

“Evangelicals worldwide have a lot to be ashamed of ... We need a second Reformation!” This challenge from Chris Wright received immediate applause in the plenary session.

Identifying Idols in Evangelical Churches

The plight of today's church was compared to the pre-Reformation church of the 16th Century. The main stumbling blocks that hinder others from coming to Christ are not found outside the church. It is neither persecution nor false religions, but the integrity of Christian leaders which is hurting the Christian cause the most: “The failure, disobedience and rebellion” of church leaders. “The idolatry of the church” was emphasised, “especially seductive, even for Evangelical Christians: the idol of power and pride; the idol of popularity and success; the idol of wealth and greed.”

Christ is Admirable but Not those that Claim to Serve Him

Kenyan participant, Calisto Odede, observed that while people admired Jesus and respect His teaching, many have no desire to identify with a church, or to follow church leaders, who bear little resemblance to Christ.

Noisy Vuvuzellas

This Kenyan pastor observed that the onus is on Christians to act differently from the world. He warned of the dangers of becoming “professional conference attendees” rather than doers of the Word. Because, when there is all talk and no action, Christians become simply “noisy vuvuzellas” from the sidelines.

A Radical Return to Humility, Integrity and Simplicity

Dr. Wright emphasized: “Reformation is once again the desperate need. It needs to start among those who claim the name Evangelical.” He called for “humility, integrity and simplicity” and “a radical return to the Lord.”

Repent

It was noted that in all generations of the Old Testament the prophets called God’s people to repent. This was not only a word for unbelievers, but for those who already claim to be God’s Covenant people. And so the message of Repentance and Reformation must come to us in the church today.

Health and Wealth is Not the Gospel

Dr. Kwabena Asamaoh-Gyadu, from Ghana, condemned the Prosperity gospel as “teaching the Word of God and Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord in a self-serving manner that places its emphasis on consumerism to suggest that the possession of material things, are necessary to show Christianity and God’s approval.”

Seduction into a False Delusion

The Prosperity gospel was condemned as “nothing less than seduction into a false delusion. It is an unrealistic solution to the challenges of daily life ... It reduces God to the magic genie in the bottle.”

Fleecing the Flock

It was noted that while the Prosperity gospel often “wears the mask of advocacy for the poor, it is hardly good news. It is the shepherds fleecing the flock ... We need to reject this gospel and work at better ways of meeting needs than offering false shortcuts.”

Conformed to the World or Withdrawn from It

Chris Wright pointed to the Lausanne Covenant adopted in 1974: “We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our mission, by becoming conformed to the world, or by withdrawing from it.”

Concealing the Costs of Discipleship

“In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow Him to deny themselves, take up their Cross and identify themselves with His new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into His Church and responsible service in the world.”

Church Growth at the Expense of Church Depth

“We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture.”

Superficiality

“Christian superficiality has become a worldwide phenomenon. Many converts never grow up in Christ.”

Integrity and Ethics

The result is seen in widespread nominalism. We need to return to rigorous integrity in all our

efforts to promote the Gospel. There is no Biblical mission without Biblical ethics.

Inflated Statistics

“Can we trust all the inflated statistics thrown around the world of Christian mission? What are they there for? What do they prove? Whom do they flatter?”

Speed and Success

“Are there methods of evangelism that are simply unbiblical and unethical driven by success and speed, rather than by obedience to all that Jesus commanded?”

The Roots of Failure

Dr. Wright condemned “lack of faith, lack of love, and lack of honesty” as contributing to the failure of our evangelism efforts.

Confronting Corruption

He also condemned the misleading influence of Prosperity theology which blinds the eyes of believers to the poverty and suffering in the world. It was freely admitted that this is not only a problem in the West, but throughout Africa, Asia and South America. Some Asian delegates said that their leaders have often not taught their congregations to resist the culture of corruption. Bribery is not only a part of everyday life in society in Asia, but even in many churches as well. African delegates acknowledged that our continent is rife with corruption on every level.

Reformation Today

The church today needs Reformation just as the church needed Reformation in the 16 th Century. We have deep seated corruption in the churches today. Unless Reformation occurs, first of all in our own hearts, there is little hope for our churches or society. The way to deal with false teaching is with sound, Biblical teaching. We need to confront the idols of our day and we need to return to God's ways of humility, integrity and simplicity.

The Threat from Religious TV

One participant put it this way: "The biggest threat to the church worldwide is not only from radical Islam, but from the materialistic American Prosperity cult broadcast through TBN and God TV."

Attractive Deception

Several speakers spoke out against the often attractive presentations given through the media, with strong and overpowering images and messages, but with an unbiblical and insidious message.

Disturbing Trends

All acknowledged that the numerical growth of the church is great and impressive, but recognised the disturbing trends of the materialistic, sensational and superficial. "Discipleship, missions and transformed lives is lacking. Materialism is pervasive and destructive. The Prosperity gospel is unbiblical and ungodly."

Opposing the Injustice of Socialism

Others pointed out that where political structures prevent people from private ownership of

property and from benefiting from the fruit of their own labours, we as Evangelicals need to oppose that injustice.

Christian Work Ethic

It was pointed out that the Biblical counter to the unbiblical Prosperity gospel is the Christian work ethic.

The Hard Truths

We need to teach the hard truths of the Gospel. We cannot “market” the Gospel. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as clearly proclaimed in the Bible, must be proclaimed and practiced. Not compromised and not edited. We must be Bible people and work for a new Back to the Bible Reformation, or we will enter into a new dark age.

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