction, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.” (Psalms 19:7-11, Psalms 119:11, Psalms 119:130, Mark 12:24)*

We are to grow as believers “*that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...*” (*Ephesians 4:14*)

We are to be like the Berean’s in *Acts 17:11*. They went to the scriptures to see if what they were being told lined up with God’s Word. *1 John 4:1* tells us “...not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone into the world.”

Never forget, “*There is a way that sounds right to man, But its end is the way of death.*” (*Proverbs 16:25*)

2 Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Always come from love when speaking with others. Never forget “*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*” (*1 John 4:8*)



On the Path Discernment Ministry

Discernment is always mentioned in scripture in a favorable light. Discernment was promoted as a way to avoid error and cause the believer to continually be seeking and watching with vigilance. Accordingly, these materials are provided for you in order to assist you in growing in your knowledge and understanding of God's Word. We have taken great care to give a thorough and expansive explanation of the positions of the church.

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These booklets are provided to explain Old Path's teachings on topics of theology and doctrine. Should you have questions on doctrinal matters or would like further clarity on these positions, you can email us and we will assist you by researching the needed matters. However, we do not provide these booklets with the intention of debating.