

## Response to Pastor Wendell's Email:

I will have the original question in black marked [original], Pastor Wendell's response in blue marked [PW] and my response are in-line and orange marked [reply to PW]. All responses by Pastor Wendell are preserved in its original format, except for spelling and grammatical corrections.

[PW]

Judah recently shared with me your email concerns about our Church and that you were leaving. I am saddened by your decision to leave the Church. We do love you and certainly consider Heidi as one of our spiritual daughters. But I am especially saddened by your misunderstanding of the Word of the Lord that is being preached here.

But nevertheless I appreciate this opportunity to articulate what we truly believe about so many important doctrines. I hope that my responses will help you understand our biblical positions better.

[reply to PW]

I appreciate your taking the time to respond to my original email; in turn I and many others are looking forward to clarifications to the questions below.

[original]

1. Divorce/Remarriage - the City Church allows remarriage after divorce in most circumstances. We strongly disagree with this stance.

[PW]

There are many debatable issues that the local church has to deal with.

[reply to PW]

You are correct, but we appeal to the Word of God to see what His standards are for these things.

[PW]

We certainly could draw a hard line on remarriage as some have done. Or we could conscientiously appeal to the mercy and forgiveness of God for new beginnings for people who have suffered through divorce. And what you would not know would be the confrontations we have made with most in regard to reconciling with their former mate, or the hard hearted men or women we have confronted who refused to consider reconciliation and left our church because they felt we were actually too harsh or hard line about remarriage.

Be careful in your blanket judgments not to assume you know what has happened in the hearts and lives of couples who have experienced the pain of these things.

[reply to PW]

I have no idea what happens in the hearts and minds of men and women, but I know blanket judgments are not foreign to the teaching of the Bible. All idolatry is a sin, all homosexuality is sin, all fornication is sin, and all theft is considered sin. The question is how does the Bible address the subject. Does Jesus teach that there are some instances of divorce and remarriage are not a sin?

*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. Luke 16:18*

Above is the clearest scripture on the matter. Not only if you get a divorce and remarry are you committing adultery, but if you marry someone who was divorced (without any exceptions given by Jesus) you commit adultery.

*And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? Tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, what did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, for the hardness*

*of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. **And he saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.** Mark 10:2-12*

This teaching is also clear.

*It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Matthew 5:31-32*

*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

*They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

*He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

***And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.***

***His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. Matthew 19:3-10***

This teaching needs some things pointed out. It seems more lenient that Jesus mentioned “Except it be for fornication” in His teaching. Below are a few observations:

1. If God wanted to allow divorce in the OT, then why did Jesus say “Moses then commanded to give a writing of divorcement” in stead of God said it was OK?
2. After that Jesus said “from the beginning it was not so.
3. The word fornication is used (pornea in the Greek), and if the couple were married, then fornication would always be adultery.
4. To explain the “fornication” exception, you should look at the story of Joseph and Mary (to let the Bible interpret itself). Joseph was going to “put her away” quietly because he was a just man. The only way out of the betrothal period in Jewish custom was for “fornication” – an offense punishable by death.
5. The apostles didn’t take this teaching lightly; they said it was better to not marry than to be under such a covenant. This is not the reaction of many Churches in the United States today.

[PW]

Do you feel there is no case of divorce where a person could be re-married?

[reply to PW]

According to our Lord, anyone who marries someone who has been divorced is an adulterer...It is not a matter of what I feel, but what Jesus said (4 times). I read the City Church’s position on the matter. It twists some unclear scriptures to allow for remarriage, which is a great example of the traditions of man making the Word of God (Jesus) of no effect.

If we truly want to live a life pleasing to God the path will be narrow and difficult.

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matthew 7:13-14*

Jesus showed us the narrow gate to enter, but it is up to us to enter in by it.

[PW]

Even God "remarried" Israel in the Old Testament after having divorced her!

[reply to PW]

This argument actually supports my position. This is a great example of **reconciliation**, not getting remarried to someone else. God didn't remarry Egypt. He "remarried" His original "bride" Israel.

[original]

2. Prosperity Gospel - the City Church preaches the Prosperity Gospel and bring in many speakers to support their view. In our estimation, this doctrine teaches us to focus on the exact opposite of what Jesus taught. Preaching on self-denial and picking up your cross are neglected, while we are taught to seek the material blessings of God.

[PW]

You are in error if you think we "focus on the opposite of what Jesus taught" or that we are teaching people to "seek the material blessings of God".

