

The Creation of the User-Friendly God

Intro: In today's bulletin I have written an article that I hope you will take time to read. It addresses the revolutionary way that modern churches have been seeking to bring people back to their services. In short, churches today seek to win converts by becoming more "user friendly". Steven Lawson has effectively stated it this way: "Gospel light has been replaced with gospel "lite", preaching with performance, exposition with entertainment, sound doctrine with sound checks, the upper room with the supper room, and the unfolding drama of redemption with—well, just plain drama".

Can churches alter the approach by which they seek to win the world and not also alter the God they worship? The answer is that they cannot. Along with the "user friendly church" comes the "user friendly" God. What churches now offer up is a god made in the image of man!, a god heavy on love and forgiveness but light on justice and punishment. A god who is compassionate but not holy, a god who gave us everything, but asks of us virtually nothing. What should our attitude be toward this "user-friendly" God?

How people make God in their own image

Let's consider some ways that God has been reduced to "user friendly" status. In some religious circles God is made to appear to be a:

Celestial Santa Claus

For many people God is seen only as gift giver. He exists to meet needs in their lives and requires little if anything in return.

Divine Copilot

You see on the bumper stickers. The idea is that we are in the pilot seat and God sits in the next seat with little to do until we call on him to step in once in a while to fill in for us and then be relegated again to inactivity. His will is subordinate to the pilot's (i.e. man) who is "in charge" most of the time.

Heavenly Repair Man

For some people God is like life's EMT's, not needed until there is an emergency. And then God is called upon to come and fix some problem in a person's life and then go away until the next crisis.

Galactic Grandfather

Many people seem to think of God as something like a doting grandfather whose love would never would permit discipline or punishment. He may get annoyed at times about bad behavior; but never enough to do anything about it. Those who view God this way just continued on in sin believing that God would never punish them; after all, He hasn't yet!

Universal Utilitarian

This view suggests that God is powerful but not all that good. At least, He doesn't appear to care too much about what happens to us as long as He can run the universe. And so life is filled with events that

seem to reflect on the real concern of God. Everything works out according to His will; but necessarily our good. Sometimes men have to apologize for how God has run the universe.

Clever Magician

For these people, the important thing about God is that He is a “miracle” worker. And so they constantly look for Him to work His magic in life every day. Two miracles before breakfast and three after lunch. If such things do not exist, then the conclusion is that God is not involved.

What is wrong with these conceptions?

Though each of these may have an element of truth, each is in its own way a partial and false view of God! God is greater than any of these portrayals which all lessen our reverence for Him.

He is indeed a gift giver; but He is also a consuming fire who is infinitely holy and righteous and who out of that character withholds blessings, and actively punishes the evil doer. God is no celestial Santa Claus.

...for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29)

God is not a divine copilot. He is in fact sovereign Lord of the universe who demands complete control of our lives. He is not our subordinate; but instead we are supposed to be His!

(He is Lord of all)— (Acts 10:36)

(If God is your co-pilot, you need to change seats!)

God is not merely a heavenly repair man.

He is not a genie in the bottle awaiting our desperate rub for help.

Instead He is the God who we need all the time, when life seems broken and when it doesn't. We always need Him!

neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; (Acts 17:25)

It is a mistake to think of God as a loving God who makes no demands or who cannot be ultimately displeased with His creatures.

Though His love is unconditional, He is a God of perfect justice who sets all wrongs right and punishes all evil doers in His time.

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 2:9-10)

Those who think of God as detached from the universe fail to consider His involvement with all of mankind and His desire that all things work together for the good of everyone.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

God is not merely a miracle worker to manipulated by the “believing”. In fact, some of His most powerful work is done behind the scenes to accomplish His

purposes, though it may not even bear the marks of the miraculous.

**And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
(Colossians 1:17)**

**Understanding these points starts us in understanding the real
tragedy of wrong views of God.**

The consequences of altering God's nature is idolatry

*God has consequently constantly warned against the sin of changing His
nature.*

**“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in
heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.**

(Exodus 20:4)

**To offer the world a god different from the true God is to offer them
an idol to worship!**

Reduction of God to man's likeness

Paul spoke of the Gentiles who made this tragic mistake:

*Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the
incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of
birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Romans 1:22-
23)*

**Conclusion: Imagine that someone were to sneak into the Louvre and spray paint
the Mona Lisa. It would be an international outrage and a tragedy.**

**There is a greater one!—marring the image of the creator of everything! It is time
to bring an end to this spiritual graffiti and let God be who He is and acknowledge
Him for who He is! If our religious world doesn't wake up, we will have helped
make a society that doesn't know God, rather than lead sinful men to honor and
glorify the God that exists!**