

The Body by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992) (9 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Challenge the Flock.

Theodore Epp, founder of Back to the Bible radio ministry, realized something was wrong when he stopped receiving critical mail. Convicted that he was not challenging the flock enough, he changed his preaching. "I'm afraid that when I'm pleasing everybody, I'm not pleasing the Lord," he later said, "and pleasing the Lord is what counts."⁹

⁹ Warren Wiersbe, *The Integrity Crisis* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988)

This is not to suggest that a pastor is only successful when he is upsetting people!

But he must be certain that he is first and foremost faithful to the One he serves. He is fulfilling a divine commission when he preaches. Just as an ambassador is entrusted not with his own message but with his superior's message, so the minister is entrusted with the Word of God. Before it is delivered, therefore, every message should be laid at the foot of His throne with one question: "Is this faithful to You, my Lord?" Or as one German pastor would always pray in the pulpit, "Cause my mind to fear whether my heart means what I say."¹⁰

¹⁰ Martin Kahler, Theologe und Christ, cited in Helmut Thielicke, *The Trouble with the Church* Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1965.) [Page 12]

2. Preaching a Great Responsibility.

The great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, "We tremble lest we should mistake or misinterpret the word." Thousands would flock to hear this man's sermons, which were then reprinted and circulated around the globe. His intellect was extraordinary: he was reported to have read twelve thousand books in his life; he could go to his bookshelves and from memory find material on any subject. Here was a man who had every reason to be supremely confident; today he'd be heralded as an evangelical superstar. Yet Spurgeon used to counsel young men to avoid the ministry--unless they felt irresistibly compelled, certain of God's call. "To preach the whole truth is an awful charge," he said.¹³

¹³ Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of truth Trust, 1966),45. [Page 122]

3. Stronger Preaching.

"Away with this milk and water preaching of the love of Christ that has no holiness or moral discrimination," proclaimed Charles Finney, one of the great preachers of the last century. "Away with preaching a love of God that is not angry with sinners every day. Away with preaching a Christ not crucified for sin."¹⁷

¹⁷. Charles Finney, *Power from on High* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, n.d.), 108.

4. Conviction of Sin.

Martin Luther believed so strongly that conviction of sin must precede conversion that he would not minister comfort to "any person except those who have become contrite and are sorrowing because of their sin--those who have despaired of self-help."¹⁸

¹⁸. Richard Alderson, *No Holiness, No Heaven* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1986), 33.

This is why the therapeutic gospel is such a dreadful heresy. It works from the outside in to restore self-esteem by enabling us to adjust to our circumstances; carried far enough, it can lead us to feel good about being bad. The gospel, on the other hand, is designed to transform our lives and circumstances; it works from the inside out. Therapy is concerned with changing behavior; the gospel, with changing character. Therapy gives us what we think we need; the gospel gives us what we really need.

Now don't misunderstand. Psychology or psychiatry can play an important role in helping. But behavior science cannot be blended into the gospel, either in counseling or, least of all, in the message preached. [Page 123]

Make no mistake. Failure to teach is a betrayal of the Great Commission. And it is dangerous.

I'm continually haunted by theologian R. C. Sproul's chilling sermons based on the warnings of the prophet Hosea: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."²⁰ [Hos. 4:6]

5. Today All about Self.

"According to a recent survey, the books selling in Christian bookstores are the 'touchy-feely' ones that focus on self-esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-analysis while

devotionals and missionary biographies gather dust on the shelves. So do books encouraging self-sacrifice.” [p.42]

“A 1990 Newsweek cover story heralded the dramatic religion resurgence among the nation’s baby boomers, reporting that more than 80 percent consider themselves ‘religious and believe in life after death.’ But ‘unlike earlier religions revivals, the aim this time (apart from born-again traditionalists of all faiths) is support, not salvation, help rather than holiness, a circle of spiritual equals rather than an authoritative church or guide. A group affirmation of self is at the top of the agenda which is why some of the least demanding churches are now in the greatest demand.”

“The trouble comes when we confuse technique with truth and when the mission or message is compromised. Many churches, like Willow Creek, have found the right balance; behind all the music and skits and fanfare stands a solidly orthodox message that deepens the spiritual life of their members.”

“What matters is not whether a church uses skits or contemporary music or squash courts. What matters is biblical fidelity. If a thoroughly orthodox church challenges people to live holy lives and is growing, it is being blessed by God.”

“Often before revival there is a drop in church attendance.”

6. The Communion of Saints.

“When Christians in the early centuries gathered together, they became known as the communion sanctorum, meaning ‘the communion of saints.’ And they were indeed that, bound together as only men and women could be who were surrounded by an angry, hostile society ready to feed them to the lions. But by manifesting the church, they made visible the mystery of God’s salvation, and this witness changed the world.” [p.69]

“This is the process by which the visible church has fulfilled its mission and witness to the world through the centuries. It’s not unlike an army, where men and women of all sizes and shapes sign up to serve. At the beginning these recruits are one big disorganized mass of humanity, and only the Pentagon knows who they are. Until it is trained and organized, this army is useless. So men and women are assigned to training units to learn the skills and discipline of soldiers. Then they are stationed into divisions and headquarters and honor guards and counterintelligence, all working together so

the army can do its job. Only when it is fully uniformed and deployed can the world see the army at work.”

So it is with the church. Its recruitment is universal, but it has to be broken down into visible fighting units. It may have command structures, such as denominations or episcopal government. And it may have special training forces to equip its fighting units: parachurch movements such as Prison Fellowship and Evangelism Explosion and others. These are visible structures we create to enable God’s army-the Body-to do the job it is called to do.”

7. Jesus Christ is Alive in the Body.

“Warren Wiersbe says he does not attend church to hear a sermon or to have fellowship, though he enjoys both, but ‘to bear witness that Jesus Christ is alive and worship Him.’ [p.70]

8. Turning around Churches and Society.

“Francis Schaeffer pleaded: ‘Let us raise a testimony that may still in turn both the churches and society around-for the salvation of souls, the building of God’s people, and at least the slowing down of the slide toward a totally humanistic society and an authoritarian suppressive state.’ (Schaeffer, Great Evangelical Disaster, 91).” [p.103]

9. Respecting Differences.

“True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share. This was Kuyper’s point as well as Calvin’s. While they unrelentingly pursued and defended their doctrinal differences with Rome, the nonetheless sought out that common ground or orthodoxy on which they could stand together.” [p.104]