[reply to PW]

I came to this conclusion by listening to the teachings of the prosperity gospel and seeing the fruit of it in people's lives. There are no teachings in the New Testament encouraging believers to earn money for the Kingdom; however this is preached at the City Church every service prior to the offering. Many times whole messages are dedicated to blessing and prosperity, and there is even a conference each year solely for this topic. I have seen many preachers brought in specifically to support this view at the City Church from Leroy Thompson to "Dr. Increase".

*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 2 Timothy 4:3*

I don't see one example of this teaching by Jesus or the disciples. Actually, they mostly warned against seeking riches (for any reason).

Prosperity leads people astray. People are naturally covetous, ambitious, and greedy and don't need encouragement in this area no matter how the teaching is disguised – "with a purpose" or "with integrity".

*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.  
Mark 7:21-23*

Jesus said "give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's" after being shown a coin. He then identified the coin as Caesar's, not God's.

*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:10*

How do we know if we love something? Usually we will talk about it a lot, think about it, pray about it a lot.

[PW]

When have we ever done that? We reject that covetous approach to life or money and have said so from the pulpit repeatedly. Have you been faithful in your attendance to Church or to hearing what we have taught?

[reply to PW]

Yes, I was faithful attending church every Sun, Wed and Saturday prayers...I also attended many conferences at the City Church. I heard mixed messages, some that warn against covetousness and some that pointed us to look for material blessing from God...

[PW]

Have you read our book on the purpose of prosperity or are you making judgments ignorantly without really knowing what we teach?

[reply to PW]

I am not ignorant on the subject. I have attended your teachings on it and read the book. In all honesty you are one of the more balanced prosperity teachers, but nevertheless teaching in error of the doctrines of Jesus and the Apostles. We were told by our Lord we need to lose ourselves, deny ourselves, and die to ourselves; but when you include that with a message that God wants us to be blessed financially and live like the "King's kids" we get a mixed message.

[PW]

Have you attended the conferences we have held with an open mind and heart?

[reply to PW]

Yes, I used to believe and defend the prosperity gospel against critics.

[PW]

Have you searched the scriptures to see if these things are so? (Acts 17)

[reply to PW]

Yes, absolutely. I think the scriptures I bring up here may show that.

[PW]

Our people have been so blessed because they have given away millions of dollars for the Gospel- to nations, missionaries, churches, orphans and the poor. Which of these things should we stop?

[reply to PW]

I don't say stop giving, but stop the unbiblical teaching.

I believe in giving generously, willingly and often. Just because I don't think we should preach prosperity doesn't automatically make me against Biblical giving.

[PW]

In regard to neglecting teaching on the Cross, you apparently are also unaware that the foundation of The City Church was based on a seminar I did across America preaching on the cross and denying ourselves. I don't know how long you have been a part of our Church but for over fourteen years, we have taught this principle of self denial and embracing the Cross of Christ many times.

[reply to PW]

I wasn't there for those teachings many years ago; I could only judge based on what I was taught at the City Church the 4 years I was a member. Self denial is preached on select subjects, not including divorce/remarriage and prosperity.

In the book "Prosperity with a Purpose", the wealth of Jesus and the Apostles is used to validate the prosperity gospel. The Bible, however, in no way leads us to believe Jesus or the Apostles were rich.

1. Jesus had to work as a carpenter, not the trade of a rich man.
2. When His parents gave an offering for Jesus at the temple, they gave the offering of a poor person. They were to bring a lamb in its first year if they could afford it, but if they couldn't afford it they were to bring a young pigeon or a turtledove. See Luke 2:24 and Leviticus 12:5-7.

3. Peter had no money for the temple tax, and Jesus didn't reach into His wallet to get it...He had to rely on a miracle for the tax.

4. *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Matthew 8:20* – Jesus didn't have a home.

5. Peter didn't have money... *Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. Acts 3:6*

6. Paul describes the plight of the Apostles:

*To the present hour we both hunger and thirst and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. 1 Cor 4:8-13*

This doesn't sound like they were blessed with the physical blessing of Abraham, but they were surely blessed with the promise that was preached to Abraham – the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:14).

In Revelation, Jesus addresses a "rich church" and a "poor church". We can learn from what He says to both of them.

#### **The "rich church":**

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:17-20*

#### **But to the "persecuted church":**

*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Revelation 2: 9-10*

It is not accident these sayings were spoken to churches by Jesus.

