

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

What Is Gaslighting?

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Have you heard the term; Gaslighting? It means the psychological manipulation of another, and has been a popular phrase since the 1960s.

The term originates in the systematic psychological manipulation of a wife by her husband in Patrick Hamilton's 1938 stage play; "Gas Light" (and the film adaptations released in 1940 and 1944.) In the story, the husband convinces his wife and others that she is insane by manipulating small elements of their environment and insisting that her perceptions are wrong.

Things she remembers are demonstrated to be wrong. When she points out changes inside their home; the husband attributes them to her mistaken perceptions. Her interpretation of events is shown to be delusional. The play's title alludes to how the abusive husband slowly dims the gas lights in their home, while pretending nothing has changed. The wife's confidence in her perceptions is so eroded, she becomes convinced that she is losing her mind and, therefore, is incapable of discerning right and wrong. This damaged self confidence leads the wife to place her dependence increasingly, and entirely, upon her husband – the abuser!

OK, what does this have to do with the church? Let's see....

"Gaslighting" is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or a group covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or group. These seeds of doubt make the target (victim) question their own memory, perception, or judgment. It may evoke changes in them such as cognitive dissonance (inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, etc.) or low self-esteem, rendering the victim additionally dependent on the "gaslighter" for emotional support and validation. Using denial, misdirection, contradiction and disinformation, **gaslighting**

destabilizes the victim; delegitimizing the victim's confidence and internal belief system.

After the victim loses confidence in their mental capacities and develops a sense of learned helplessness, they become more susceptible to the victimizer's control. Do you see evidences that the church, today, has allowed itself to be victimized in this way?

Have you ever listened to a debate on a spiritual matter? When every point the Christian makes is demonstrated to be faulty, old fashioned, backward or delusional by the antagonist, it can actually serve to cause doubts in Christians who hear it.....especially those who are not rock solid in the foundations of their faith. Those who are immature, weak, lazy in their Bible study, or lacking in their exposure to fundamental truths, can experience 'cognitive dissonance' when their faith is challenged.

Prior to such large scale 'gaslighting' in our nation, the weaker members of the church were able to be buoyed up by the strength of the faith of those surrounding them. It was almost like gaslighting in reverse: "We're fine, so you are too!"

However, as individual congregations fall to the pressures of social changes, as leaders in those congregations leave the Bible on the shelf and turn to "enlightened sources," the church, as a whole, is suffering real damage. Satan preys on the weak. Those with weak faith, weak prayer lives, weak Bible study habits, have weak foundations from which to resist this gaslighting....the subtle manipulations that damage one's belief system. As the victim's becomes weaker, they actually grab more tightly to that which is damaging their faith!!

2 Corinthians 11:14 "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."

I cannot tell you how many people I've spoken with who are well past their 60s, who hear the Gospel for the first time. In conversations in which I share Christ, they INSTANTLY assure me they've been a 'life long member of the XYZ church, and that they tithe, and they volunteer, and they rescue puppies, bathe lepers, blah, blah, blah..." They tell me of the success of their church, and the benevolence of their pastor....blah, blah, blah...

God honors good works, but NONE of that is impressive to God! Only when we confess that we are helpless sinners, worthy of hell, and that the blood of Jesus is our only salvation.....THEN is God impressed with us.

My response to them is often something like this; “Then, what a tragedy it is that you’ve been attending that church for over 30 years and it took a handyman coming into your house for God to finally get you the message about Jesus! Do not think that your pastor will escape severe judgement for THAT!” (I get a little less gentle when speaking with people who have been gaslighted for decades, and who don’t have a lot of time left to get things right.) I figure the time is past for playing “pat-a-cake.”

If you can listen to someone arguing about the Bible and your faith in Christ becomes more questionable, or weaker, you may be an easy target of gaslighting. If you do not have concrete, unshakable faith in the fundamentals of The Bible, then you aren’t yet mature enough to resist this kind of subtle manipulation. If you tell yourself that you have strength of faith, and you do not, you are at risk of being a victim.

Gaslighting from within the church

The early Christian church grew and spread rapidly. Eye witnesses to Jesus’ ministry were the first evangelists. The Jewish faith, which expected the Messiah, was ripe for the revelation of the Christ. Jews, and gentiles alike, were coming to faith in Jesus across the region. However, read what Paul contended with inside these early churches:

Galatians 1: 6 “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ”

Ephesians 1: 17 “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,”

Philippians 1: 27 “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel “

Colossians 1: 15 “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Are you picking up on the theme? Paul’s letters to the Christian Churches all include exhortations to stand firm, hold fast, be confident in, the supremacy of the Lordship of Jesus. Keeping Jesus CENTRAL and FUNDAMENTAL wasn’t just Paul’s effort to give Jesus His ‘props’ in the beginnings of his letters. Paul was addressing a real problem! These young churches were being influenced by pagan religions of the day...including Jewish detractors who clung to their perverted law makers (the ones who played nicely in the sandbox with the Romans and got Jesus crucified).

