

STRENGTHENING ECUMENISM

SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

A growing number of thought leaders in various Protestant denominations are questioning the spiritual veracity of current ecumenical trends. Not only are truths being compromised, but artificial religious social and liturgical issues are being created to rally over a togetherness.

The following questions represent provocative concerns expressed related to those issues. They address core interests that are undermining the spiritual integrity of denominations. They have been drawn from many resources. One thought leader we especially note is Dr. Robert Zins.^[1] He has eloquently shown how ecumenism has become a serious apostasy.

By themselves, these questions may seem benign and almost trite to mention. Collectively, they define a path that Protestants along with Catholics are walking. These issues help bring togetherness without dealing with vital salvific Biblical truths. In that fearful light, we present them to stimulate thinking – deep thinking.

Is the church increasingly a pastor-dominated fellowship? Are sermons mainly addressing social needs or do they draw on deep eternal concerns? Are leaders' guiding authority based upon psychological problem resolutions or Spirit-driven Biblical solutions? Is success being defined by the number of programs? Is a permissive cosmopolitan constituency detracting from spiritual growth within the church? Have music and drama become a tool to attract? Does the pastor use a medicinal gospel as his great appeal? Does concern for parishioners comfort detract from presenting penetrating sermons of truth?

Do sermons appeal to the responsibilities of faith? Does the congregation know what sin is? Are Biblical doctrines sound and clearly presented? Are appointed teachers trained or are they left to teach opinion-driven classes? Do parishioners sense an urgency and wonderment from continually learning gospel-driven messages? Are programs taking away time from Bible study?

Is there an appetite for spiritual growth? Does a distaste exist for sound exegesis of Scriptures? Are relevant issues driving to deeper study into prophecy? Does the church represent and honor the dignity of the Almighty? Does the congregation know the meaning of reverence? Is the church more of a para-church? Are the buzzwords unity, cooperation, integration and tolerance driving ideologies? Is the church possessed with its ministries and gifts? Do nurturing women leaders mellow church discipline at the expense of standing for right?

Is there any effort to help reclaim those in sin or is the focus on only bringing comfort to those suffering the consequences of sin? Is the mission of the church denominationally unique or evangelically tasteful? Is the word Christian understood more in spiritual terms or social concerns? Is righteousness defined most by loyalties to the church or to God?

Is revelation defined by what the pastor says or how convicting the Spirit speaks? Are psychological seeker-sensitive themes emphasized over sin, repentance, forgiveness and restoration appeals? Has the congregation experienced recently an altar call or is that too serious for the worship style?

Does the pastor choose his own board of elders or deacons or are they chosen by the body to advise and work with him? Is there fear that spiritual alienation will occur if spiritual subjects are addressed?

Are the results of the gospel emphasized more than the gospel? Do sermons appeal to heart change or are

they enticing Will Rogers thoughts? Are man's merited activities promoted over the Savior's merits? Is doing good promoted as Christianity or being good? Do leaders tolerate apostasy and falsehood or are unyielding spiritual principles governing the church?

Is the church willing to show its people who the antichrist is or is it afraid to mention Rome or Catholicism? Is altruistic egotism a barrier to healthy relationships among church leaders? Are lessons on apostasy understood from Luther, Calvin, Knox and Spurgeon's concerns or is the sum purpose of church simply a motto, "Come to Christ"? Are there things the church formally loathes and detests or are most things acceptable in the name of peace?

At a time when theologians and scholars, teaching at denominationally-run colleges and universities, represent less of their employers' beliefs, many questions are being raised regarding what their students exemplify. What kind of churches do their ministerial graduates run? Are they denominational or do they typify the Willow Creek Association? Are unique denominational roots honored? Do the sacrifices of the reformers and pioneers bring respect or are they fearful it might sound like protesting?

Does the pastor have concern that anyone might be eternally lost or is he too politically nice? Is the mission of the church relevant to heaven or is it relevant to earthly alliances? Has it ever been asked, WhyChurch?

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Reference:

[1] Zins, Th.M., Robert M.; "On the Edge of Apostasy," *White Horse Publications*; Huntsville, Alabama.