

“RELATIONSHIP, NOT RELIGION”

Some time ago a denomination in Dallas, Texas, advertised its aim as “relationship, not religion.” When I read it, I thought, “At last, truth in advertising!” Actually, most of the religious groups that claim to be “Christian” have been placing “relationship” ahead of “religion” all along, but seldom do they advertise it. In fact, some of them may not even recognize that they are doing so.

What does their slogan mean? I infer that it means that their principal aim is to encourage good human relations. The slogan implies that the church members are free to believe and practice whatever pleases them in religion and to behave about any way they choose in their daily lives—as long as they maintain good “relationships” in so doing. A further implication is that they will not be “burdened” with any dogma, doctrine, or requisite practices (especially if they are taught in the Bible, no doubt).

This “version” of “Christianity” is one of the many sorry ends of the old slogan, “It makes no difference what you believe, as long as you’re sincere.” If “relationship” supersedes religion, one may keep his third wife who has had four husbands as long as the two presently have a “good relationship.” In this creed it matters little what one believes about the Creation, baptism, the way God has directed men to worship Him, or the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Such are irrelevant as long as one knows how to “get along” with others.

The greater tragedy is that some congregations that wear the name, “Church of Christ,” have adopted just such an emphasis. Some congregations now boast of being havens for those involved in adulterous marriages. If these groups were honest, they would no longer use *Church of Christ* on their signs. We are beginning to see integrity in this regard in some. Max Lucado renamed his Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio

“Oak Hills Church” in 2003. Some of us have for years begged the elders of the North Richland Hills “Church of Christ” near Fort Worth to take this step. It is at least **approaching** honesty in this regard. Its marquee read on one occasion, “If you are looking for an independent community church, call ___-_____.” To no one’s surprise, NRH recently announced it would begin conducting a service on Saturday nights which will feature instrumental music and the “Lord’s supper.” Those apostates who are zealous to lead the church into fellowship with the denominations consistently soft-pedal doctrine in favor of an “irenic (peaceful) spirit” toward and relationship with men.

No one can deny the importance of correct relationships. However, even a neophyte in Bible teaching cannot miss its primary emphasis on the **right relationship with God**. It is not possible to be rightly related to one’s fellow man if he is not rightly related to God. The correct order is always peace with God, then peace with man (Mat. 10:37; Luke 12:51–53; Acts 5:29; et al.). There is no peace with God without respect for the authority of His Son (Mat. 17:5; Heb. 1:1–2; 5:9; et al.). Only when one has the **right religion** (as defined by the New Testament) will he have the **right relationship** with both God and men.

—Dub McClish

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