

## Traditions, Tribes, and Truth: Nothing New

Recently a video was posted online by the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, TN. This video (since set to PRIVATE) is about Lauren King who is a preaching intern at David Lipscomb University. She shared the pulpit with Patrick Meade the senior minister of that church on Sunday morning November 23, 2014. Churches of Christ are autonomous and therefore should not need to answer to any human institution or other church in regards to their Biblical practices. We all will be held responsible by Jesus Christ who is the Chief Shepherd in the Day of Judgment. However, in the case of this video, a clear provocative approach has been taken to promote things not specifically taught in Scripture. If this movement continues (as Lauren King says), it will be divisive and confusing to many people who may be seeking the truth. We need a moral, loving, and meek approach like Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ says that we [Christians] are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Instead of wasting our time on divisive practices and arguments (I Timothy 1:3-4), our energy needs to be focused on the work of the Church. But we can only accomplish that mission as we are unified by the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) so that we practice truth. Since the Spirit speaks only truth, we must practice that truth. For this reason, we feel that in this discussion we are not trying to be divisive as mentioned in I Timothy 1, but we are calling for unity in truth

The incident mentioned in the video has been thoroughly refuted by several writings. The reader is strongly urged to use these sources for a more detailed study. It is not the intent of this writing to add to them but it makes the assumption that the practice at the Fourth Avenue Church of Christ of allowing a woman to preach is in error. These four internet sources have excellent material for further study and are cited below:

**Adam Faughn** says 'I am sad'.<sup>1</sup> He is sad because the Apostle Paul's words are made to carry little meaning even though Jesus said (John 14:25) the Holy Spirit would guide them (Apostles) into all truth. Then the teaching of Paul is twisted to say it was only a cultural issue applicable to only one congregation in New Testament times. Finally, they argue that a lady not speaking in church is a Church of Christ tradition and hence not binding.

**David Miller** in an article for the Apologetics Press concludes 'A massive restructuring of values and reorientation of moral and spiritual standards has been taking place in American culture for over forty years now.'<sup>2</sup> He makes a Biblical argument against this revisionist reinterpretation of Scripture by those who espouse the feminist movement.

**Joshua Pappas** in one of his blog postings says about I Corinthians 11:2-16 'The passage is about the order of authority that originates with God: Christ is subordinate to the Father, men are subordinate to Christ; women are subordinate to men. There is a principle of male leadership and female submission throughout the Bible, and while it is generally true that God did not intend for women to occupy positions of authority over men in any area of human society, there have been, and are certain exceptions that meet with God's approval (teaching and exercising authority over men in the church is not one of them).'<sup>3</sup> He concludes that customs are not binding but principles are binding.

**Scott Shifford Jr.** in one of his blog postings says this about women and men 'Culture is not a standard for understanding God's Word concerning women in the church (1 Pet 1:23-25), and the followers of Christ must not reject the authority of the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16-17).'<sup>4</sup> He further observes that Christ chose only men to be Apostles. Women have a teaching role but he uses I Timothy 2:8 to show that women cannot teach men in a gathering where men pray.

It is not my intent here to add to that discussion but to think about how error of any type may be justified and propagated using the Fourth Avenue Church of Christ as an example. We will analyze this video in detail pointing out its erroneous reasoning and in the Biblical context of why things like this happen. The only reason that things like this happen started with the rebellion in Heaven. Satan **wanted** more than what his created order allowed. Some relevant Scriptures are Luke 10:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, and Revelation 12:7-10. Other relevant Scriptures that describing Satan's actions are Genesis 3:1-7, John 8:44, I John 3:10, I Peter 5:8, and 2 Corinthians 11:14. John 8:44 describes Satan as a murderer and a liar; this verse says that Satan is the father of lies and speaks from his own resources. The first recorded lie was in Genesis 3:4. The serpent told the woman that she would not surely die if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that was a direct contradiction of Genesis 2:17 by the addition one word. Revelation 12:10 described Satan as an accuser. The book of Job gives an example of how Satan acted against one righteous man. Job 1:6-12 describes Satan's appearance with the sons of God before the Lord. He accused Job of serving God from an impure motive. God gave permission for Satan to take away all his possessions and eventually (after a second appearance before the Lord) strike him with boils thereby taking away his health. Satan would probably have taken Job's life but God set a limit on what he would allow him to do. From 2 Corinthians 11:14 we learn that Satan is a mastermind of disguise: he transforms himself into an angel of light.

