

## **Radical Christianity**

**Mark 8:35 (KJV)** For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

**Mark 8:35 (LB)** Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live!

It is beyond dispute that our current youth culture values living on the edge, going against the mainstream, striving after the unknown, and experiencing a total rush more than anything else. That's the reason for extreme sports, extreme styles, extreme music, and extreme lifestyles. The bad news is that most of these people are lost, without salvation. But the good news is that the Apostolic church is better positioned than ever before to reach this extreme generation with the extreme truth about an extreme experience they can have with an extreme God!

We are a radical culture because we live in a time of radical change!

To store a gigabyte's worth of data 20 years ago required a refrigerator sized machine weighing 500 pounds. Today that gigabyte of data lives on a disc the size of a quarter. The speed, capacity, and performance of technologies have exploded. They have increased by six orders of magnitude over the past 30 years (10 X 10 X 10 X 10 X 10 X 10).

Today we are building machines today that are measured in nanometers. A nanometer is to an inch what an inch is to 400 miles.

Telephone connections are increasing exponentially as well. Half as many landlines were laid in the last six years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as in the whole previous history of the world. During those same six years, the number of active cell phones in the world grew tenfold.

The world has generated more information in the last 3 years than had been collected before that since the beginning of time. That's radical!

The dictionary defines RADICAL as "departing markedly from the usual or customary; favoring revolutionary changes in current practices, conditions, or institutions." In today's street lingo, the word RADICAL means "excellent, wonderful." But the word RADICAL is Latin in origin and literally means "having roots" – "going back to the roots or basics; reaching to the center, the foundation, the origin, the principles; going back to the ultimate source."

Apostolic Christianity was never intended to be a religious experience; Jesus Christ and His apostles instituted it from the beginning to be a radical lifestyle! The sad thing today is that churches are filled with people who think they are getting radical when they stand up in a service and shout, "Hallelujah!" That's not radical; that's normal around here!

Radical Christianity is ROOT Christianity. It is ORIGINAL Christianity. Radical Christianity is not normal as far as the secular world goes; it is also not normal as far as the church world goes. Radical Christianity is believing God for the supernatural. Radical Christianity is so sold out to God that it goes beyond what the average person would even dare to live like. And radical Christianity is sorely criticized and soundly condemned by lukewarm saints who have become more comfortable with the status quo than they are with a real revival on their hands.

But those who would oppose it are fighting an uphill battle! Radical Christianity has met these opponents before, and still it thrives. It has been fed to the lions and forced into the catacombs. It has been burned at the stake and buried under stones. It has been vilified and crucified. It has been martyred and murdered. It has been ridiculed and rejected. It has been prosecuted and persecuted. It has been misrepresented and miscommunicated. But still it thrives ... because radical Christians are not afraid of men, only of existing without the power of God flowing through their longing, hungry souls!

The most dangerous opponent of radical Christianity is not a liberal media, a corrupt court, a humanistic government, or a secular society. The most dangerous opponent of radical Christianity is the smug satisfaction of so-called Christians who think they have arrived!

An OXYMORON is "a figure of speech created by joining contradictory terms" – act naturally, deafening silence, definite maybe, exact estimate, freezer burn, fresh-frozen, genuine imitation, government organization, jumbo shrimp, minor crisis, pretty ugly, working vacation.

Here are a few more oxymorons for you: passive worship, dead church, denominational Pentecostal. They don't belong together!

We must have a radical approach for a radical culture!

**Acts 1:8 (KJV)** But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The early church started out in obedience to Acts 1:8, but stopped too soon. They wanted to reach out in Jerusalem, among their own kind, but they did not want to go to the ends of the earth – or even to Samaria!

**Acts 1:6** When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

The early church needed a reversal in their thinking! They wanted to sit in a state of spiritual blessing in Jerusalem and have the nations flow to them. Jesus wanted them to be servants of the Kingdom who would leave their comfort zone and go to others, just as He had left heaven to come to us! Their responsibility was not just to care for the lost who came to find them, but to seek them out!

IF WE WILL NOT GO, God only has two alternatives ...

- PERSECUTION, to drive us out
- SUBSTITUTION, to find someone else who will go willingly

Nothing is secure, nothing is permanent, nothing is guaranteed to have God's favor forever, even if it seems to have been built by Him and to have His anointing. **ONLY THE CHURCH THAT OBEYS HIS COMMANDS CAN BE ASSURED OF HIS CONTINUING FAVOR!**

It is not that the Jerusalem church rejected the Great Commission, it's that they could not seem to manage the kind of vision and commitment that was required in this period of church history. So, God used persecution first and then substitution when they continued to resist.

When the Apostle Paul had his life-changing encounter with God and came to the church at Jerusalem to share his vision of preaching to the Gentiles, the brethren sent him back to Tarsus – his birthplace – so that he couldn't stir up any more revolutionary ideas!