Imagine that our congregation commissioned a sister church to take the Gospel into an inner city – where drugs, prostitution, and other crimes are common. Can you imagine the pressure on that new congregation to conform to their surroundings? What would be our pastor’s frequent communication to them? Would he regularly exhort them to resist the gaslighting and, above all, remain faithful to Christ? That was Paul’s situation.

Many of these early churches were established by the new Jewish Christians who Paul, himself, scattered as “Saul of Tarsus.” (See study: **They Were Scattered**) Saul of Tarsus persecuted the fellowships of new Christian believers and caused them to be dispersed over a region approximately as large as Allentown and Philadelphia, PA! In scattering these Christian believers, new churches were

formed in the midst of both Jewish and Gentile communities. The pagan religions (including some Jewish sects) of the day were all putting pressure on the first century churches to conform to THEM, and their belief systems. And, this conformity was being pressured through false teachers, manipulators, and charlatans.

Can you imagine the conversations within a group of new Christian converts? Jews who believed in keeping idols like Ephods and Asherah Poles (look them up), or Gentiles who worshipped false gods of nature, were pushing the idea that no Messiah could come and replace ALL these practices. The new believers were being 'gaslighted.' "Why do you think your crop is so weak, since you converted to this Jesus and got rid of your ephod? Jesus is OK, but don't throw the baby out with the schfutz water!"

Does this sound like the modern gaslighting of the church around topics like:

- **Voting:** "Christians are not supposed to participate in, but rather obey, government." (approximately 40 million Christian Americans do not vote!)
- **It's the woman's right to govern her own body** (62 million abortions later....)
- **It's illegal to teach the Bible, or pray, in public schools** (false – look it up)
- **There is a homosexual "gene."** (false – look it up)
- **Christians should not serve in the military** (false – look it up)
- **It's illegal to display Christian holiday decorations on government property.** (false – look it up)
- **God prohibits capital punishment in the Ten Commandments** (false. "Thou shalt not MURDER" is the correct translation)

In other words, the gaslighters have been convincing the Christian Church to do their worshipping INSIDE their buildings and keep out of sight the rest of the time. And, if Christians don't heed such teachings, there is a ready band of people with cameras, microphones and TV shows to shame us into never trying anything outside our buildings again!

Job 13: 4 "But you smear with lies; You are all worthless physicians. 5 "O that you would be completely silent, and that it would become your wisdom! 6 "Please hear my argument and listen to the contentions of my lips. 7 "Will you

speaking what is unjust for God, and speaking what is deceitful for Him? 8 “Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? 9 “Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man? 10 “He will surely reprove you if you secretly show partiality. 11 “Will not His majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall on you? 12 “Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.

Illustration; I was a Navy SEAL for 8 years. During the last couple, I was an instructor in the basic SEAL training unit. When we got a new batch of trainees, I always identified myself as a Christian and offered to speak with anyone who might have questions. With each training class was a few men who met with me to ask if a Christian can serve in the military, in a position that might require killing the enemy. They were confused by the King James English translation of the commandment; “Thou shalt not kill.” Once this, and other misconceptions were cleared up, they were confident that God was OK with them serving their country; that serving their country and God is an entirely normal, blessed thing.

How many well-meaning Christian faiths (Quakers, Mennonites, Amish, etc.), pastors, priests, congregations, etc., have divided the Christian community as a whole by NOT getting a basic education on this singular issue? Instead of JUST ONE of those leaders opening the Word of God and praying for the Holy Spirit to guide them, they have accepted the consistent dimming of the lights as reality! As a result, each time there is an execution of a murderer, there is a crowd of uneducated Christians out front chanting “Thou shalt not kill!”

Exodus 21: “14 But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death.”

Such misled, mistaught, fellowships have followed their gaslighting abusers into the social toxins of our day: Worshipping the “earth” and the “environment,” making their ministries about charities and not about the Gospel, accepting sexual sin as normal, teaching that financial prosperity is God’s will for you, etc. Indeed, things have morphed to the degree that those loudest voices for tolerance and love are the harshest against Biblical Christianity.

Can you feel God’s frustration? I can almost hear Him saying; “Hey! I employed miracle after miracle to give you MY WORDS, and you don’t read them! You don’t study them! Someone perverts them and you don’t even look it up! You

attended 16 years of state-run education, but you cannot read my Word once a day? You cannot attend a Bible Study? If I sent Jesus to you again, would you crucify Him a second time?"

2 Timothy 3: 12 "Indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 But as for you, continue in the things you have learned and firmly believed, since you know from whom you have learned them. 15 From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

Can you see the long, manipulated path the modern Christian church has plodded toward domination by our gaslighting abusers? And, how many of our Christian brethren have adopted such compromises, and then cling to them ever stronger when they are confronted by the pure Word of God? "Sexual sin is not sin?"

1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Why is God's word so clear on this?because He MEANS IT!

Mark 7:21-23 "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

The time is past for the Church to be gaslighted anymore!

