

Preacher's Pen points

A Challenge to “User friendly” God and Religion



Through the years computer software designers have worked to make computers more “user friendly”. The objective has been to relieve users of the task of having to remember and type so much, giving them instead quick and easy ways to do what they want to do. And so today, computer users click icons with a mouse to do what they once did by typing long and hard-to-remember commands.

Sign of the times—User Friendly Religion

In the religious world we see a similar trend toward “user friendly” churches, and it has revolutionized the religious world. The principle thesis, it appears, behind the movement throughout the denominational world is this: People are uninterested in traditional religion. They consider the church to be irrelevant to their present existence. Church services are traditionally too boring with too many appeals for money and too many guilt trips and demands laid on the participants. Therefore, the churches must accommodate this mindset by making churches more “user friendly”.

The features of “user friendly” religion are becoming increasingly standardized in the religious world: slick performance-based worship services that entertain the audience and produce an emotional high, spiritual messages that respond to “felt needs” and which do not challenge the listener to a higher level of living, church doctrine that offers “politically correct” positions on current social issues and morals, creation of a once-stop shopping center for all family-oriented needs such as day care, recreational activities, and “fellowship” suppers. Or as Steven Lawson has effectively stated it: “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”.

The Legacy—User Friendly God

The sad legacy of the world-centered approach to faith is that no church can alter God’s plan for the church without at the same time altering God Himself! To achieve this “user friendly” religion the world seeks, we must also create a “user friendly” God the world will worship! Indeed the words of French agnostic Voltaire have been fulfilled by 21st century religionists: “God created man in His image and man has returned the favor”! For, when, in the name of church growth or outreach, the church’s teaching and work is altered, then God and His nature is also corrupted. The high exalted and holy God of Scripture is replaced with a watered-down version, an idol that is slightly above man and subject to his will. Paul’s words to about the Gentiles are fulfilled again in our own time as they “change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man” (Rom. 1:21).

Solution—Refocus on God’s True Nature

When we get our view of God right, we will consider unthinkable an alteration of either His purpose for the church or His requirements of those who seek Him. We will invite men to come to Him on His terms, not ours. We will worship God as He teaches rather than as man desires. And it may be that churches may diminish, and that is sad! But to diminish God is even sadder! At Perry Heights we’ve taken a different course that we hope will lead people to glorify God as He has revealed Himself.

—Johnny Felker