**Acts 11:19-21 (KJV)** Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

Antioch was a mostly Gentile city, and it is inconceivable that they should ignore all but a small minority of Jews, assuming they were the only ones God wanted to save! But that's what the first group did! However, thank God there was a second group not from Jerusalem (men of Cyprus and Cyrene) that preached to the Greeks – **AND THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH THEM!**

This is a moment of destiny, when the church at Antioch was born! Not just a few transplants from the Jerusalem Jewish subculture, but some sinfully irreverent, Biblically illiterate Gentiles came to God!

Jerusalem never did know how to deal with revolutionary revivalists like the Apostle Paul, who continually jumped fences, ignored boundaries, and broke rules to win the lost. That's why Jerusalem never sent out history's greatest missionary – Antioch sent him out!

The Jerusalem church was originally chosen, richly anointed, full of New Testament teaching, experiencing amazing miracles and basking in rich worship. But God still turned His attention to Antioch because Jerusalem would not embrace God's command to witness! If our little church building and program becomes the sum total of our vision, it will not last beyond a second or third generation!

**BUT GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES ARE DIFFERENT!** Generation after generation, they run with vision. No matter what they achieve, they have never arrived, because there is always one more soul just beyond their borders that needs to hear about Jesus! Jerusalem held on to their resources, but Antioch accepted that Jesus had the right to demand of them any resource He wanted to use – people, prayer, finance, whatever! They also accepted that the Great Commission was at the very top of God's priority list.

Jerusalem was unwilling to CHANGE to reach the culture of the world around it; instead, they demanded that the Gentiles become Jewish before they could get saved. You must speak our Jewish lingo, learn our Jewish customs, and like our Jewish music! **THE SAME THING HAPPENS TODAY**, and because change is hard, most churches simply do not want to be uncomfortable. They just want to touch their Jerusalem and leave it at that.

**Acts 11:25-26 (KJV)** Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

But what will the other Christians think? That's not the question that begs to be answered. **WHAT WILL JESUS THINK?**

It's easy to pastor a church that knows where it's going. I want to pastor a church that doesn't have a clue where it's going, but knows WHO it is going with! You can travel across the country in the dark with only a few feet of light (headlights) - that's like following the leading of the Spirit.

It's RADICAL to be in a church like that. It's even more RADICAL to be a Christian like that! But think how we got here, Pentecostal! We didn't build this church the sensible way anyway!

**Psalms 124:1** If it had not been the Lord who was on our side ...

**Galatians 3:3** Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Did you know that skulls eventually become set, but your ears always keep growing - hear what the Spirit says to the church - LISTEN!

The Bible's favorite word for disciple is mathetes. It is translated "disciple" 269 times, but it can also be translated "learner." True disciples need to keep learning!

Some people are frightened of NEW ideas – I'm even more frightened of OLD ideas that stopped working a long time ago!

This radical generation has to have a radical experience with God! It doesn't matter so much whether we are successful today – what matters is whether we will reach our youth and be successful ten years from now!

Why do people say, "Your church is so full of life?" Because we're aiming to reach this generation! Our youth, with their loud music and their contagious enthusiasm, are equipped to reach today's culture because they are like it – RADICAL! (The rest of us have to work on it.)

We are not going to use every METHOD they used in Pentecost fifty years ago, because they won't work any more. But I'll tell you what we are going to do – we're going to preach the same MESSAGE they preached in Pentecost fifty years ago – because it is a RADICAL message, and it still works! We're going to WORSHIP the same way they did in Pentecost fifty years ago – because it still connects with people the same as it ever did. (Some of you older saints were 'wild worshippers' in your youth, so don't criticize just because arthritis has kicked in!)

We're not going to put senseless restrictions on our young people (or on new Christians); we're going to let them get radical for God in their own way to reach their own generation. That's the Apostolic way!

**Acts 15:28 (KJV)** For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

**Romans 1:14 (NLT)** For I have a great sense of obligation to people in our culture and to people in other cultures.

Radical Christianity can't be lived at 20 mph (you'll be miserable); it must be lived at 120 mph! (unused power in engine)

**Habakkuk 1:5 (NLT)** Look at the nations and be amazed! Watch and be astounded at what I will do! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it.

THAT'S RADICAL!

**Luke 15:7 (CEV)** Jesus said, 'In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to.'

THAT'S RADICAL!

**1 Thessalonians 2:19 (NLT)** What gives us hope and joy, and what is our proud reward and crown? It is you! Yes, you will bring us much joy as we stand together before our Lord Jesus when he comes back again.

THAT'S RADICAL!

**Isaiah 43:5-7 (NIV)** Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

THAT'S RADICAL!

**Acts 2:17 (KJV)** And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Dreams tell us where we came from, and visions tell us where we're going – and they join together in a last days outpouring of God's Spirit!

**Psalms 126:1-6 (KJV)** When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. [2] Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. [3] The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. [4] Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. [5] They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. [6] He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.