Why didn't Jesus tell them to pray for the physical blessing of Abraham and overcome the spirit of poverty? Didn't they know they weren't glorifying God with their lack of faith and hindering the Gospel because they couldn't afford more for churches and supporting missionaries? He didn't tell them to seek after the blessing of Abraham, he told them to "be faithful unto death".

[original]

3. Word of Faith - We believe at least some of the pastors of the City Church subscribe to the "Word of Faith" doctrine, and have taught it from the pulpit. This doctrine is unscriptural, and I believe attacks the sovereignty of God and exalts the will of man. I have seen too many people hurt by this doctrine at the City Church. I also studied the roots of the doctrine (Hagen/Copeland) and found them to express unscriptural beliefs about the nature of Christians and the nature of God.

[PW]

Exactly what do you believe is unscriptural? Although my background is not from the faith movement, I do believe Romans 10 says we have a "word of faith" in our mouths to preach the Gospel. And that we are to speak faith to circumstances and situations in our life. Do you not believe that? Our Lord Jesus Himself said we are to speak to mountains with faith.

[reply to PW]

Of course I believe Romans 10, but it has nothing to do with the Faith Movement. I have heard it practiced by pastors at the City Church. The City Church has brought in the leaders of the movement (Ken "Papa" Hagin, T.D. Jakes, and Marylyn Hickey, along with many lesser-known associates). Their books are sold in the bookstore, and sow the seeds of that movement.

The "Word Faith Movement" (also called "Faith movement" or "Positive Confession") is unscriptural from its roots, begun originally by E.W. Kenyon. E.W Kenyon began to teach this doctrine after graduating from Unity School of Christianity – a school from which many Christian Science teachers came. Kenneth Hagin then picked up the torch by plagiarizing much of Kenyon's teachings. This is shown in "A Different Gospel" by D.R. McConnell - an Oral Roberts University grad that has side-by-side comparisons of Hagin writings next to Kenyon showing the word for word copying of the word of faith teaching.

[PW]

When you say "too many people have been hurt" by our teaching, can you give me one name or two?

[reply to PW]

I could give you many names of people who were hurt and have left the City Church because of this teaching, but this is not the appropriate forum.

[PW]

And because some people misconstrue the teaching of any preacher, and reap bad fruit in their lives, does that determine that the preacher is wrong?

[reply to PW]

No, the Bible is the guide for what is wrong, but how people apply the teachings is a fruit of the teachings.

[PW]

Is every mistake of an individual Christian to be blamed on a pastor, a preacher or a certain church?

[reply to PW]

No, I don't. But let's not forget:

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.  
James 3:1

[PW]

You believe we "attack" the sovereignty of God? Have you worshipped with us? Have you heard us pray or prophesy?

[reply to PW]

Yes, I have

[PW]

If your perspective were accurate, you would know what a balanced view of both God's sovereignty and man's responsibility we preach.

[reply to PW]

It is not my perspective that matters, but The Truth is what matters. I do not think it is a balanced teaching if "word of faith" teachings are coming from the pulpit and bookstore. Scholars have shown this movement sprang directly out of Christian Science and occult teachings.

The battle-cry of the Positive Confession (PC) Movement is "Have faith in your faith" (the name of one of Kenneth Hagin's books). This is a far cry from what Jesus taught, "Have faith in God".

Another teaching from the movement is called the "little gods" teaching:

**Kenneth Copeland:**

"You're all God. You don't have a God living in you; you are one! ... When I read in the Bible where God tells Moses, 'I AM,' I say, 'Yah, I am too!'" ("The Force of Love," Tape BBC-56).

**Kenneth Hagin:**

"You are as much the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ was...the believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth." "Word Of Faith" Dec. 1980, p. 14

I think it is clear what the roots of this teaching are, and though you don't say these things, you associate with those who do.

[original]

4. I never heard a sermon on hell - I don't think we as Christians need to be "fire and brimstone" preachers, but Jesus talked quite a bit on the subject, so I believe we should be educated on the subject.

[PW]

I have preached on hell. But if you are so concerned about emphasizing what Jesus emphasized then these are the facts; There are only 15 passages on hell addressed by Jesus in all four Gospels combined.

[reply to PW]

I was just pointing out that I never heard a sermon on hell in my 4 years there; I didn't think it would be such a big deal. My reason for thinking of it is if Jesus taught on it and He said:

*"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe **all things whatsoever I have commanded you**: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20.*

Then I would expect people would teach on all the things He taught on if they expect to make disciples. Maybe it has been taught, but like I said in 4 years I don't remember any teachings on it.

[PW]

However, there are over 600 passages where Jesus speaks of Money!

