

## How the User-Friendly God affects the church

**Intro:** A.Z. Tozer once wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us”. It will both consciously and unconsciously determine how we live—our attitudes, priorities, choices, and even our eternal destiny. When people develop a distorted view of God they not only make an idol out of Him, everything else gets out of perspective. They embrace a distorted view of themselves as well. Nothing makes this clearer than what we see in the denominational world today!

**How the User-friendly god affects the church!**

### *Think for a moment about how American church got where they are!*

*Today’s religious attitudes may be traced to the historical period called “the Enlightenment”. That era marked a decided shift from divine revelation to human reason as the source of reality and truth.*

Scientific discovery in many areas, left the impression that all could be known by scientific investigation. Darwin’s theory of evolution offered an alternative explanation of the Genesis account of man’s origin. Perhaps it was not necessary to believe in God after all, even though most scientists had been theists.

Science even sought to explain how the Bible came into being. Not by revelation from God but by human processes. The Scriptures were human creations, attempts to preserve faith by creating myths.

*The momentum of these ideas assailed the faith of earlier generations and compromises were made. Churches felt the need to re-evaluate their doctrine and mission.*

Perhaps there was some truth to this theory of evolution or these explanations of how the Bible came into being. After all it is not doctrine that is important but mission.

Even if it is not certain that God nor heaven or hell exist, the church might be a useful instrument to advance the good of mankind, especially if the emphasis is placed on good works to relieve the ills of society. In a matter of a generation, many religious groups had totally capitulated to modernism and the social gospel. A religion that emphasized God and preparation for the after life seemed more and more irrelevant in a society where life on earth was pretty good!

*As Americans became more and more materialistic and churches became more and more unspiritual, the result was a diminishing interest in church attendance. As the budgets crunched and the church rolls diminished, it became clear that the church would go out of business unless it made drastic change to get worldly people back into church again. The church would have to change its approach and lighten up on its views of God. Such changes were to have a profound effect on historic faith.*

At the organizational level, “user friendly religion and god” reduces the church to a

**religious country club that seeks to be more like the world than like heaven.**

*The focus of churches shifted from God to the world! How can we glorify God if no one shows up! So let's find out how to get people in again!*

*The churches embraced alternative missions to the one God gave it! In short, churches today seek to win converts by becoming more "user friendly", by a multi-prong attack that includes the following:*

**slick performance-based worship services that produce an emotional high similar to that created by secular entertainment**

**spiritual messages that respond to "felt needs" and which do not**

**challenge the listener to a higher level of living or learning**

**church doctrine that offers "politically correct" positions on current**

**social issues and morals lest we "offend" the world**

**creation of a once-stop shopping center for all family-oriented needs**

**such as day care, recreational activities, and "fellowship" suppers**

*What churches are not prepared for is the cost that these changes will produce in the future. An anemic view of God results in:*

**Doctrinal confusion**

*What is the true nature of God?*

*seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3)*

**Corrupted worship**

*If people do not truly know the God that is, then how can they give him the worship He seeks.*

*Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; (Hebrews 12:28)*

**Compromised evangelism**

*What will be the motivation for people to love and serve God?*

*Will it be an understanding of who He is or a desire for church amenities?*

*"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more." (Hebrews 8:10-12)*

**Spiritual deadness**

*I don't mean "quiet church services" but the inability to offer God worship out of a spiritual understanding of Him rather than an affected emotional high.*

*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to*

*this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)*

### **At the personal level, exaltation of man's will over God's**

*The truth is that our service and obedience to God depends more than anything on what we think of Him! Look at a person's attitude toward God and you will already know what kind of Christian He will be! If our conceptions of God are false, then we will be tempted to substitute our will for God's!*

*Idolatry always leads to a life of sin! Paul describes this process perfectly in Romans 1. When we reject God's revelation of Himself, he will allow us to believe in a false God. Such a view will lead to moral degradation. As a society we convince ourselves that believing the lie will have no serious consequence when the reality is that rejection of God and His way will lead to social chaos and divine judgment!*

*The god that most Americans believe in, and many professing Christians, is always there to be called upon in times of trouble, but he would never intrude our personal space, judge our sins, or hinder our happiness" (R. Albert Mohler) Hence there is no incentive for repentance!*

### **The great present need**

*A church focused on Him and His purposes*

**To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:8-10)**

**When we truly know God, then we understand the truth of Eph. 3:10, that we are intended to be a display of God's wisdom. The wisdom of God is seen, not a display of our own intellect and talent, but in our humble obedience to His plan!**

**We see the important truth that we exist for His glory, not He for ours:**

**to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21)**

*Every Christian valuing more than anything in His life the knowledge of God and His will as He has revealed it!.*

**Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)**

**Only when we have the highest view of God will we have a proper perspective from which to evaluate all our thoughts and actions. Only**

**then will be recognize the great truth of Isaiah:**

**“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)**

**It is one thing to call Jesus “Lord”; it is another to give that expression meaning by obeying Him!**

**“And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? (Luke 6:46)**

**“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)**

**Conclusion: It was not by accident that Paul affirm that eternal destruction was for those who “know not God and obey not the gospel”. To fail to know God is also to fail to obey Him.**

**And in contrast acceptance of the new covenant is conditioned upon the knowledge of God.**