

## Abundant Life Church Advertisement

The Abundant Life Church of Houston, TX, has a billboard which says: "We will not condemn you. We will not criticize you. We will only love you."

Doubtless, the church's aims are pure, their goals sincere. However, they equate criticism and condemnation with a lack of love. The universal assumption of our age is that if one finds fault, he is full of hate and devoid of love. Is this true? If so, it indicts God Almighty Himself, for Scripture says, "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12:6). Further, the Son of God said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Note the contrast: The Abundant Life Church says, in effect, we will not rebuke, chasten, and scourge you; we will only love you, but God says, because I love you, I will criticize and condemn you and call you to repentance! Which philosophy do you accept? Which one represents the wisdom of men? Which approach and appeal is of God? Remember, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Most will select the soothing ad of the Abundant Life Church (How sad it is that even some churches of Christ have been deceived by this "touchy-feely" religion.). "Speak unto us smooth things" is the cry of those who do not want their errors to be corrected (Isaiah 30:9). It allows the sinner to escape rebuke and avoid judgment. Are you in an adulterous marriage? "We will not criticize or condemn you." Do you want to drink, dance, and dress like the world? "We will not criticize or condemn you." Do you want to adopt or accept homosexuality? "We will not criticize or condemn you."

Does a parent love his child if he refuses to be critical of its behavior? "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24). If the Abundant Life Church truly loves mankind, it will criticize and condemn sin in the lives of men, for that is part of the nature of true, godly love.

(1) Did Jesus refuse to criticize and condemn the religion and worship of those in his day (Matthew 15:1-14; 16:6, 12; 21:45; 23:2-33)? (2) Speaking "as the Spirit gave (him) utterance," did the apostle Peter use the Abundant Life Church's method to reach people? Did he refuse to condemn and criticize? No, he said, "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" Jesus (Acts 2:23). Later, the Jews said, "ye ... intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28). Obviously, they felt criticized and condemned! (3) Stephen did not subscribe to the advice of our day. Said he, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51). (4) Paul loved the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 2:4; 12:15). However, he consistently criticized and condemned them (1 Corinthians 5:1-2; 11:18-22).

Yes, Paul loved the souls of men, but it was not "love" as defined by the Abundant Life Church. Paul's love for Felix made him "tremble" in fear as he "reasoned of

righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). True love is not always embracing. At times, it must be abrasive and confrontational (Acts 17:2, 3, 16, 17, 22-31).

With these examples, it is certain that the popular philosophy and practice of the Abundant Life Church is not of God. Let us resolve, therefore, to love men enough to tell them the truth, to love them enough to show them their sins, and warn them of the eternity that awaits them if they die outside of Christ (Isaiah 58:1; John 8:24; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4).

Larry Hafley