[reply to PW]

Just because Jesus mentioned "money", "riches" or "wealth" doesn't mean they were used to support the prosperity gospel. More often than not, He (and the Apostles) actually gave many warnings against greed and covetousness.

**For Example:**

*Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and **give to the poor**, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Matthew 19:21*

*Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the **cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word**, and he becomes unfruitful. Matthew 12:22*

*But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. Luke 6:24*

*"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You **cannot** serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24*

I don't see any scriptures that teach us to rely on the covenant with Abraham to get riches for the purposes of the Kingdom. When I did a word search about money, talents, minas, and mammon, Jesus was using them as parables to be good stewards with the Gospel, not to go get riches to "further the Kingdom".

[original]

5. Tithing - I find no support in scripture for new testament believers to be held to the law of tithing. It seems to me that the disciples (even the Holy Spirit) gave us instruction on how to operate as Gentile believers in Acts 15:28-29. The only time tithing is mentioned in the New Testament is when Jesus was scolding the leaders who were under the old covenant. We are taught to be generous givers, but we are not under the law any more.

[PW]

Have you not read all the Scriptures?

[reply to PW]

Yes, I have.

[PW]

Do you believe NT believers should not read or obey OT scripture as well as the New?

[reply to PW]

No, I don't think we obey **ALL** the OT scriptures. The ones we should obey were commanded by Jesus and the Apostles. Tithing wasn't one of them commanded in the New Testament. If it were such an important principle for the success of a Christian, Paul would have mentioned it in the epistles; however "tithing" is not mentioned at all, but rather he teaches on "giving" and "generosity", subjects Jesus also taught. Paul was writing to Gentiles who didn't have the concept of "tithing", yet the guidance to tithe is altogether absent.

[PW]

Was not Abraham the first to tithe 430 years before the law? He is the father of all who believe even in the NT era (Rom 4; Gal 3).

[reply to PW]

Let's look at this more closely. This is used as a proof text that we should tithe because Abraham did it, but I have some scriptures that put serious doubt upon this logic. You are right, Abraham is the father of all who believe, but does that mean we should tithe? I don't see any support for it in scripture.

In your sermon "The Gospel of Blessing" (preached November 5<sup>th</sup> 2006) you outlined the argument to look for physical blessing from Abraham's covenant.

**[Quote from "The Gospel of Blessing" (11/5/2006 – Pastor Wendell Smith)]**

*"Apparently the Gospel is more than just the story of Jesus, coming; apparently the Gospel has something to do with the blessing of God".*

**[End Quote]**

Paul wrote:

*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2*

And in Galatians he said:

***But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.***

***As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.***

***For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10***

Teaching anything other than Christ crucified is dangerous.

*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Matthew 12:37*

OK back to tithing and Abraham. Your sermon on “The Gospel of Blessing” you said we are entitled to the material blessing of Abraham because that is the gospel that was preached to him. You said we should insert our names in the place of Abraham to claim the promises to him from God. I disagree with this conclusion because a little later on in Galatians Paul clarified what the actual blessing is that came through Abraham to the entire world:

“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the **promise of the Spirit through faith.**” Galatians 3:14

No “fill in the blank” blessing...simply that through Abraham’s seed (Jesus Christ – see Gal 3:14) the nations would be blessed with the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14). No promises of wealth, no fill in the blank prosperity, no commandment to tithe, no animal sacrifices or circumcision for the covenant of faith. We are told to simply have faith in Christ.

If that isn’t enough, let’s look at the claim that Abraham tithed and we should follow his example. First, we see what exactly he tithed. He was coming back from war where he recovered the wealth of the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. He then met up with the priest and gave him 10%. We need to ask, 10% of what? He gave 10% of the spoils of the war. A critical point is that the spoils weren’t even his (Hebrews 7:4). He was going to give them all back to Sodom and Gomorrah. So if we are to follow Abraham’s example, we shouldn’t even tithe on our own goods. There is no other example of Abraham tithing for us to get a clear teaching of how to tithe.

If we are to follow the logic put forth for tithing, shouldn’t we also circumcise since Abraham did? Should we also perform animal sacrifice as Abraham did 430 years before the law? Obviously the answer is no. There is no support for telling people that we should tithe 10% of all their goods.

The New Testament has no commandment to tithe, and Jesus did not command the believer to tithe.

Matthew 23:23 – a rebuke of the Pharisees, who should have tithed under Mosaic law since they were still under the law and performing animal sacrifices for the cleansing of sin.

