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West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



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Rebranding The Culture of Death? Planned Parenthood's Latest Strategy

Does Planned Parenthood just need to rebrand its image? That suggestion appeared in a recent headline from the USA Today, which read, *“With abortion services in the crosshairs, Planned Parenthood is reshaping its image. Will it work?”*

This question overflows with moral significance and urgency. Planned Parenthood believes it needs to recast its image from America’s largest abortion provider to something less politically charged and volatile.

Make no mistake, Planned Parenthood does not intend to halt the abortion services it provides. On the contrary, the organization will continue to provide abortions and it is determined to retain all of its government funding—amounting to over a half billions dollars. Federal law prohibits tax monies flowing directly to abortion procedures, but the tax funding keeps Planned Parenthood in business. And it is a deadly business.

Planned Parenthood wants rebrand itself as one of the nation’s front-line health care providers, thus providing camouflage for its determination to kill unborn babies in the womb.

The article from the USA Today takes a sympathetic approach towards the organization. The first sentences of the article read, *“The Trump administration is pushing ahead with its reproductive health agenda. It has rolled out changes to the Title X program, which funds family planning services for low-income people, that are designed to have a chilling effect on organizations that provide abortions or include this option in counseling.”*

The USA Today adopts a similar strategy employed by many other pro-abortion activists. They have re-framed the discussion by removing the language of **‘abortion’** and replacing it with phrases like **‘reproductive health.’** Part of the rebranding strategy, no doubt, will utilize euphemisms such as this in order to accuse opponents of abortion as opponents of **“healthcare.”**

Moreover, the last phrase of the paragraph reveals the rhetorical strategy now adopted by the pro-abortion movement. The article accuses President Trump of changing Title X funding policies which will now have a *“chilling effect on organization that provide abortions or include this option in counseling.”*

Imagine if the article instead read, *“President Trump is altering Title X policies in an effort to prevent American taxpayers from paying for abortions.”* Or, imagine if the reporters wrote, *“The President is determined to uphold the sanctify of human life by removing tax-payer funds from institutions, which provide abortions.”* But that is not how the article reads.

Instead, pro-lifers are now opposed to **‘reproductive health,’** and pursue policies that harm low-income families who need **‘family planning services.’**



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The effort to rebrand the image of Planned Parenthood stems from the public perception of the controversial organization. The article reports, *“Planned Parenthood, known as a staunch defender of abortion rights, is working to recast its public image. Under its president, Leana Wen, who took office in November, the nation’s largest reproductive health provider is highlighting the breadth of care it provides—treating depression, screening for cancer and diabetes, and taking on complex health problems like soaring maternal mortality rates.”*

Again, words carry enormous meaning. Planned Parenthood is not described as the largest provider of abortions, but as the largest reproductive health provider. They intentionally do not define **‘reproductive health’** so that they can draw attention away from abortion.

The article continues, *“This strategy, analysts say, could buttress Planned Parenthood against the efforts by the White House and other abortion opponents. But it’s complicated. Even as the organization leans into its community health work, Wen [the President of Planned Parenthood] isn’t abandoning the abortion-related services that have helped form the organization’s identity—and its opposition.”*

Indeed, Dr. Wen said, *“We cannot separate out one of our services. That’s not how medicine works.”* This raises a larger strategic question and highlights some potential division in the ranks of Planned Parenthood—as the organization attempts to rebrand itself away from an abortion provider, Leana Wen has drawn a line in the sand. She wants abortion front and center. It is central to good *‘medicine.’* So much for successful rebranding.

Despite the apparent quandary, USA Today reports: *“The effort to thread the needle could, if successful, change the public’s perception of Planned Parenthood. But if it backfires, it could make the organization even more vulnerable. Some people are skeptical of the payoff, given how polarizing abortion politics are.”*

The article then highlights the potential failure of this strategy. USA Today cites Karen O’Conner, a political scientist at American University, who said: *“The minute you start talking about abortion, it’s a risky strategy.”* The reporters explained that *“it’s likely to attract strong reactions from people who see abortion providers not as reproductive health professionals but as ‘baby killers.’”* O’Conner then concluded, *“If I was doing it—and this is as somebody who studies social movements and women’s organizations—I would take abortion out of the equation and talk about ‘reproductive health is health care.’”*

No amount of rebranding, however, will ever change the deadly determination of Planned Parenthood. Indeed, soon after President Trump took office, he dispatched emissaries to propose a deal to Planned Parenthood—if the organization got out of the abortion business, the President would cease all efforts to strip Planned Parenthood of its federal funding.

Not only did Planned Parenthood say **“no,”** they emphatically denied the offer and went public in an attempt to embarrass the President. Rather than causing damage to President Trump, Planned Parenthood flew its true colors—they are monomaniacally committed to abortion even if it harms their reputation and costs them taxpayer funding. They doubled-down on their image as the central institution of the culture of death in America.



