

Fluff

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WHEN DAD PASSED IT REMINDED me of the great teachers we've lost. Dad remains a giant of Christianity (though like many of the giants toiled in relative obscurity) and the more you knew him, the more you'll understand while he'll enjoy his promotion, we're deprived of more leadership than you can imagine. Besides dad passing, consider Walter Martin, the Chucks (Smith and Missler), and what each taught and warned about.

- Walter Martin — earnestly contend for the faith.
- Chuck Smith — teach the Word and reach the lost.
- Chuck Missler — science agrees with the God of the Bible.
- Dad — Don't divide over (his word) "fluff" issues.

You might not have heard dad's message, but I'd lost count of the times he said about something that's a fluff issue, it's not important (which doesn't mean a right or wrong answer doesn't exist though). We grew up in a Presbyterian church, attending others as well — some non-denominational, but over the decades everything from Baptist to charismatic.

I recall when Chuck Smith set up the tent in Costa Mesa dad wanted to know what was going on; he certainly had disagreement with Chuck on *at least* one area (those who know dad know *exactly* what that is), but in the end said Chuck was a good guy because what they didn't agree on was, well, fluff.

I always wondered how we could attend so many doctrinally different groups. It wasn't until years later dad related his "fluff" principal and I understood. Character, integrity, and accepting Jesus as savior mattered to dad, and frankly not much else. I could relate stories about dad's interaction with people he disagreed with (*strongly* if you know dad), but always considered friends.

Reading the problems existing in the Corinthian (and today's) church, too much focus exists on non-important issues, choosing division over minor (sometimes non-doctrinal) issues instead of agreeing on the majors.

I've noticed each of our giants passed when what they were trying to teach the church desperately needed, but tried to ignore, and later openly rejected.

- Walter Martin — Walter's voice remains a stern warning against "modernizing" the church.
- Chuck Smith — Nobody wants to teach the Bible, and those that do ... frequently ignore the lessons therein. Since Chuck's passing, Calvary Chapel unquestionably morphed from what he founded.
- Chuck Missler — Open hostility to science exists today, yet a stunning creation exists just waiting to be discovered.
- Dad — Fluff? That's now *most* important, even over the Gospel.

Examples abound for stupid, silly, and trivial ideas to divide over instead of focusing on the Gospel:

- At the dawn of the pandemic age (2020–2021) COVID and when/how the church meets (remote meeting via Internet doesn't count, it *must* be in person no matter what), basic sanitization, and protecting the flock from a pandemic (and banishing people not agreeing with certain political views).
- A friend related a story upon her first visit to a church they asked at the door if she was a Calvinist ... for only Calvinists could fellowship there.
- Dad related a guy told him when he read the Bible, he would toss it back on the coffee table, but when he read the KJV, he reverently gently placed it down.

For myself, you wouldn't believe some of the hatred I've received over the years (most of it from "Christians" ... atheists generally show more respect, at least to me) on many so-called vital issues Christians divide over — baptism, Calvinism vs free will, pre-trib, COVID, science, math, and other nonsense (i.e. "fluff"). It seems the church and its leadership forgot (or willfully cast aside) what Paul taught:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures ...

That's it. That's the Gospel. That's *the* definition of Christian. All else has (and always will be) ... fluff. If you agree on that (and the Bible is the inspired inerrant Word of God), we're together. Sadly, often in the church today you must be of political party "D" or "R", a Calvinist (or not), reject health protections in a pandemic, and other silly side issues having nothing to do with foundational doctrine — let's focus on the Gospel, not idiotic side issues.

A theory exists called Strauss–Howe generational theory, where societies traverse through four stages — the last being a crisis, as people forget the concepts and ideas from previous generations. At that point society either fixes the problems or sinks down in quagmire.

The church differs not. As great leaders of the church pass, the church faces its own fourth turning crisis, as lessons from those leaders are forgotten, or worse, willfully abandoned. At the dawn of the pandemic age (2020–2021) many pastors willfully and proudly abandoned rock-solid principles as the church enters its fourth-turning crisis.

The question: will the church and its pastors repent and return to foundational principles, or proudly continue down the path of hypocrisy, destroying their witness in the process?

Dad tried to warn us about the church dividing over stupid issues. I've seen that warning be both heeded, and sadly, ignored. We're repeating the mistakes of Judges as the great church leaders pass on.

In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25

Putting that in today's terms:

In those days Christ was not king in the church: every pastor did that which was right in his own eyes.

The only thing we learn from church history is the church fails to learn from history.

After someone passes, frequently discussion turns to how can we honor and respect them? What to put on the headstone, flowery words at the funeral, notices in the newspaper — all miss the mark. No, true honor is none of those. It's do you maintain their example, or ignore it? I'm with Elisha, I'd like a double-portion of what dad had.

...Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.

And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

2 Kings 2:9

I've chosen to pick up dad's mantle, though it's likely as the church continues to focus on stupid and silly stuff few will choose ministry, fellowship, and friendship over politics. People simply don't want to listen and replaced fellowship with politics and litmus tests of fluff you *must* accept or be banished.

...we need to remember that we deal with individual people, not a class of students... people who have joy and sorrow, who hurt, who can be lonely, who can be happy, who can be involved or who can turn us off or tune us out.

So what?

Well, this means that we can not simply deliver material from the Bible, but that we must relate that material to Christ, to life ... and this must be done with real people in mind, with real life situations.

~ James J Yeager, November 22 1971

I'll try dad to follow your example — hypocrisy is saying we're going to honor someone's legacy ... while ignoring his teaching and example. Why can't people just be honest?

- We want to take our church in a different direction; anyone not agreeing with new political positions will be asked to leave.
- We don't want to contend for the faith *once for all delivered to the saints* so we'll ignore warnings regarding "modernizing" the church.
- Science? We're anti-science so reject math, rational thinking, and logic.
- And we'll specifically focus (and divide over) fluff issues like politics and pandemics, and banish anyone holding different views, after all politics must have priority over ministry, the Gospel, and Paul's teaching.

It would be refreshing to see people be honest and admit they reject what they *claim* to follow. Dad's most important lesson? It's all fluff ... focus on 1 Corinthians 15. If you get that right, other minor points are just that. Minor.

...at 3 AM or any other time.