Luke 11:42 – The same story as Matthew 23:23

Luke 18:12 – A story of a Pharisee who prayed a self-righteous prayer where he boasts of tithing and goes away unjustified for his boasting. Not a good foundation for the doctrine of tithing under the New Covenant.

Hebrews 7 – This chapter tells us that Abraham tithed, and now there is a better priesthood (Christ) who we now make spiritual sacrifices to. In this chapter, tithing is specifically linked to the law, which was done away with.

If tithing was critical to receive the blessing of God on our finances (as proponents of tithing continually (mis) use Malachi 3 to support their view) – don’t you think Paul would have mentioned it at least once in the epistles to the Gentiles who probably didn’t know anything about the writings of the Torah or the Prophets? I think the support for tithing for the Gentile believers is non-existent in the New Testament (which means new covenant). If tithing were part of the new covenant, then it would be explained in the New Testament, and it clearly is not.

[PW]

The prophets prophesied about the tithe.

[reply to PW]

Yes, they prophesied how the Israelites under the law should tithe. I agree with them, since they made a covenant with God to tithe and if they didn’t keep the covenant they were cursed. (Leviticus 29:24-29).

Did they prophesy that the New Testament believer should tithe?

[PW]

And Jesus did mention it and endorsed it (Matt 23:23).

[reply to PW]

Once again, Jesus endorsed it to the self-righteous Pharisees who were still under the Old Covenant Law and bound by the covenant to tithe. I agree with Jesus because they were still performing animal sacrifices under that law. If they didn't perform all the law they were cursed, but Jesus became the curse for us. We are not under the Malachi 3 curse.

[PW]

It is also taught in the NT book of Hebrews (Heb 7).

[reply to PW]

See above. It is not taught that we should tithe, it is taught that there is a better sacrifice, Jesus Christ. There is no reference for the believer to follow the commandment of tithing.

[PW]

Is tithing the issue in your heart or is it a control issue?

[reply to PW]

No, it is a scriptural issue.

[PW]

Do you have a problem with New Testament authority in the local church or someone telling you what to do?

[reply to PW]

I understand respecting those in authority and submitting to one another (Ephesians 5:21 and Romans 13:1-2). I understand New Testament authority to operate under these guidelines:

*They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and **you are all brethren**. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

*Matthew 23:6-12*

Jesus admonished Christians to not have authority like the world has authority. We are not to rule one over another.

[PW]

Who has been hurt by tithing?

[reply to PW]

The question isn't about who is being hurt, but are we being true to the teachings of scripture. I am sure if you asked many sinners if they are being hurt for disobeying God they would say no. If we started forming doctrines based on feelings or whether or not we hurt people the difficult doctrines taught by Jesus would be neglected.

[PW]

Have you surveyed those who tithe and asked them if they are blessed or hurt?

[reply to PW]

No, that is not the best method to determine if something is Biblical.

[PW]

Do you truly believe our people feel forced to give?

[reply to PW]

When taught that if you don't tithe your finances will be cursed, it makes it difficult to do otherwise. This brings on much undue condemnation. I don't know if "forced" is the right word, but maybe the word "coerced" would be appropriate. This comes from continually quoting Malachi 3, that says if they don't tithe they are cursed (under the law). If they do tithe they will be blessed (under the law). Jesus took the curse of the law for us...we are not under the law or under the curse. Conversely, we are no longer blessed because of the law, we are blessed through Christ Jesus with every *Spiritual* blessing.

[original]

6. Latter Rain Doctrine - Although I do not know the official position of the City Church, I found that Kevin Connor is a teacher who came out of the "later rain" movement. From what I can glean in the few messages I heard on the "end times" I understand the Church's position leans toward "latter rain".

[PW]

And exactly what is the latter rain position and what do you have a problem with? This is unclear in your comment. The "Latter Rain" outpouring and revival was in the late forties. What part of a spiritual renewal are you criticizing? Although there are extremes in every revival we do not discount them all. Is it not possible to glean the best from a move of God and reject the excesses?

[reply to PW]

I might have mis-spoken about this topic. Maybe I should have said "Kingdom Now" theology. This is more of an eschatology question, and I really don't know enough about the movement to know what I'm talking about. It was a mistake to include this reason.

7. Women as Elders and Pastors - Paul laid out the qualifications of elders and pastors (husband of one wife). We believe that the Bible is clear on this teaching.

[PW]

Do you have a problem with women leading in the church? Although the issue of women serving as Elders may be debatable by some, each local church must determine what they believe.