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This PR stunt by Planned Parenthood will eventually fail. Why? Because the organization has time and again run, not away from, but towards abortion. They want to expand abortion coverage and offer this morally atrocious service in the most outrageous circumstances—even offering abortive care to women who want an abortion up to and after a baby’s due date.

No public relation strategy will ever successfully rebrand the murder of babies in the womb as ‘**reproductive health.**’ The effort itself is one of the most insidious evils imaginable.

In essence, Planned Parenthood is attempting to make the unborn life inside a woman’s womb nothing less than a matter of ‘**reproductive health.**’ If you can get away with that, then you can erase even the most baseline moral standards of any human society.

But, as the article makes clear, Planned Parenthood itself cannot stay away from the abortion issue. Its own president pushes the issue to the fore of the conversation. Speaking before a group in Providence, Rhode Island, Wen declared, “*Abortion is part of the spectrum of full reproductive healthcare, and we know reproductive health care is health care, and health care is a human right.*”

Words cannot describe the blatant, atrocious, and shocking inhumanity of Wen’s repugnant remarks. If you follow the line of her logic, she averred that abortion is reproductive healthcare; reproductive healthcare is healthcare; and, healthcare is a human right. In short, Wen believes abortion is a basic human right—it is a human right to end life.

This is **moral degradation** of the highest order.

Just because Planned Parenthood provides a range of medical services in no way atones for its practice of abortion. It will continue to promote the culture of death, so much so that it now enshrines abortion—the senseless murder of innocence—as a basic human right.

If Planned Parenthood gets away with rebranding itself on these terms, our society will have lost its mind, and its conscience. ~ **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.**



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On Whose Door Is Christ Knocking?

Is it really “abuse” if a verse is used inaccurately to make an important point?

The short answer is, “Yes.” We should not be so careless and cavalier with Scripture, or think so highly of ourselves, that we can impose new meaning—even if it is valid—on the inerrant, sufficient Word of God. If the point is worth making, it’s worth making from the appropriate text.

Which brings us to the verse before us today: Revelation 3:20 is certainly one of the most familiar and frequently-quoted verses in the church. It’s a particular favorite for evangelists, camp preachers, and anyone else who wants to lend some urgency to the call of God on a sinner’s life.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). In the hands of many preachers and evangelists, the verse paints an attractive, compelling picture of Christ’s pursuit of the sinner, and highlights the need for an immediate response.

But is that an accurate interpretation of the verse—is Christ truly at the doorstep of each sinner’s heart, pleading to come in? And if not, on whose door is the Lord knocking? Let’s tackle those issues one at a time.

Is Christ Knocking?

We use a lot of clichés as shorthand in the church, and not all of them are helpful or even accurate. For example, many Christians talk about *“asking Jesus into your heart.”* And while that phrase might have some vaguely biblical underpinnings, it doesn’t shed any light on what it truly means to repent and believe. If anything, it muddles the sinner’s responsibility in salvation; it dulls some of the sharp edges of the gospel.

In the same way, the common misapplication of Revelation 3:20 has done more harm than good. Yes, the mental image of Christ knocking on the door of a sinner’s heart is moving. But it’s not accurate—it’s a caricature at best, and it comes at a high theological cost.

Put simply, Christ isn’t pleading on every sinner’s spiritual doorstep. Jesus doesn’t need to beg or badger anyone into the kingdom of heaven (John 10:27-28). Salvation isn’t merely a matter of the Lord getting a foot inside the door of your heart—it’s a work of total transformation (Ezekiel 36:26). And most important of all, salvation is not triggered by an act of the sinner’s will—it is God’s intervening work that rescues us from the just penalty of our sin (Ephesians 2:4-9).

In fact, the abuse of Revelation 3:20 often goes hand-in-hand with talk of *“asking Jesus into your heart”* and other man-centered versions of the gospel message. One way to protect yourself and your evangelism from such skewed perspectives is to closely adhere to biblical language when you’re explaining the gospel.



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And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:1-9, emphasis added)

Train yourself to think about the gospel in those terms, and you'll insulate yourself from the influence of man-centered theology, and the temptation to reinterpret God's Word.

Whose Door?

The door in Revelation 3:20 was not a vague spiritual metaphor—it was a specific door. And while Christ wasn't physically knocking, His words were directed to a specific group of people, and should not be watered down or applied carelessly to just anyone.

The context of Revelation 3:20 is Christ's letter to the church at Laodicea—also known as the lukewarm church. In Revelation 3:14-22, the Lord condemns them for their spiritual self-deception and apathy. Christ says, "*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot*" (v. 15). They did not openly reject Christ, but neither did they exhibit any spiritual zeal or authentic love for God or His Word. They professed to know Christ, but He had no place in their assembly.

And lost in their self-deception, they risked being spat out of God's mouth altogether (v. 16). Their only hope was to truly repent (v. 19).