We are dealing with a very capable and cunning foe. Having some knowledge even from the direct teaching of Jesus is not enough. Peter boldly proclaimed in Luke 22 that he was ready to go to prison or die with Jesus. However, in Luke 22:31-32 Jesus said that Satan had demanded to sift Peter like wheat. Jesus prayed to the Father for Peter that his faith might not fail and when you have turned again (converted) that he might strengthen his brethren. The Bible sounds the warning in 1 Peter 5:8: ***“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*** The solution is given in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: ***“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*** In 2 Timothy, Paul admonishes the young preacher as follows: ***“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”*** We need to emphasize the right handling of the Word of Truth. The perfect example is Jesus’ temptations after fasting in the wilderness for 40 days. These temptations were of the same type that Eve faced (lust of the flesh, pride of life, and lust of the eyes) but with a different outcome. Matthew 4 and Luke 4 record these in detail. In each of the three temptations Jesus goes back to scripture and says ***‘for it is written’***. The plea here is that we will not fall to societal norms or emotional arguments.

Now let us turn our attention to the video. For the sake of ease in analyzing this pleasing and professionally-produced video, we will cite approximate time intervals tied to the comments under discussion. The video is approximately 9 minutes in length. It includes cuts from the sermon itself and an interview with Patrick Meade (senior minister) as well as Lauren King and another woman in the church. We will look at this video as a case study to see how error is conceived, justified, and promoted. **When things like this are said or promoted, be on guard for error.** In our discussion, we will use the time listed in bold to the left of the actual statement. As a quick reference in this discussion, some of the comments in the video are listed **APPENDIX I**.

Error begins with a **want**. (Note that the word **want** is used not **need**. A **want** is not essential. ) That want may start as lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, or pride of life. It may be stated as ‘I have a right to \_\_\_\_\_.’ God would want me to be \_\_\_\_\_.’ We want to \_\_\_\_\_.’ Other statements emphasize I, me, my, or mine. The reader can fill in the blanks on these. It is a rejection of God’s authority and presumes man’s thinking to be equal with Gods. **In contrast** look at Jesus (equal with God) and what was said in Philippians 2.

***Philippians 2:5-9 ESV*** *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,*

We have discussed the fall of Satan earlier and the temptation of Eve and how she was deceived. Other Old Testament examples are worthy of consideration:

**(1 Samuel 8)** The nation of Israel, using as an excuse that Samuel's sons caused them to sin, wanted a king to judge them so they could be like all the other nations. God goes on to say that it was not Samuel they had rejected but Him.

**(1 Samuel 15)** King Saul listened to the people and did not completely destroy everything in Amalek as God had commanded. His excuse for not obeying is that he had a better use for some of it (sacrifice the best of the animals to the Lord). Sacrificing to God was a good thing but God demands obedience. Eventually the kingdom was removed from Saul and his lineage from Israel as well.

**(Leviticus 10)** Nadab and Abihu offer strange (unauthorized) fire before the Lord. The Lord had commanded the fire to be used. For some reason, they chose to do otherwise and the results were immediate.

**(2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13)** David desires to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. Apparently he does not consult with God and has it moved his own way. Uzzah pays the price for David thinking that just moving the Ark would honor God while disregarding how it should be done. **2 Samuel 6:7** says that God struck him (Uzzah) dead because of his error--that is touching the Ark when the oxen stumbled.

## **TRADITION**

The posted video does not mention tradition but it is definitely trying to change it. The changes in American now, in part, are based on feminism. But what about tradition as mentioned in the Bible, is it right or wrong? When tradition elevates man's ways over God's commandments it is wrong. Consider the mention of tradition in the New Testament. Four of the five books that mention tradition condemn it. The Scriptures are Matthew 15:2-9, Mark 7:3,5,8,9,13, Colossians 2:8, and I Peter 1:18. These condemnations were directed to the Jewish religious leaders because they rejected the commandments of God so that they could keep their own customs and man-made laws. The only exception is 2 Thessalonians 3:6 where the Apostle Paul

tells them 'keep the tradition received from us'. Here tradition referred to work and not being idle. We must understand that tradition must be accepted or rejected based upon proper application of Scripture. However, in our worship to God, we need to be careful of changes that were not practiced in the early New Testament church. Since God must be held in reverence, well-intentioned change may not be acceptable. In the Old Testament, 2 Samuel 6: 3-7, Uzzah was struck dead because of his error when he reached out to steady the Ark as it was being brought to Jerusalem. Two sons, Uzzah and Ahio, of the house of Abinadab had made elaborate plans to carry it on a new cart. As respectful as they thought, God had said it must be carried by two Levites using Acacia poles covered in gold. They knew God had said not to touch the Ark. Uzzah paid the ultimate price. In Acts 7, Stephen recounts some Jewish history. In verse 33, when God met Moses in the burning bush, Moses was commanded to remove his sandals because he was on Holy Ground. When we come to worship God and He is in our presence, we should be careful that that worship is to please and honor God and not just what we want.