[reply to PW]

No, I do not have a problem with women leading in the Church (leading women or children); however scripture teaches women should not hold authoritative positions over men.

**And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man**, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 1 Timothy 2: 12-14

A bishop then must be blameless, the **husband of one wife**, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 1 Timothy 3:2

[PW]

What specifically do you disagree with? That women are not capable of leadership? That women should be silent in the church?

[reply to PW]

There are many women who are good leaders, but that is not how God set the authority in the Church (or marriage). Just because a woman may be a better leader than her husband, should she go against God's word and usurp the authority given to her husband by the Lord? The clear answer is no, so why would we use that same logic to change the authority structure laid out in the Bible for the Church? Men need to take the Biblical responsibility for their roles in the Church and in families.

I didn't argue that women should be silent in the church.

[PW]

Has there been any specific offense that has occurred because women are involved in leading the church?

[reply to PW]

I have not personally been offended by women leading the Church, however, it clearly opposes scripture which is offensive to the Word of God.

I don't see scripture allowing for women to lead in the local Church. Jesus made great strides for women, and elevated them to equal value as men in the minds of Christians. In that sense He was a radical for His time. A question to ask is; why didn't he send out the women with the 70, and why didn't He appoint a woman Apostle? Did he not go far enough for women in His ministry, or was he following the protocols of the Kingdom?

[original]

"Jesus warned us to beware of the "leaven of doctrine", and Paul said "a little leaven leavens the whole lump". Though it grieves our hearts to leave the City Church, we believe we are being obedient to the scriptures."

[PW]

Time will tell if you are being obedient to the Scriptures or are reacting in fear, ignorance or unbelief. From your perspective then I would assume- a divorced person should never remarry, believers should not tithe, we should not preach prosperity or faith, we should preach more on hell and women should not help lead the Church?

Altogether your perspective sounds pretty negative doesn't it?

[reply to PW]

Let me clarify what I actually DID say: Jesus taught a divorced person may remarry their original spouse; believers should give generously and cheerfully; the WHOLE Bible needs to be taught and preached rather than emphasizing one topic over ALL the rest; and scripture teaches women are welcome to HELP lead the local church just not LEAD it.

[PW]

It seems incredulous to me that if these things you state were true about us- how we could ever produce any good fruit!

[reply to PW]

What is good fruit? Is a growing church, financial blessing, and buildings fruit? If that were the case, Mormons would have good fruit. I believe biblical fruit is a willing heart to follow the teachings of the Word, since Jesus said "if you love me you will obey my commandments".

[PW]

You know a tree by its fruit. Not only has there been much good fruit among the members of The City Church but there has actually been good fruit in your life. I wonder if that will continue if you cut yourself off from these branches.

[reply to PW]

Do we need to be in specific branches to get God's blessing? I plan on continuing in the goodness of the Lord to partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. In this process of leaving the City Church I have a new found reverence for the scriptures, a fear of the Lord; and respect and Love for Him that isn't based on what He can or can't do for me. It seems to me that I now partake directly from the Vine rather than getting my nourishment from a branch.

[PW]

What bad fruit have you seen? Who has been hurt by embracing more faith, or the love and mercy of God or the wonderful provision of the Lord or the leadership of godly women?

[reply to PW]

I have actually seen many people go astray and fall away that have studied and sat under the teachings of The City Church. No one has been hurt by embracing BIBLICAL faith, the love and mercy of God, the wonderful provision of the Lord, or the leadership of Godly women. These SHOULD be embraced by believers. People have only been hurt by unbalanced and false doctrine.

[PW]

What is the fruit of The City Church? You judge.

[reply to PW]

I did judge, that is why I choose to take my family elsewhere to worship the Lord.

[PW]

You are both old enough to know better in my opinion that many of the statements you have made are exaggerated and erroneous. After being with us so long, I am not sure how you came to your conclusions.

[reply to PW]

You do not deny my assessment of your doctrines, but if I am wrong please let me know.

[PW]

But I am aware that when a person gets offended or listens to certain voices, it can color their thinking in every area.

[reply to PW]

I think this is a common excuse to write-off people who disagree with these doctrines. Your assumptions about me are false.

[PW]

We pray God's grace to be with you as you go. And we hope that perhaps one day you might return to The City Church.

[reply to PW]

We would consider coming back if the church would adopt a more biblical view on the above doctrines, or show us where we are in biblical error for disagreeing with your stance on them.

[PW]

It's really not as bad as you think.

Sincerely with Love,  
Pastor Wendell