

August 27, 2023

# The View

*“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21*

---

## Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly "headquarters." The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

***Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.***

***We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.***

## Mark Your Calendars

**Bible Exhibit, with Mike Wilson, October 21, 2023**

*Invite your friends and relatives.*

## Schedule

### The Lord's Day

#### 9:30 AM Bible Classes

*Auditorium: "Jesus at work in the Gospels."*

Young Adult Class (room 12): "Jesus: making the best use of the time." Ephesians 5:15-17

Room 15/16: "Building a Great Marriage"

#### 10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today

David Posey: "What If You Walked Away?"

*Matthew 19:16-26*

*Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>*

#### Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

*"Praying the Psalms" (Auditorium)*

*HS/College Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey's home*

*Middle school class: monthly (contact David Sanderson ([david.r.sanderson@intel.com](mailto:david.r.sanderson@intel.com)))*

*or Seth Reagan ([sethreagan@gmail.com](mailto:sethreagan@gmail.com))*

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

### Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes: 5<sup>th</sup> grade and lower

*6<sup>th</sup> grade and up, auditorium: Praising God in Song*

---

Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

Website: [folsomchurch.com](http://folsomchurch.com)

# The Resurgence of the “Social Gospel”

BY COREY CUNNINGHAM

Sometimes, satire is an effective teaching tool. By nature, we recognize that satire is funny (and often painfully poignant) because somewhere deep behind the facetious front there is a kernel of truth! I was reminded of this fact just recently, when a popular satirical publication shared the following headline on social media in jest: **“Local Church Tries Bold New Tactic of Just Teaching the Bible.”** After chuckling at the absurdity of the thought that any religious organization would consider this a “bold new tactic,”

I realized that there was surely some truth to the idea that many “churches” do not, at least in practice, consider Bible teaching to be a prominent part of what they are assembled or organized to do. Furthermore, I found myself questioning which part of the story was considered by the publication to be the satirical part: was it that everyone knows that nobody focuses their undivided attention on Bible teaching anymore? Or, was it the fact that nobody would consider plain Bible teaching to be an effective strategy to garner popularity? Both are equally terrifying for the state of the religious world at large.

The problem of churches being distracted from “just teaching the Bible” is certainly not a new one. Throughout time, folks have set aside Bible study and teaching in favor of things that would garner more attention from those outside the faith. Amongst the brethren, these distractions have historically had a way of intruding with an effect almost like a pendulum.

At some times in the history of the church since the first century, the brethren have been very serious and studious regarding the study and teaching of God’s Word. At other times, brethren have feared that focusing too much on “dogma and doctrine” would lead to a legalist mindset that would ultimately cause people (especially young people) to somehow lose interest in spiritual things and, by extension, lose their faith. It is no coincidence that Paul told young Timothy to “*give attention to reading, exhortation, and doctrine*” until he came to him to reinforce these things (1 Tim. 4:13-16). He gave this advice because he knew that many would “*depart from the faith*” and become distracted by their own desires.

Throughout the fourth chapter of this letter, we also find Paul making mention of “*instructing the brethren*,” being “*nourished in the words of faith and the good doctrine which you have carefully followed*,” being “*an example to the believers in word, conduct, love, faith, and purity*,” “*meditating on these things and giving yourself entirely to them*,” and finally “*taking heed to yourself and to the doctrine*,” which he says will save both Timothy and those who hear him. The Hebrew writer states that, “*the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb. 4:12). It’s no wonder that Paul wanted Timothy to focus so intently upon it! No words that you or I could contrive, and no distractions that we could devise to

gain attention or popularity, could ever compete with the abilities of the Word of God to act upon the heart of man!

And yet... many don’t trust it to do just that. I can recall in my youth that many brethren began to become distracted from basic Bible doctrine in favor of activities that would be more “fun and engaging.” People began to focus on social connections first, stating that if we could just get people interested in forming a connection with us that their interest in the gospel would follow. Churches recruited young people from other congregations. Gospel Meetings, where a full week of God’s teaching was used to reinvigorate the spirit of brethren, were replaced with the occasional singing where a Bible was never cracked open. Youth Bible studies were replaced by bowling nights, “lock-ins” and camp gatherings. As these things became more of a trend, I can recall one visiting preacher commenting that it was becoming apparent that folks would do any activity they deemed positive and fun and, as long as they put “for Christ” on the end of the activity, it was deemed permissible. “Exercise Group for Christ”... “Food Drive for Christ”... “Bowling for Christ”... This preacher finally posed the question, “where do we draw the line?” He suggested that some brethren pool their funds, open a for-profit funeral home, and call the initiative, “Cadavers for Christ!” Another example of satire as a teaching tool.

