

The latest gimmick

I have a hard time with gimmicks. There was a time when Christian couples flocked to marriage retreats. When the latest book sold millions to help with porn addiction. Dr. Atkins sold millions on his diet books. Did it help people? It's a resounding yes. Yet, it's also no. To me it's New Years all over. I will start the year with a resolution to change. I will read this book and change. The hook is the few that do. They are put on posters promoting books, retreats, and conferences. If they can do it, you can do it. To me it's the chicken and the egg thing. It's works and does not work.

If someone told me that this book would change my life, would I read it? I have done that. Deep behind the scenes is the money trough. Do we ever really know how much an author made on their book and conferences. I have been a life long concert goer. The rule of thumb is that concerts make money. The actual album does not. A very precious few get rich off of an album. Most musicians have to travel and travel to make a dime. It's a tough life. Somehow, we can't see the same thing in the Christian book tour gimmick.

I see that Beth Moore is wealthy. She has every right to be so. She worked and she did it. Yet, her wealth is a range. I see it's somewhere above 2.5 million. In the past, ministry was built to help the poor. To build churches and grow the faith. Yet, within all that is wealth. The TV evangelist fell from grace directly because of wealth. It's not just one of them either. I have argued with a pastor over whether a pastor should wear a 5000-dollar pair of shoes while preaching. They are entitled to wealth. Yet, they say they are also helping the poor and marriages. But we all know that deep underneath, wealth plays a role. The shoes play a role.

What does God have to say? Luke 12:34 “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” For most Christians this is a go to verse. The heart justifies the means. Yet, that is not what Jesus is really talking about here is it. We say the heart is seen in the fruit of our labours. We helped the poor. We saved a marriage. We saved little black kids from the harshness of Africa. Oh, and we sent them on tour across the world to fundraise in churches. What is the problem with it all? If you can’t see it then you have a problem. Parading black kids is done to raise funds. Awareness is a side affect. Yet, the heart of the drive is wealth. Jesus knew that the pharisees went into the streets preaching a good message. Yet, Jesus was clear as to why they were really there. It was to look good in-front of people. The tassels and long robes were a sign of wealth and power, not goodness. I could say the same about shoes.

I was asked recently to go to a financial seminar. The church wants to help you get your finances in order. That giving your tithe to God will bring blessings. Yet, what are we talking about here? I have no issue with helping people get their money in its proper place. I do have an issue with bringing in the tithe word and blessing word. Dave Ramsey is the Christian financial go to. It’s reported that his wealth is in excess of 200 million. If Jesus were here, who would He be yanking on publicly? The people in the conferences or the one with excess?

But it helps people! Yes, I have no doubt. Dave Ramsey has five Money books. His headquarters is a 47-acre ranch. Tell me that his wealth equals the number of people he has helped? Who is the number one promoter of Dave Ramsey? It’s the local church. I have never heard a pastor say the name Dave Ramsey and not include tithing and blessings. Those three things are like peanut butter and jelly. Why? It’s because tithing is for the church. Blessings are for people in it. The gospel missions? It’s not the first thing pastors say about Dave Ramsey, is it?

Where the heart is. Generally, it's known that people are sheep. Trends and fads know that people are sheep. How did we get people to brush their teeth. Make brushing cool. How did we get women to wear a bouffant hair do? Why was Talk to me Elmo a craze? It's wealth. Be like me and you will live like me. Yet, Jesus was all about actions. Heart actions!

Matthew 6:5-6 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

I have no doubt that financial and marriage courses are gimmicks. It's Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz all over the place. She walked the whole movie trying to be better. To find her inner peace. Yet, in the end she is quoted by saying it was in her heart all along. We can go to these church gimmicks if we want. Dave Ramsey and the church are very glad you will. They are very, very glad! Yet, you had the ability to be a better person all along. It does not cost you a dime. Yes, we should tithe. Yes, we should work on our marriages. I just believe that giving the next fad and church another pair of shoes is not the way to get there. It's looking in the mirror and nothing more.