

THE SAVIOR SENSITIVE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION: This series of lessons comes from a heart of concern and with a great desire to challenge church members to maintain a passionate sensitivity for Christ and His will in the church. The principles in this series are not based on a depressed longing for the “good ole days.” The conviction is much deeper than just the idea that we’re old fashioned. What I’ll be teaching isn’t just old-fashioned; it’s Bible-fashioned.

- Many young Christians are looking at the fruit of so called “mega churches” and, because they desire great numerical growth, they fail to look below the surface and see the root of these ministries.
- In 2003, a study by the University of Chicago stated, “The number of Americans that call themselves Protestants went from 63% to 52% in the last ten years. By the year 2005 America will no longer have a Protestant majority.”
- Although Baptists are not Protestant, the reason for the decline according to this study is very interesting. The article said the reason was that “Mainline churches did not require enough commitment, theologically or evangelistically, from congregants.”
- What is interesting to see is that many so-called “Fundamental Baptist” churches are getting involved in the seeker-sensitive movement which embraces a philosophy requiring less commitment “theologically and evangelistically.” This is where we need to begin to worry as Baptists.
- As today’s Fundamental Baptist churches continue to require commitment from their people, we will run the risk of being called “overbearing, legalistic and uncaring.”
- On the other hand, as the study shows, if we hold on to the unbiblical teaching of the seeker-sensitive movement, we will fail in the area of reaching the lost world for Christ.
- I say we stay true to the purpose and intent God has for His church. Let’s be a Savior Sensitive church.

I. POST-MODERNISM (II TIMOTHY 4:1-5)

INTRODUCTION: Recently In the News, there has been a philosophy in teaching that is sweeping the nation. The way of thinking is that if a student tells you that 2 plus 2 equals 5, you cannot tell the child that he is wrong. After all, he is right in the sense that he believes it is 5. You may laugh, but there have been hundreds of schools across the nation that have adapted to this way of teaching. The philosophy is called “Post-Modernism.”

A. DO YOUR OWN THING PHILOSOPHY

B. VALUE CLARIFICATION

1. This taught that all moral values are relative and, therefore, all moral values are acceptable. The Jiminy Cricket Philosophy. (Judges 17:6) (Proverbs 12:15)
2. Here is the behavior that Value Clarification taught society: You can still talk about truth, but you can only talk about what is true for you and what is true for me.
3. Under Value Clarification, you can’t say that sodomy is wrong. Instead, you must say, “Homosexuality is wrong for me.” Absolute right and absolute wrong became a thing of the past.

C. ABSOLUTE TRUTH HAS BEEN REPLACED WITH RELATIVE TRUTH.

D. FUNDAMENTAL BAPTIST LEADERSHIP IS AT A CROSSROADS. (Ezekiel 34:6; Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 10:21; Jeremiah 23:1)

II. DESIGNER TRUTH (II TIMOTHY 4:1-5)

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INTRODUCTION: In II Timothy 4 Paul is nearing his death and he is about to hand off the baton to the next generation of preachers. Paul uses this opportunity to warn Timothy against the very thinking that we face in modern day Christendom.

A. DESIGNER TRUTH IS EVOLVING TRUTH. (Romans 1:18; Romans 1:25)

1. In the church, we see this philosophy in movements like the neo-evangelical movement.
2. Evolving truth can be well defined in II Timothy 3:7.

B. DESIGNER TRUTH IS EXPERIENTIAL TRUTH. (II TIMOTHY 4:3B) (PROVERBS 14:12)

1. Peter warned that there would be those who would scoff at the Bible, God and Truth. (II Peter 3:3-7) Why do they scoff at the Bible? Because they know it's truth.
2. Did you know that God has revealed Himself to every man who has walked on this planet? (Romans 1:18-20)
3. The Bible tells us that God has written the truth on man's heart. (Romans 2:14-15)
4. The true reason man scoffs at the Bible is because he is walking after his own lusts. (John 3:19-20)
5. Ultimately, man doesn't accept absolute truth because man doesn't want to change his ways.
6. The Post-modernist's personal experiences define their needs and shape their answers to those needs.
7. So they came up with "Pragmatism."
8. Pragmatism is a way of creating truth based on experience or on "what works."
9. This is where we find the birth of the Seeker Sensitive Church.

C. DESIGNER TRUTH IS ECLECTIC TRUTH (4:3C) "teachers"

1. "Teachers" is in plural form. Not one under shepherd but many teachers.
2. They'd rather many instructors over one pastor or one God.
3. If there is no absolute truth, we can take what we want from each version of the Bible and choose what to follow.