I recall a Christian commenting on the radio in 2010 that we will soon see new age. What is right will be wrong. What is wrong will be right. What is forward

will be reversed, and what should be shut off will be released. He was warning that good will be called bad and vice versa. And, he has been proven correct. If you are past the age of 30, you have witnessed the most outrageous advancement of paganism in the history of America. The more it advances, the faster it moves. Our society has devolved into a culture that embraces every sin the Bible identifies, and reveres most of them as honorable.

These changes are no secret to God. They have been foretold:

2 Thessalonians 2 The Man of Lawlessness

1 “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to be easily disconcerted or alarmed by any spirit or message or letter seeming to be from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord has already come. 3 Let no one deceive you in any way, for it will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness—the son of destruction—is revealed. 4 He will oppose and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship. So he will seat himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

5 Do you not remember that I told you these things while I was still with you? 6 And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now restrains it will continue until he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival.

9 The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the working of Satan, with every kind of power, sign, and false wonder, 10 and with every wicked deception directed against those who are perishing, because they refused the love of the truth that would have saved them. 11 For this reason God will send them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie, 12 in order that judgment may come upon all who have disbelieved the truth and delighted in wickedness.

Stand Firm

13 But we should always thank God for you, brothers who are loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning to be saved by the sanctification of the Spirit and by faith in the truth. 14 To this He called you

through our gospel, so that you may share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **15 Therefore, brothers, stand firm and cling to the traditions we taught you, whether by speech or by letter.**

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who by grace has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and deed.”

American society is in rapid decline. The true church of Jesus will be driven further and further from mainstream society. There will come a time when true believers in Christ will be forced out of our beautiful churches and pushed to meet inside homes, barns, or other shadowy places (same as many Christians around the world). The name of Jesus will not be tolerated, and the Word of God will not be respected. Those who truly follow Christ will become segregated from normal social functions.

“Throughout most of American history, it’s been pretty easy to call yourself Christian. It didn’t even occur to people that you might be shunned or ridiculed for defending the teachings of the Bible. But things are different now. You’re going to be asked not just to tolerate things that violate your faith, you’re going to be asked to endorse them. You’re going to be asked to bow down to the idols of the popular culture.” VP Pence addressing Liberty University students.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party took advantage of weak national leadership, financial devastation and civil unrest to unite their nation against the Jews. Once the “villain” had been identified, the gaslighting began....and you know the rest of the story. Even some Christians in that society turned against the Jews. This process will repeat itself in America; this time, against the Christian church. It’s been happening, and you know it, if you are paying attention.

Now is the time for Christians to fortify their faith. It’s not enough to simply attend church once a week, or so. It’s not enough to simply be part of the club. Each and every Christian must put on the full armor of God and be prepared for what is already well on its way:

Ephesians 6: 13 “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around

your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

It is one thing to deflect an arrow of persecution with the shield of faith. It is quite another to vanquish a lie with the Word of God. If you are not praying, studying God’s Word, meeting with mature believers, and managing your money God’s way, you are not preparing for the battles just over the hill.

2 Timothy 4: 1 “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and encourage with every form of patient instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires.”

Meekness vs Weakness

Biblically speaking, “Meekness” is strength under control. Meekness is submitting to God’s will while resisting the soldiers of Satan. If you ever watched the movie; “Patton”, you saw a man who was submissive to God, to the foundational principles of America, and to the US Army’s code of conduct. He prayed, then went boldly into war. It was only in his moments of human weakness (no strength) that he faltered.

As Christians, we submit to God’s word; meaning; we READ IT! We learn of God’s will for our lives through His word. As Christians, we submit to the Holy Spirit. We listen, we pray, we seek wise counsel. In so doing, we become strong, but that strength is under the control of our Lord....NOT OUR OWN CONTROL!

Weakness is either no strength, or strength out of control. A person with no strength may have a loud mouth, or an abusive nature. A person with strength that is out of control, may harm others, may be a criminal, or an administrator or politician who can do things to a lot of people at his/her personal whim.

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me.”

Hebrews 12:11 “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Ephesians 3:16 “That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,”

2 Corinthians 12:10 “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I’ve been involved in construction most of my life. I love the early morning when the crew shows up to work. Each grabs their respective tools and walks onto the job. They are experienced, tooled up, coffee-d up, and ready to work. They know the plans, the materials available, and they work in concert to build a quality structure.

As we look ahead, the Christian community must become strong due to every individual’s strong faith and readiness in Christ. We must recognize when we are being gaslighted and manipulated, and stand strong in our faith. We must not only put on the full armor of God; we must help our brothers and sisters do so.

Harsher times are coming. Our kids and grandkids will face an environment that is far more hostile to the church than we can ever imagine. We must build up the body of Christ so that every individual is a Temple:

1 Corinthians 6:19 “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body.”

YOU are the temple of the Holy Spirit. “Church” should occur wherever you go. Let’s get Jesus out of the buildings in which we meet and introduce Him to our daily contacts.