

# **Christianity on the Grow**

Acts 18 and 19 and Selected Scriptures  
“Critical Matters”

*Presented by*  
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March 14, 2021

## **FOUR CRITICAL MATTERS**

- **Evangelism Matters (Acts 18:1-9)**
- **Your Calling Matters (v. 5)**
- **Discipleship Matters (Acts 18:24-19:7)**

### **Five Signs of a Progressive Church<sup>1</sup>**

1. There is a lowered view of the Bible
2. Feelings are emphasized over facts
3. Essential Christian doctrines are open for re-interpretation
4. Historic terms are re-defined
5. The heart of the gospel message shifts from sin and redemption to social justice

- **Truth Matters (Acts 19:1-7)**

- One little error can lead you a whole lot wrong!

<b>INSTANCES OF MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT</b>			
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Observers</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
2:1-4	Jewish believers	Jewish nonbelievers	To authenticate the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32)
8:14-17	Samaritan believers	Jewish believers	To authenticate God's acceptance of Samaritans as Christians
10:44-47	Gentile believers	Jewish believers	To authenticate God's acceptance of Gentiles as Christians
19:1-7	Jewish disciples of John the Baptist	Jewish believers	To authenticate the gospel among the Jews in Ephesus

**Swindoll's living Insights: Acts**

Swindoll, C. R. (2016). The Expansion of the Church (Acts 13:1-20:2). In *Swindoll's Living Insights: New Testament Commentary: Acts* (Vol. 5, p. 372). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Who are you mentoring, or who is mentoring you?
2. How would you describe your role in the body of Christ? How important do you feel that role is?
3. When was the last time you read God's Word and it changed your opinion?

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

### **Five Signs of a Progressive Church<sup>1</sup>**

#### **1. There is a lowered view of the Bible**

One of the main differences between Progressive Christianity and Historic Christianity is its view of the Bible. Historically, Christians have viewed the Bible as the Word of God and authoritative for our lives. Progressive Christianity generally abandons these terms, emphasizing personal belief over biblical mandate.

##### **Comments you might hear:**

- *The Bible is a human book...*
- *I disagree with the Apostle Paul on that issue...*
- *The Bible condones immorality, so we are obligated to reject what it says in certain places...*
- *The Bible "contains" the word of God...*

#### **2. Feelings are emphasized over facts**

In Progressive churches, personal experiences, feelings, and opinions tend to be valued above objective truth. As the Bible ceases to be viewed as God's definitive word, what a person *feels to be true* becomes the ultimate authority for faith and practice.

##### **Comments you might hear:**

- *That Bible verse doesn't resonate with me....*
- *I thought homosexuality was a sin until I met and befriended some gay people....*
- *I just can't believe Jesus would send good people to hell....*

#### **3. Essential Christian doctrines are open for re-interpretation**

Progressive author John Pavlovitz [wrote](#), "There are no sacred cows [in Progressive Christianity].... Tradition, dogma, and doctrine are all fair game, because all pass through the hands of flawed humanity." Progressive Christians are often open to re-defining and re-interpreting the Bible on hot-button moral issues like homosexuality and abortion, and also cardinal doctrines such as the virgin conception and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The only sacred cow is "no sacred cows."

##### **Comments you might hear:**

- *The resurrection of Jesus doesn't have to be factual to speak truth....*
- *The church's historic position on sexuality is archaic and needs to be updated within a modern framework...*
- *The idea of a literal hell is offensive to non-Christians and needs to be re-interpreted....*

#### 4. Historic terms are re-defined

There are some Progressive Christians who say they affirm doctrines like biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and authority, but they have to do linguistic gymnastics to make those words mean what *they want them to mean*. I remember asking a Pastor, "Do you believe the Bible is divinely inspired?" He answered confidently, "Yes, of course!" However, I mistakenly assumed that when using the word "inspired," we both meant the same thing. He clarified months later what he meant—that the Bible is inspired *in the same way* and *on the same level* as many other Christian books, songs, and sermons. This, of course, is not how Christians have historically understood the doctrine of divine inspiration.

Another word that tends to get a Progressive make-over is the word "love." When plucked out of its biblical context, it becomes a catch-all term for everything non-confrontative, pleasant, and affirming.

##### Comments you might hear:

- *God wouldn't punish sinners—He is love....*
- *Sure, the Bible is authoritative—but we've misunderstood it for the first 2,000 years of church history...*
- *It's not our job to talk to anyone about sin—it's our job to just love them....*

#### 5. The heart of the gospel message shifts from sin and redemption to social justice

There is no doubt that the Bible commands us to take care of the unfortunate and defend those who are oppressed. This is a very real and profoundly important part of what it means to live out our Christian faith. However, the *core message* of Christianity—the gospel—is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and resurrected, and thereby reconciled us to God. *This* is the message that will *truly* bring freedom to the oppressed.

Many Progressive Christians today find the concept of God willing His Son to die on the cross to be embarrassing or even appalling. Sometimes referred to as "[cosmic child abuse](#)," the idea of blood atonement is de-emphasized or denied altogether, with social justice and good works enthroned in its place.

##### Comments you might hear:

- *Sin doesn't separate us from God—we are made in His image and He called us good....*
- *God didn't actually require a sacrifice for our sins—the first Christians picked up on the pagan practice of animal sacrifice and told the Jesus story in similar terms....*
- *We don't really need to preach the gospel—we just need to show love by bringing justice to the oppressed and provision to the needy...*

<sup>1</sup>Childers, A. (2017, May 08). 5 Signs Your Church Might be Heading Toward Progressive Christianity. Retrieved March 12, 2021, from <https://www.alisachilders.com/blog/5-signs-your-church-might-be-heading-toward-progressive-christianity>