D. DESIGNER TRUTH IS ELEVATED TRUTH. (4:4)

1. Fable means false, fictitious or ludicrous. (Isaiah 47:10)
2. My friend, the term "I Am" is reserved for one person and it's not you or me.

CONCLUSION: THE BIBLE TEACHES US THAT MEN WILL BE BENT ON UPON REJECTING GOD'S TRUTH. (Deuteronomy 30:17; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 56:10-12; Ezekiel 12:2)

III. DISCOVERED TRUTH (II TIMOTHY 4:1-5)

- Discovered truth is truth that has always been here.
- Discovered truth stands outside of the realm of my experience or intellect or anybody else's.
- Discovered truth stand neutral and unchanging apart from me or anything that I am.

A. DISCOVERED TRUTH IS ETERNAL TRUTH. (II TIMOTHY 4:1)

1. The reason why truth is eternal is because the Author of that truth is eternal. (Malachi 3:6) (Numbers 23:19) (James 1:17)
2. God's truth does not change with the times; it is not culturally relative; it is not pragmatic.
3. God's truth is eternal truth because God Himself is eternal and Immutable. (Psalm 102:25-27)

B. DISCOVERED TRUTH IS ESTABLISHED TRUTH. (II TIMOTHY 4:2) (HEBREWS 4:12)

1. God's Word is established truth because it is based on sound doctrine. (II Timothy 4:3)
2. His Word is true even when it contradicts your experience. (II Peter 1:16, 19-21) (Psalm 119:89 & 152) (Luke 16:17; 21:33)

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C. DISCOVERED TRUTH IS EXAMINED TRUTH (II TIMOTHY 4:2)

“Quite studying your Bible; let your Bible study you!”

1. It’s time that we give ourselves to God’s Word in the spirit of humility and submission.

“We must approach the Word of God with the spirit of submitted obedience; coming under God’s final authority, determined to be conformed to Christ and transformed by God’s power.” – John Goetsch

2. The living, unchanging Word of God must be given access to our hearts. Why? (Jer. 17:9)
3. We need an MRI of God’s Word to show us the condition of our hearts. (II Tim. 3:16-17)
4. Our hearts can become as hard as a rock, but Jeremiah tells us that God’s Word is like a hammer.

Jeremiah 23:29, “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”

Ezekiel 36:26-27, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

D. DISCOVERED TRUTH IS ENDURING TRUTH (II TIMOTHY 4:5)

1. Paul is telling Timothy that one day he may be in the same place as Paul was; ready to place his head on a chopping block for Christ.
2. He’s telling Timothy that when this happens, he is to just stay by the stuff because real truth is an enduring truth.
3. When our lives are over, we are not going to stand before designer truth, but discovered Truth.

John 12:48, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

IV. BIBLICAL MINISTRY VS. MAN-CENTERED MINISTRY

- The word “preach” in the New Testament means a strong declaration of the truth and the singing of the church has always been songs, hymns and spiritual songs so I think I’ll do it the Bible way.
- Perhaps the two greatest contrasts in the early churches were the church of Laodicea and the church of Thessalonica.
- The word “Laodicea” means the people’s rights.
- Though Paul had only been at Thessalonica for a few months, the Holy Spirit of God moved mightily. (I Thessalonians 1:3)
- Paul defends the integrity of his ministry at Thessalonica in I Thessalonians 1-2.
- It is here that he defines many qualities of the Savior-Sensitive church.

A. A CHURCH WITH PURE MOTIVES. (I THESSALONIANS 2:3-6)

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1. Paul first defends his ministry by stating that his ministry had not been a deceitful one. (II Corinthians 5:17)
2. Secondly, the apostle Paul stated that he was not unclean in his ministry.
 - a. The word “guile” means to bate or to snare. It speaks of using trickery or deceit.
 - b. (Illus.) When the term “New Evangelical” was coined at Fuller Seminary by Harold Ockenga, his desire was to bring modernists (deniers of the truth) together with fundamentalists (believers of the truth) by encouraging them to compromise on their doctrinal position. It was a bate intended to snare people together for the purpose of drawing a crowd. The results of this compromise is the ecumenical gatherings we see today such as the “Promise Keepers”.
3. Essentially, the apostle Paul is saying that the church at Thessalonica had integrity. (II Timothy 3:10)
4. Paul makes a point, also, to show that the church of Thessalonica was not man-centered. (Galatians 1:10)

“It is not the business of the church to adapt Christ to men, but men to Christ.” – Paul Chappell

B. THE REDEFINING OF GRACE (TITUS 2:11-12)

1. Often in the “Seeker-Sensitive” church’s attempt to please men, they pollute the doctrine of Grace.
2. Somehow, there is an entire generation of Christians who are being raised to believe that grace produces less holiness in the life of the believer. (Galatians 5:13)
3. This new teaching on grace is leading Christians to believe they can live any way they want to and still please God in doing so.
4. Living under grace will cause us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.
5. May we be reminded that the church is not man’s, but the Lord’s.

Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

6. Paul makes it clear that he was not deceitful, man-centered or covetous in his ministry.

C. A CHURCH WITH A PERSONAL MINISTRY (I THESSALONIANS 2:7)

1. According to the verse we just read, the apostle Paul was very personal in his care of the Christians.
2. We as Bible-believing Christians must maintain a strong doctrinal position.
3. Our convictions will be challenged, but we must stay grounded in the Word of God.
4. We also must, however, remain gentle and easily approached by the lost and by new believers whom we have an opportunity to minister to.

Jude 1:22, “And of some have compassion, making a difference:”

5. Not only was the apostle Paul personal in his care, but he was also personal in his commitment to the people. (I Thessalonians 2:8)
6. People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.

D. A CHURCH WITH A POWERFUL MESSAGE. (I THESSALONIANS 2:13)

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1. Paul clearly states that the epistle he was writing was given to him by direct revelation.
2. This was not his opinion and these were not his ideas. This was the very Word of God.

1 Peter 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Matthew 4:4, "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

3. Not only does power exist in the preserved Word of God, but it also exists in the preached Word of God. (1 Thessalonians 2:9)

1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

4. Several modern day seeker-sensitive leaders have stated that modern day Pharisees are more concerned about purity than people. They call us legalists.
5. But we must be concerned about both people and purity. One does not contradict the other.
6. Jesus was concerned about people, but He was also concerned about purity.

Ephesians 5:27, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

7. We must be concerned about doctrinal purity and at the same time concerned for a lost and dying world. The Seeker-Sensitive movement believes that it is impossible to be concerned about both.

James 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

8. The preaching of the Word of God is an authoritative declaration of the truth of God's Word.
9. One of the saddest verses in the Bible was about the church of Laodicea. (Revelation 3:20)
10. My friends, let's not leave God on the outside of our church, wanting to come in.

V. THE PHILOSOPHY OF A SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH (REVELATION 3:14-20)

INTRODUCTION: For years there has been a growing movement in our country called the Seeker-Sensitive Church Movement. Many churches, including Independent Baptist churches, have been influenced by a philosophy that is man-centered, as opposed to being God-centered. Many pastors are buying into the post-modern thought of our day and leading their churches down a path of pragmatism and carnality.

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- Our goal in church ministry should always be to please Christ and glorify Him in the church. (II Tim. 2:3-4)

Ephesians 6:6, "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;"

- In this message, I want to explore the philosophy associate with growing a true, Savior-Sensitive church.

A. THE OWNERSHIP OF THE SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH.

1. The Seeker-Sensitive church has taken the authority of the church and placed it into the hands of the community at large.
2. The problem is that we, as a Bible-Believers, understand that the Savior-Sensitive church is not the "people's church" but it rightfully is the Lord's church.

I Peter 5:3, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

3. The very root problem in modern day church compromise is the question of authority.

B. THE MESSAGE OF THE SAVIOR SENSITIVE CHURCH

1. The message of the Savior-Sensitive church must always be biblical in its content.
2. The Savior-Sensitive church will not change God's message to please men.
 - a. Many times in the Old Testament, Israel would get mad at the prophet's messages, and hire a false prophet that would give prophesies they wanted to hear.
 - b. That false prophet is a good example of the Savior-Sensitive pastors of today.
3. The Word of God is powerful and must be preached with conviction.
4. It must be declared with authority and it must be central to every message and S.S. lesson. (Romans 1:14-16) (I Corinthians 1:18-21)

Jeremiah 3:15, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

5. The message of the Savior-Sensitive church will continually lift up the cross, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the life-changing truth of God's Word.

C. THE MISSION OF THE SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH

- The Savior Sensitive Church's primary goals and missions:
 1. A desire to be sensitive to the Lord in all it does.

I Thessalonians 5:19, "Quench not the Spirit."

2. A desire to be sensitive to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20) (Luke 19:10)

D. THE MOTIVATION OF THE SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH.

1. The first motivation must be the Word of God. (I Timothy 3:15)

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2. The second motivation must be the Love of Christ.

II Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:"

3. The third motivation must be the Grace of God.
 - i. We are motivated to serve God and one another.

Galatians 5:13, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

- ii. We are motivated to encourage one another.

Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

- iii. We are motivated to give.

II Corinthians 8:6-7, "Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."

- b. The grace of God at work in our hearts will do more to help us to stay faithful to Christ than any other thing!
 - c. Man-made "guilt trips", sensational dramas or films, high-powered marketing ploys, and promotional gimmicks can never create within a church family the kind of love, devotion, commitment, and service that the incredible grace of God can produce!

VI. THE PRACTICE OF A SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH

- There are three major visible areas that slip first in the Seeker-Sensitive church: The Music, The Youth Ministry and The Methods.

A. THE MUSIC OF A SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH (EPHESIANS 5:18-20)

1. The conscience of a Holy Spirit led believer will bear witness against the CCM movement.
2. The music of a Savior-Sensitive church does not focus on the musician.
3. The term "spiritual songs" is from the Greek word *pneumatikos* meaning Holy Spirit given music.
4. Music cannot appeal to the flesh and to the Spirit at the same time.
5. A Savior-Sensitive church must not be afraid of being perceived as a church with a different or traditional worship style.

Jeremiah 10:2, "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them."

6. In an effort to people with ungodly music, we distance them from God and defile His church with carnality. Spirit-led music will never mimic the world's style. (Psalms 40:1-3) (Romans 12:1-2)

B. THE METHODS OF THE SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH

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1. I want you to remember this statement: (Read it then say it together)

“What we win them with is what we keep them with.”

2. The methodology of the church should be Biblically sound.
3. Our message should be in agreement with the Scriptures and, in fact, they should come from the Scriptures.
4. That’s why at Open Door Baptist Church, we still go out into the community and knock on doors, support missionaries, have special offerings, have godly men and women teach S. S. classes, etc. . .
5. Our methods are Bible-based and we must continue to do our best to follow God’s blueprint.
6. Let me say that there are some Independent, Fundamental Baptist churches that do things slightly different than us, but are still Biblically sound. We must be careful to not think as the Pharisees.
7. They may use screens, have a modern looking building, or sing from a different hymnal. That’s ok.
8. As long as another church is holding to sound doctrine and endeavoring to win the lost to Christ, our spirit should be of praise for the souls that are being won at that church.

C. THE YOUTH OF THE SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH.

1. One of my greatest concerns for the youth of the Seeker-Sensitive church is that they are seeing a watered-down concept of what Christianity truly is.
2. These teenagers are getting the idea that church is all about them and not about the Lord.
3. In contrast, teenagers in a Savior-Sensitive church will see godly mentors.

Philippians 4:9, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

4. We need godly mentors who can say, “Do what you see in me.”

D. THE COST OF A SAVIOR-SENSITIVE CHURCH

1. There will always be a cost in maintaining a Savior-Sensitive church.
2. Those who are in the Laodicean-Sensitive Movement will claim that a church that stays doctrinally and practically in the position, which they once held, is one that doesn’t emphasize grace.
3. They will claim that we are legalists and that we emphasize doctrine over the needs of the people.
4. A mature Christian realizes that “standards” are not the ultimate goal of the church. Jesus Christ is.
5. But a standard based on a Bible principle will only aid us in living a Christ honoring life.
6. Others will justify the path they have chosen by criticizing a church that will remain the same.
7. This is all a part of the cost of being a Savior-Sensitive church.
8. Although the Seeker-Sensitive church will talk about grace, they show very little of it when they verbally attack Savior-Sensitive churches.
9. They seem to forget what the Bible says in Galatians 5:13.

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Galatians 5:13, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

E. THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE SAVIOR SENSITIVE CHURCH

1. As I mentioned in the past weeks, the alternative to seeking to please the Savior is to seek to please the culture around us. (So we go back to Romans 12:1-2)
2. We must not desire to conform to the world's system and philosophies, but must maintain our stand as a distinctive Baptist church.

F. THE REWARD OF THE SAVIOR SENSITIVE CHURCH

1. Finally, I want you to contemplate the reward of being faithful to the Savior.
2. The reward will be spiritual fruit.
3. I believe that our Bible-believing churches across America in which the Bible is being preached faithfully and men and women are being called upon to turn to Jesus for salvation, the fruit will truly be fruit that is brought about by the inner working of the Holy Spirit.
4. I believe that not only will there be souls saved, but I believe there will be eternal rewards for churches and Christians who remain faithful. (I Corinthians 3:11-15)