

Articles and Sermons :: A RESPONSE TO SOME CONCERNS BY FRANCIS CHAN**A RESPONSE TO SOME CONCERNS BY FRANCIS CHAN - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2019/3/24 15:14**

MARCH 16, 2019

From what I hear from friends and critics (I stay away from social media, etc), there have been a lot of conclusions drawn from my decision to speak at The Send conference as well as other venues. Some people have questioned my willingness to take pictures with anyone who asks for a picture with me. So I thought it might be helpful to explain some of my theological beliefs which have come under scrutiny as of late, as well as some of my practices/decisions. I realize there are many questions, but let me at least clarify a few things.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE REGARDING THE "PROSPERITY GOSPEL"?

My understanding of that term is that it refers to teachings which imply that if you follow Jesus, He will make you healthy and wealthy. It is often used to attract people to make a decision to follow Jesus so that they can spend the rest of their lives in health and prosperity.

I believe this is a dangerous teaching for several reasons. First and foremost (in my opinion) is that it contradicts the teachings and example of Christ and the apostles. Jesus taught His disciples "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24). It was not a call to come and prosper but rather the opposite- a call to come and suffer. The New Testament is full of passages explaining the suffering that comes with a decision to follow Christ. I once gave a sermon where I went through every book of the New Testament and showed how suffering was in every book but one. Jesus was clear that following Him meant forsaking things of this earth to find a treasure far greater (Luke 9:58, Matthew 19:21, Matthew 13:44-46). This was exemplified by the martyred apostles who spent their lives joyfully suffering. Paul speaks about this when he compares his lifestyle of suffering in comparison to false teachers living in luxury (1 Corinthians 4:8-13, 2 Corinthians 4, 11). It is dangerous because it is not the gospel.

Jesus is the greatest prize. He is the bread of life. In John 6, as people were coming to Him looking for another miraculous meal, He refused to give it to them. Instead, He asked them if they wanted Him alone. He refused to be their genie, granting every wish they might have. Jesus let great numbers of people walk away in that moment because they wanted Jesus only if He would provide for them materially (prosperity gospel). He was then left with the disciples who treasured Him regardless of if they were homeless and poor because of it. For the Christian, Jesus is the focus of our affections and aspirations. The prosperity gospel distorts this by putting the focus on what Jesus can do for you rather than the beauty and value of who He is. This results in many people coming to Jesus (or so they think), not because they have fallen in love with Him, hate their sin, and would die for Him, but because they believe He will give them the desires of their heart in health, wealth, and prosperity. This is not Christianity, and if this is the motivation of people "coming to Jesus", they are not truly Christian.

Another reason this teaching is dangerous is that it gives false hope to listeners that can result in confusion and discouragement. Prosperity preachers often promise greater wealth if their listeners will give more to their ministries. This is never promised in Scriptures. We can never hold God to something that He has not promised. In many impoverished nations, this has resulted in listeners giving their resources without anyone becoming rich besides the preacher. This can lead them into questioning the faithfulness of God. People need to be warned against this kind of teaching so that their faith is not damaged.

The New Testament does not teach that everyone should expect riches on earth. Instead, it teaches that we shouldn't really care about earthly possessions. We have been given something far greater, so we can be content with basic necessities (1 Timothy 6:8). Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Give us this day our daily bread". We are promised provision, but not riches on earth (Matthew 6:31-33). If we are given more, it just means that we've been entrusted to use those resources for His Kingdom (2 Corinthians 8:1-15, Luke 16:1-15). Beware of teachers who spend a lot of time talking about becoming wealthy (1 Timothy 6:10).

God is supremely valuable. In an age of exaggeration, there are no words left to describe His worth. Any teaching that places focus on earthly riches gives a diminished picture of His glory.

There is much more I could write, but I think you get the gist.

WHY DO YOU SOMETIMES ACCEPT SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS IN PLACES THAT TOLERATE THEOLOGY THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM YOURS?

I speak at events almost every week of the year. Often times, it's more than one event a week. I don't really enjoy it, I hate the travel, but try not to complain about it. Despite the toll it can take on myself and the family, it is always an honor to preach the Word. I believe it is my calling. Some question my choice to speak so often, but my best discernment and the discernment of the elders of our church is that it is still a part of my calling in this season.

I am asked to speak at approximately 500 events a year. I decline approximately 90% of the requests. It's a difficult thing to do. Often times, I decline because other speakers will be at the event who believe almost exactly what I believe. My reasoning is that it may be a waste of Kingdom resources for all of us to be there, speaking largely to people who already agree with us. It seems more effective to speak where there is less Bible teaching. It has not been my practice to ask who will share the platform with me and to research the other speakers. While some may be dear friends, there are many that I know little about. This current experience has caused me to consider exercising more caution and to develop a team to help me research. That being said, I speak in many places where I am not in alignment theologically. I actually believe that is where I can be most effective, as long as they give me freedom to address anything I believe the Lord wants me to address.

I recognize, now more than ever, that sometimes my participation can give the impression that I align with every other speaker at the event. I'm not sure what to do about that other than to tell you that I don't. Unless the elders of my church direct me differently, I will continue to be found preaching in venues with those I disagree. I will preach in just about any kind of setting if I'm given freedom to preach from any passage of scripture. The elders and I are trying to come up with more safeguards for future events to hopefully prevent misunderstandings. Pray for us.