## **TRIBES**

In this video Lauren King uses the phrase '**our tribe**'. From the context she seems to be talking about the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee.

*The word tribe is defined as 'a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recolonized leader' by [www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)*

Notice the subtle shift away from church to tribe. A tribe is neither a name nor a description of the church that Jesus built. The 12 tribes of Israel can be found in Scripture but its usage in this way cannot. To be scriptural we cannot say our tribe any more than we can say our church. If it really is a tribe then we, not God, can set the rules of membership and conduct.

A very sad and disturbing scene is described in Judges 19 which involves homosexual behavior and rape. Instead of the tribe of Benjamin executing judgement on those worthless men, they protected them because of the tribe. The outcome was the near destruction of that tribe. Judges 17:6 and 21:25 simply states (in ESV) '*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes*'. However, the story gets even worse. A basic disregard for God's law and relying on kinship (tribe) explains it all. The church is not a tribe to be ruled by our laws: the church, purchased by Jesus Christ's blood, is subject to His laws.

## **Truth**

If the truth is to be perverted, a want must be exploited usually through the avenue of pride of life, lust of the eyes, and lust of the flesh. It begins with a half-truth (lie) that fulfills a want but described in terms of reaching a greater good; i.e. preventing discrimination, curing a disease, church growth, etc. Secondly, to make the perversion less emotionally distasteful or more emotionally appealing, words are redefined and changed to other words entirely. Thirdly, there is an appeal for unity or acceptance of the idea. Leaving out Scripture, erroneous application, and many other tactics are often used. Fourthly, there is an attempt to close any further discussion and totally destroy the opposition by branding (calling them) a name or phrase so bad that most people would ridicule or oppose them.

This video follows the playbook quite well. The reader is encouraged to look at APPENDIX I to see some excerpts along with the approximate time code from the video itself. At the time of writing, this writer had a digital copy of the video in his possession. If there is any doubt that this writer has misquoted or has drawn conclusions contrary to what was intended, it is suggested that the elders of the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin TN, be asked to provide a password so that the video can be viewed online or provide them with a copy of the original video.

The video starts with the way we value women and the way Scripture values women. Implied here is that in the past the Church has not valued women correctly. So Lauren King says that thru discernment and prayer she was able to pick up a preaching emphasis and now having perceived the Lord's voice, she has peace. The half-truth here is that to value women equal to men, they should function in the same role as men. We have already looked at *Tradition* and how many times it is based on human values but not this time. Some would imply Galatians 3:28 says that men and women are equal but continue to verse 29 (ESV) which says '*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*' We are equal because in Christ we are heirs to the same promise. But the role is different. Consider I Corinthians 11:3 (and others mentioned previously) '*But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.*'

Secondly, Lauren King tries to use emotion in a logical argument to make what she is doing acceptable to the church. She says that the Lord has given me the gift to speak (could be any others as well); gifts should be used to glorify God; so I will use mine to be a pulpit minister. At

first she talks about a preaching emphasis where her real intent using a subtle shift in phraseology was to speak in public before a church. She is erroneously saying that since I am good at public speaking it must be in a church worship service. Again this writer would say that she has a want above what is allowed. We have already discussed where that has taken us.

In addition she claims that my calling [preaching before a congregation] is no different than Abrahams. She cites an example from Genesis 22:2. In her words, ‘murder is wrong, but go kill your son...’ She continues by saying ‘If a gal has the calling and passion that the Lord is calling, then she should do it...’ She is playing on emotion by using the strong word murder instead of offer. In this case to offer would involve slaying (killing) the sacrifice but not murder which is condemned. Of course, human sacrifice such as done with Baal (that of making sons and daughters pass through the fire) was always condemned and one of the reason that God brought judgment on the people in Canaan. Looking back at Genesis 22, it is clear that God was testing Abraham’s faith and had no intention that the boy would be harmed. Even Abraham had enough faith to believe that his son was coming back with him even if God had to raise him from the dead.

Thirdly, Lauren King says ‘Make every effort to keep the unity of faith in the bond of peace...’ which is a combined reference to Ephesians 4:3 and 13. This passage has already been discussed in this writing. She further says that our church embraces difference so we get unity that way but that is not exactly the meaning of Ephesians 4:3 which says ‘keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ Lauren is apparently equating faith with Spirit. She further expands the argument by saying you serve God one way and I serve Him another so let’s be unified.