But like all good satire, there’s a kernel of truth there. **Where does it end?** Where would we draw the line? You see, these distractions are making a comeback. And it’s important that we understand the difference between the *gospel of truth* and this *social gospel*, and that we communicate the difference to our young people. If we fail to do this, each generation of our youth may blur the line a little further between what is profitable and what is pleasurable when it comes to our efforts in the Kingdom. Even now, there are brethren who are emphasizing things like fancy church logos, church “business plans” that lay out the mission and vision of the congregation, and hosting youth events where everyone gets a matching T-shirt and engages in fun-filled planned activities like dodgeball. It’s not a far leap from there to the church hosting such activities and operating as a business. And many of the young folks engaged in these things presently undoubtedly do not fully understand where the line is drawn.

At the center of all this is the failure to understand and emphasize some simple truths about God found in Isaiah 55. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways. And His word shall not return to Him void, but rather it shall accomplish what He pleases and shall prosper in the thing for which He sent it (Is. 55:8-11). Folks, what He pleases is repentance and the salvation of souls (2 Pet. 3:9).

*Continued on page 3*

## RESURGENCE OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

These folks have it backwards; it is not that we should get people hooked in socially and then they will desire the Word. It is that we should use the Word to hook them in spiritually, and then they will desire a relationship with God *and* the brethren (see all of Romans 12)! Fellowship with one another can *only* come through fellowship with Christ. Fellowship with Christ can only come from walking in the light with Him (1 Jn. 1:3-7), and this is where we can find true joy. This is where we will have success in bringing folks to Christ and keeping them there. Besides, if we bring folks in socially but they came for the social hour and not for the gospel, where have we really brought them? **Not to Christ.**

May we never see the church as a social group first and a spiritual group second. May we never presume to treat the church like a business, with a business plan/mission/vision for popularity, growth and success. May our mission be His mission, to seek and save the lost with the gospel of truth (Lk. 19:10). May our vision be His vision, to see ourselves and those around us come to repentance through the teaching of His Word (2 Pet. 3:9). May our desire always be for the pure milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). May we always be able to sing truthfully and zealously, "Give Me the Bible!" And may we teach our young people to desire the same.

## No mincing of words here...

It says in Matthew 14:6-7 - "*But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.*"

John the Baptist was killed due in great part to Herod's lust. And Herod's lust was enflamed in great part by the dancing of the daughter of Herodias. It's difficult to see this story otherwise.

Yet more and more I see followers of Jesus involved in such activities, or allowing — and even encouraging or facilitating — such in their children. The physical body is attractive to the opposite sex. Movement in the physical body can and often does enhance said attraction. There is absolutely no denying such. And you would think in a culture that is so obsessed with nudity and sex that Christians would be especially conscious of any appearance or behavior that encourages lasciviousness.

But it is commonplace to see young men and women who profess godliness wearing very revealing clothing (read short shorts & skirts; cropped tops; low cut blouses; clingy, sheer, or tight shirts, dresses, athletic gear). And wearing such shamelessly - almost defiantly - with the idea that anyone who might object is an archaic prude. Then taking their flaunted sexuality to the dance floor so that they might display themselves in the most sensual of ways. It happens regularly. It happens extensively. And we're often scared to address it because of the brazen ridicule that is directed at anyone who would decry such carnality.

I'm saying it. Think what you will. Shame on Herodias' daughter. Shame on Herod. Shame on us. Holiness demands more than such animal behavior.

RUSS BOWMAN

## Fathers!

### Ephesians 6:4

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*

Isn't it interesting that, of all the things Paul could have said after "do not" he chooses the word "provoke"? It seems that he wants fathers to think seriously about how they communicate with their kids — that's a key to proper "discipline and instruction." The Greek word for "provoke" means to rouse someone to anger or "to push their buttons." Instead of provoking, fathers should be wearing the fruit of the Spirit on their sleeves — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. So be careful; be very careful...

- Gaslighting\* is not a fruit of the Spirit.
- Mockery is not a fruit of the Spirit.
- Condescension is not a fruit of the Spirit.
- Manipulation is not a fruit of the Spirit.

These are a few ways that some fathers "provoke" their kids. Paul said, "don't do that; it's a sin."

\*"Gaslighting" means to manipulate someone psychologically with the goal of brainwashing them often with the goal of making them feel that they are the ones who are guilty. Technically, it is a colloquialism describing the subjective experience of having one's reality repeatedly questioned by the perpetrator.

— dp

## Quotes

### On Love

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."

— C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

"Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own."

— Robert A. Heinlein

"Love is like the wind, you can't see it but you can feel it."

— Nicholas Sparks

"Love is a two-way street constantly under construction."

— Carroll Bryant

"Forgiveness is like the fragrance a flower gives after it's been stepped on." (Unknown)