I realize that many will not agree with my decision to speak at certain events. I hope you will at least consider the burden of trying to weigh potential outcomes good and bad. Over the past few years, I have seen many people come to truly follow Jesus, have a deeper love for the scriptures, and a deeper commitment to the great commission. There are millions of souls that sit under weak or unorthodox teachings. It thrills me to think about what the Spirit might do through His Word in those situations. My personal belief is that there are 2-3 million orthodox American Christians who consume all of the same books, blogs, and podcasts. Meanwhile, there are millions who will never hear strong biblical teaching unless teachers are willing to go. I might be fooling myself, but I feel like the Spirit enables me to lovingly confront difficult issues. And I have seen repentance result from it.

WHY HAVE YOU NOT PUBLICLY DENOUNCED CERTAIN PREACHERS?

I believe it is absolutely biblical to call out certain false teachers and beg people to run from their teachings. We see Paul do this in the scriptures. As I was growing in my faith, I was grateful for radio shows where false teachings were exposed. I have always wanted to be a person who did not shy away from controversy, boldly willing to call out false teachers. In my zeal, I often denounced teachers and denominations without having my facts in order. I was sometimes motivated by pride rather than love. I have had to repent before true brothers in the Lord that I one time slandered. As a dad, it's a terrifying thought to know that I inappropriately slandered one of God's sons or daughters.

I still strive to boldly call out false teachers, but I have found it hard to collect accurate data. I am willing to do it, but I want to do it with caution. I will be judged for every careless word spoken (Matthew 12:36). Whether it is due to carelessness or a desire for fame, many Christians have fallen into the worldly practice of creating fake news. Exaggerations are made because it makes things interesting, driving more traffic to their sites, leading to greater revenue and attention. Over the years, many things have been said about me that simply are not true. I can't know the motives, but I am sure it is untrue. In the same way, friends of mine have been misrepresented and their reputations unfairly tarnished. I want to make sure that I am not guilty of the same thing.

We live in a time when it is hard to discover the truth about any one person because there are a slew of voices quick to s

tate their opinions as fact. So I now have a team of people researching to try and differentiate between rumors and truth. As I gather that information, I will seek out the teachers and address the issues in a biblical manner (Matthew 18). I will pray for and seek their repentance in love. If there is not repentance, I believe it is right to warn against false teachers and separate from them.

Having said all of that, I refuse to slow down in my preaching to the lost, caring for the local church, sending missionaries to unreached people groups, collecting and distributing aid to the needy, in order to research false teachers. It is important. I admit that I have not done enough research and will do more without neglecting the other responsibilities I have before the Lord.

WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG FOR YOU TO WRITE A RESPONSE?

Early in my ministry, I had a professor warn â€œdonâ€™t spend your time defending yourself. Let God defend you and those closest to you defend you. You can spend your whole life dispelling rumors.â€• I have followed that advice for the past 30 years. I hope this response doesnâ€™t sound like a person who is trying to save his reputation just for the sake of saving his reputation. My hope was to bring clarity to those who might trust my life and preaching and assume that my being in a picture or on a stage with someone means that I align with them. In regards to pictures...I live a very strange life. Most people take pictures with their friends and family. I end up taking thousands of pictures with complete strangers who ask to take pictures with me. I have struggled over the years with whether it is wrong to sign books or take pictures with people. I would be perfectly happy to never take another picture or sign another book. It just feels rude and discouraging to say no. My intention was never to show allegiance with those who request selfies.

Another reason I took so long to write this response is because I read Paulâ€™s defense of his ministry. He was able to do it out of love for people and the furtherance of the gospel. I needed a little extra time to make sure I wasnâ€™t responding out of anger, pride, hurt, or cynicism- things that I have been guilty of. I think my heart is in a good place now, and I am writing because I believe I have a calling to proclaim the gospel and preach unpopular truths in a crooked generation. Though some are trying to deter people from my ministry altogether, I believe God has given me a calling to teach His Word. I plan on teaching faithfully until I die. I hope you take this in the spirit in which it was written.

One final thought- We should all be careful to guard against false teaching of any kind. In the process of refuting false teachers, however, we can unintentionally falsely accuse good teachers. That might be equally harmful to His Kingdom. God desires unity in His body, so it is no small crime to bring division into the church.

â€œAs for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.â€•
Titus 3:10

â€œDo you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.â€•

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Jesus deeply longed for unity amongst His children. This should not come at the expense of truth. There are times when the truth will divide. Letâ€™s all humbly beg for wisdom from the Holy Spirit to know how to love our brothers without compromising truth. As we diligently confront false teaching, letâ€™s show equal fervency in defending those who are true to our brothers and equal zeal in confronting those who unnecessarily divide the body.

from: <http://wearechurch.com/blog/2019/3/16/a-response-to-some-concerns-by-francis-chan>

Re: A RESPONSE TO SOME CONCERNS BY FRANCIS CHAN - posted by narrowpath, on: 2019/3/24 18:58

I had similar concerns about Francis, but I think he makes a strong point.

Also, he takes a very humble and teachable position.

I have high regards for a man who reacts to critique in a Spirit of Grace and does not take offense

Wouldn't it be good if preachers like him can wake up those who are caught in movements that are on the fringes of biblical Christianity?

Jesus ministered in Samaria. This could be a synonyme for churches that are half way down to secularism.

Art Katz ministered among fringe groups and was mightily used by the Lord.

Len Ravenhill spoke at a John Wimber conference were he had a powerful impact on me while I was still in my hyper-charismatic dreamworld.

We are often too quick to write off those of who disagree with us.

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2019/3/25 11:21

What a beautiful and wise response from Francis Chan.

This response really blesses me.

When I listened to his sermon at an IHOP meeting (international house of prophets) his message contained a real element of rebuke and correction...for which I was very pleased to hear him speak without apology.

I thank God for Francis.