In the context of Revelation 3, then, Christ was standing at the door of the Laodicean church, eager to re-enter the congregation through the genuine repentance and salvation of its members. In his commentary on this passage, John MacArthur explains the imagery of verse 20:

Though this verse has been used in countless tracts and evangelistic messages to depict Christ's knocking on the door of the sinner's heart, it is broader than that. The door on which Christ is knocking is not the door to a single human heart, but to the Laodicean church. Christ was outside this apostate church and wanted to come in—something that could only happen if the people repented.



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On Whose Door Is Christ Knocking? - Cont'd

The invitation is, first of all, a personal one, since salvation is individual. But He is knocking on the door of the church, calling the many to saving faith, so that He may enter the church. If one person (anyone) opened the door by repentance and faith, Christ would enter that church through that individual. The picture of Christ outside the Laodicean church seeking entrance strongly implies that, unlike Sardis, there were no believers there at all.

Christ's offer to dine with the repentant church speaks of fellowship, communion, and intimacy. Sharing a meal in ancient times symbolized the union of people in loving fellowship. Believers will dine with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), and in the millennial kingdom (Luke 22:16, 29-30). Dine is from deipneō, which refers to the evening meal, the last meal of the day. The Lord Jesus Christ urged them to repent and have fellowship with Him before the night of judgment fell and it was too late forever.

What does repentance look like? Far from merely opening the door of your heart to Christ, true repentance reflects the conviction of your sin and the deep desire for righteousness. Here's how D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones defined this important doctrine:

Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God, that you are hell-bound. It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it, and that you turn your back on it in every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world in its mind and outlook as well as its practice, and you deny yourself, and take up the cross and go after Christ.

The Urgent Call of the Gospel

When it comes to applying and interpreting Scripture, the details matter; good intentions are not enough. We bring the authority of Scripture to bear in sinners' lives only inasmuch as we handle it accurately. We have a responsibility to the Lord, to each other, and to the unsaved world to proclaim the excellence, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the Bible. And we can't fulfill that responsibility if we're assigning our own meaning to God's immutable truth.

With that in mind, you may still want to inject some urgency into the call to repent the next time you share the gospel with friends or family. Rather than falling back on a misappropriation of Christ's words in Revelation, why not make a biblically sound argument? Here are a couple passages that convey the sinner's urgent spiritual needs.

Isaiah preached to the apostate nation of Israel pleading with them to return to the Lord:

Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7)



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And in Acts 17 Paul ended his gospel appeal to a crowd of philosophers with these words:

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

These and other passages (cf. Acts 2:37-40; Hebrews 4:6-7) can be rightly used to urge unbelievers or those lost in self-deception to respond to the gospel by repenting and turning to Christ. What good is our evangelistic zeal if we aren't biblically sound? ~ **Jeremiah Johnson - Gracelife Fair Oaks Ranch Study Shepherd - An affiliate of Grace Community Church - Dr. John McArthur**

Renewing the Mind

It is possible to have knowledge without having wisdom. It is not possible, however, to have wisdom without knowledge. Knowledge is a necessary precondition for wisdom. The practice of godliness demands that we know and understand what godliness requires.

The Christian life is a transformed life. The transformation of life comes about, as the apostle Paul declares, through the renewal of the mind. An understanding of the Word of God renews the mind. The Word of God expresses the mind of God to us.

Our minds are to be conformed to the mind of Christ. That conformity does not automatically or instantly occur with conversion. Our conversion by the power of the Holy Spirit is not the end of our learning process but the beginning. At conversion we enroll in the school of Christ. There is no graduation this side of heaven. It is a pilgrimage of lifelong education.

The pursuit of wisdom is the pursuit of the knowledge of God. In one sense, Socrates was right in his insistence that right conduct is right knowledge. This is not in the sense that correct knowledge guarantees right behavior, but in the sense that knowledge, when it grows to wisdom, leads into right behavior. Thus, philosophers can become philotheos, "*lovers of God.*" ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**



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Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner - August 2019

Birthdays

*Ben S. (8)
Carrie P. (24)
Ezra P. (26)
Phyllis C. (27)
Marlin H. (27)*

Anniversary

Mike and Cheryl P. (9)

Rejecting Kingdoms of This World

Augustine stood by the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. He had heard of the hordes of barbarians that were moving as a juggernaut against Rome and the empire. The reports were ominous and foreboding, lending little reason for hope of the survival of the Roman culture.

Augustine said a prayer in three parts. In the *first* part, he implored God to save the empire. In the *second* part, he asked for grace to accept the destruction of civilization as he knew it, if that should be the will of Providence. In the *third* part, he asked that in either case he might be permitted soon to die and enter his eternal rest.

Permanence and security cannot be found in the structures of man. Concrete crumbles. Glass shatters. Steel melts. When God says *“No!”* the cities and kingdoms of men come to ruin. God simply will not tolerate man’s quest for autonomy—his lust for idols of his own making. No city, no nation, no culture can survive the judgment of God.



**West Suffolk Baptist Church
Leadership**

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