

Velvet Christianity, not artwork

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When I was young, I used to love things that were made of velvet. The soft and fuzzy feel of velvet was something that I really liked. I even liked the velvet-backed paintings that I would see on people's walls that would be lit up with a black light. After all, this was the '70s. A lot of stuff glowed in the dark back then. You can rest easy, however. I don't have any velvet artwork lining the walls of my home today and I don't have any velvet shirts hanging in my closet.

The term "Christianity" denotes a mixed bag of stuff today. Part of the trending is a throwback to the '70s styles. I am not referring to strapless, bellbottoms, long hair and sideburns, although we are definitely flashing back in these fashions. I am referring to the comeback of velvet. This time it is theological.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, let me first clarify a truth of Scripture we probably both agree upon. In his wisdom, God made people diverse with individual features, characteristics, capacities, talents, and gifts. The Bible is clear that each person is uniquely and wonderfully made. As a result, there are many differences within God's people that reflect these traits, and a diversity of local bodies and worship styles within the larger church. Most of us would agree that this is a wonderful thing. And yet there is one "Body of Believers." Therefore, each individual local church of Jesus Christ is a member of the larger body of Christ. We call those who are following Christ; disciples — in the broad sense; Christianity.

Some foundational elements of Christianity are under attack, however. Under the guise of intellectual or spiritual depth, some are taking a jackhammer to the base stones of Christianity. As a result, some of God's people are being crushed. But can you build where there is no understructure? Or what happens to a strong structure when you chip away at its core. Now those who understand construction know that one cannot build reliable framework without a secure grounding. That is why the Scriptures say that Jesus is our "sure foundation" on which to build our house.

Not too long ago I got try my hand with a jackhammer. We were tearing out the concrete foundation of the parsonage next to "The Chapel" in Oak View. We did a lot of work with no progress. It seemed nearly impossible because it was well built. We had to bring in heavy-duty equipment to finish the job. That day I learned a bit about the people who originally constructed that house; they were not shabby, half-hearted builders.

You might remember the parable that Jesus told about the wise man who built his house upon the rock and the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Both looked impressive until the storm came. When the storm was gone, only one house remained. He was illustrating the principle of how we build our lives, our marriages, the raising of our children, our community involvement, and our interactions with others. Jesus was explaining our source of wisdom, strength and connection to divine power in times

of need. Jesus is our "rock."

What happens when you take what was intended to be solid in your life, your strength, your rock, and you replace it with something more illusive, soft, and fuzzy, like velvet? To be sure, velvet feels more luxurious than bedrock; more comfy and cozy to cuddle up to than stone. But what happens? You have constructed your house on sand, which Jesus said a foolish man does. Every builder that you have ever met will confirm this truth. Jesus took everyday knowledge into the spiritual realm to explain the secrets to life success.

I had the privilege earlier this year to be in Egypt teaching pastors and leaders. While there, I had the opportunity to climb around on some of the stones that form the base of the Great Pyramid at Giza. This structure has lasted thousands of years and has survived many generations' battles and storms. I can personally attest to you that they did not use sand, fluff or velvet; they used solid rock. This experience was an up-close and personal reminder to me of the words of Jesus. Anything less than "the real deal" won't survive when you face "real life." Every ideology seems comparable during philosophy chats and "deep think circles." But take them both to the cancer ward, or to a funeral, or to the depths of despair and depression, or to Judgment Day: only "The Sure Foundation" survives!

So as people try to chip away at your core and undermine your foundation, do not be naive or deceived. If you are lost you cannot help anyone else and someone who is blind themselves cannot help you see. Open your Bible and read it. There is a lot there to warn us of these things. Learn God's message and live God's truth. Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and forever", said "I am truth" and there is nothing fuzzy about that!

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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