Patrick Meade, senior pulpit minister, gets into the argument as well by saying ‘we no longer read the Bible as equal. He can’t believe that the Apostle Paul, in two verses, is trying to undo the rest of Scripture. Paul is a fellow student like us so let’s read the Bible through Jesus. Two verses contradict that whole argument. Look at 2 Timothy 3:16 ‘*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*’; note that it says all not some. What did Jesus have to say about the writings of the Apostles? In John 14:26, Jesus said that God will send the Holy Spirit in my name to teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have told you. Paul is not a fellow student like us; he is an Apostle given the right to speak inerrantly by Jesus and guided by the

Holy Spirit. Read Galatians 1 about Paul spending time in Arabia receiving the Gospel from a revelation of Jesus Christ and then explain how you can be a fellow student like Paul.

Fourthly, Lauren goes on the attack by saying let the lies be gone. The enemy will not have hold on us anymore. It doesn't take long [7:35 mark in the video] to quit talking about unity. She tries to destroy by calling others liars and enemies. This is exactly what we expected by someone promoting what they want regardless of what Scripture says. It all goes back to want and the first sin.

### **Nothing New**

We should not be surprised when even members of the Church try to interpret the Bible in a way that supports their beliefs or when nonbelievers reject the Bible. Consider the reading from Jeremiah 26. Jehoiakim, King of Judah, did not like what was written by the Prophet Jeremiah so he took a knife and cut it into pieces and threw them in the fire until the whole scroll was burned. Another scroll was written with even more words added. Daniel 1:1, 2 tells us that the king was taken captive to Babylon along with some of the temple vessels as well. Also some of the royal family, the nobility, and youths without blemish were also taken into captivity. Many other examples could be cited to show that people have always resisted the Word of God even though this one was extreme. But it does not matter the way we put our wants first, those wants and the results will always be the same—punishment. Ecclesiastes 1:9 says ‘...these is nothing new under the sun.’



## REFERENCES

1. Faughn, Adam. An Open Letter to the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Church of Christ. (2014, December 4). [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://www.faughnfamily.com/open-letter-4th-avenue-church-christ/>
2. Miller, David. Female Leadership and the Church. (2005, February 7). [Article]. Retrieved from <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=7&article=1407>
3. Pappas, Joshua. Social Customs and the Sexes (I Cor. 11:2-16). (2008, February 7). [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://joshualpappas.blogspot.com/2008/02/social-customs-and-sexes.html>
4. Shifferd, Scott Jr. Must Women Remain Silent in the Church? (2010, January 29). [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://godsbreath.net/2010/01/29/must-women-be-silent-in-church/>

## **APENDIX I [video]**

**0:04** [Patrick Meade] ‘...We value women...and the way Scripture values women’

**0:59** [Lauren King] ‘The Lord has made it clear thru discernment and prayer that I was to pick up a preaching emphasis...’

**1:32** [Lauren King] ‘Perceiving the Lord’s voice is when I have peace...’

**2:15** [Lauren King] ‘The gifts that I have are from the Lord...’

**2:20** [Lauren King] ‘To see people in our tribe that are OK...’

**2:48** [Nancy Baughman] ‘Our church embraces lots of differences...unity by embracing differences’

**3:34** [Lauren King] ‘There is a movement coming...’

**3:45** [Lauren King] ‘Make every effort to keep the unity of faith in the bond of peace...’

**3:54** [Lauren King] ‘When God tells us to be united why other believers in God get in our way?’

**4:30** [Lauren King] ‘You prefer to get to know the Lord one way and serve Him-awesome...Let us respect each other and be unified...’

**5:12** [Patrick Meade] ‘I do not believe that Paul in two scriptures is trying to undo the rest of scripture...’

**5:23** [Patrick Meade] ‘Paul was addressing a temporary issue in Corinth and Ephesus...’

**5:34** [Patrick Meade] ‘If Paul was making rules for every time we would not allow widows to be fed...or the wearing of jewelry...’

**5:47** [Patrick Meade] ‘The Bible tells me about Jesus...not to read Jesus thru Paul but to read Paul thru Jesus...’

**6:00** [Patrick Meade] ‘We no longer read the entire Bible as equal...’

**6:10** [Patrick Meade] ‘Everything Paul says was as a fellow student with us...let’s read it thru Jesus...’

**6:16** [Lauren King] ‘Not here to tell people they have been wrong...’

**6:50** [Lauren King] ‘Go and be the hands and feet of Jesus...’

**7:10** [Lauren King] ‘This is the gift He has given me and here goes...’

**7:20** [Lauren King] ‘Guy or gal—any gift God has given can be used for His Kingdom...’

**7:35** [Lauren King] ‘I want the lies to be gone—the enemy not to have hold on us anymore...’

**7:40** [Lauren King] ‘Allow to and called to use it to glorify Him...’

**8:05** [Lauren King] ‘Think about Abraham—Murder is wrong but go kill your son...’

**8:12** [Lauren King] ‘If a gal has the calling and passion that the Lord is calling, then she should do it...’

**8:15** [Lauren King] ‘She prays in the service.’