



February 16, 2007

To All Concerned:

This is in response to the [Christianity Today](#) articles "[Day of Reckoning](#)" by Rob Moll published 2-16-2007 and "[Unaccountable at Calvary Chapel](#)" by Rob Mull published 5-8-2006. The facts reported of who did what to whom may be correct, but I'm dismayed at many of the conclusions drawn from them and the way they're organized to present what I believe to be not just a misrepresentation of Pastor Smith but, of even greater concern, missing the point of what exactly has taken place spiritually.

In both articles the Vineyard is mentioned as if it's just another asset of Calvary Chapel like their radio stations or Maranatha! records. But if the trail had been properly followed and researched as to **WHY** that group (and others as well throughout Calvary Chapel's history) were held spiritually accountable to the point of being asked to leave, a different conclusion is most likely to be reached as to why some troubled souls appear to be tolerated while others are not.

These articles communicate that where there is sin, there should be definitive action to permanently remove that person just because they're a pastor or hold a position of authority. Sorry, but that's not always a biblically supportable position. As long as a Believer is willing to address the issues of sin, we're supposed to continue to work with them. Sometimes they will recover and experience complete, spiritual restoration, but the risk is that they'll repeat the sin and have to be dealt with again. It's a case-by-case, individual situation. Christ's teaching on forgiveness is that it's not limited and may have to be given and experienced more than once. When a person refuses to repent, refuses to change – **THAT'S** a different issue.

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In the case of the Vineyard, a completely set of criteria are involved: What to do when wrong and false doctrine are not just preached, but embraced. As with issues of sin, you confront them (as Chuck Smith did), and hope they will repent of it and renounce it and thus be restored. But if they refuse, the biblical mandate is not only to remove them from the body of Christ, but to cease personal fellowship with them immediately (as happened in this and other cases).

Careful study of God's Word in how we deal with sin as compared to dealing with heresy and false teaching mandates different approaches on our part. Dealing with sin is generally an ongoing process that can take time and appear to be "clunky" according to the world's standards because of the fact that grace has to be applied, something the world doesn't understand about the restoration process. Ironically, the world also has no understanding that heresy and false teaching must be swiftly and immediately handled with a much smaller window of interaction. They think it's just someone with a "different point of view".

Yes, there are sinners at Calvary Chapel, even amongst the pastoral staff. Many have resulted in spectacular failures as Chuck Smith and company have tried to work things through with them the best they could according to their understanding of Scripture. But there have also been many, **MANY** successes in restoring them to the Kingdom. This is not a work that is limited to just pastors; it's a microcosm of what should be going on within the whole church amongst all Believers at every level. As long as there's a legitimate willingness and effort, we have to apply God's grace to the effort even if it takes longer than desired, and even if there are *even more* lapses along the way. This **MAY** involve a person needing to relinquish a position or responsibility, but it is **NOT** automatically so.

But when there are what the Bible terms wolves among the sheep -- false prophets, false teachers, false believers -- the process is

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considerably shortened and demanding. One of the chief roles of the body of Christ **IS** to deal with sin, but one of the things it absolutely can't tolerate is perversion of God's Word and ways. Otherwise it will be incapable of discerning and dealing with sin. The articles mentioned above fail to make this connection. Even worse, they propagate the wrong notion of how to deal with sin.

I'm sure Pastor Smith has made mistakes and his efforts have not been perfect. But what is missing in the reporting of these things is really the difference between the attempt to follow God's Word where others' sin is concerned versus those who become deceived and in turn deceive. The real damage of these articles is not to anyone's reputation, but in teaching the wrong thing. The articles put all the emphasis on sin, giving the appearance that little or nothing is being done (when in fact **EVERYTHING** is being done according to Biblical guidelines), and completely dismissing the **GREATER** issues that **ARE** being addressed of false teachers.

Like many others before him, it took a scandal involving personal sin to bring Ted Haggard down. The truth is that your publication should have been reporting for **YEARS** and **YEARS** that he should not have been tolerated because of his teaching, something that has done *far more* damage to the church than the final scandal that caused his removal. But like your secular media counterparts, you appear to be attracted to the salacious and scandalous rather than God's greater measure of His Word. As long as the likes of Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, and others maintain morally clean images, you never go near approaching the much greater issue that their false doctrine and misapplication of God's Word to such large audiences is doing a far greater work of sin.

Yes, Calvary Chapel will face very difficult issues should Chuck Smith go home to the Lord, but not because of the reasons you've highlighted in your articles; the vacuum he'll leave is not the result of a cult of personality, but of a true spiritual leader employing God's

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Word to hold others accountable. What will happen when there is no longer someone with the discernment and will to extricate a group like the Vineyard from their church will be much more damaging than someone who refuses to throw out a brother while they work through personal issues of sin. But your articles have this completely backwards.

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness,
Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"
Isaiah 5:20 (NASB)

If [Christianity Today](#) were a secular publication, I wouldn't have given even a second's thought to writing them. But your point of view and audience are obviously far different, and it grieves me deeply that, like your secular counterparts, you can take factual data and yet arrive at the completely wrong conclusion. I wish you would adopt a standard worded so well by Jacob Prasch of [Moriel Ministries](#): "You can agree or disagree with me, and I can agree or disagree with you, only so far as it agrees or disagrees with God's Word." But that does not appear to be the standard by which you measure activities or personalities in the church today.

In His Love,

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NOTE TO EVERYONE: Please feel free to forward or use this in its entirety as you see fit.

"Heck is a place for people who don't believe in gosh."

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