

# Off Course Christianity

A Spiritual Wake Up Call

by

John McWilliams

***A portion of the profits of this book will go to support a very special Christian ministry called "Operation Heal Our Patriots." They minister to our wounded veterans and their families.***

*Off Course Christianity*

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### Dedication and Acknowledgements

*This book is dedicated to Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Without Him it would have never been written and without Him my life would count for nothing. My prayer would be that He would use it to be a blessing in the lives of many.*

*I also would like to thank my wife Barbara for her constant support of my work and ministry and for being the wonderful wife she is to me.*

*Of course, writing a book is something that takes time and effort, but it takes the efforts of numerous people beyond just the author. Editors and proof readers make a huge difference in how any book comes out. I owe a large debt of gratitude to Judi VanCleave and Zarie Jones for the many hours they gave of their time to edit the manuscript and make this book a better book. I also would like to thank Beth Johansen and Kerry Larsen for all the time and efforts they put in to proof read the manuscript searching for all those little errors and mistakes that are so often missed in the process.*

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*In addition, I'd like to thank Susan Young for her work on designing the cover art for the book.*

## *Introduction to this Book*

*The fact is that as Christians, many of us have wandered from the lessons that our Scriptures have taught us on many important topics. For years we have seen the erosion of many Biblical standards that have guided our society and world. Firmly held beliefs that we once took for granted from Scripture as meaning one thing, are now being challenged and presented to us as having an entirely different interpretation. Amazingly enough, rather than standing up for God's Word, as taught to us and believed in by millions, we have compromised and caved in to the demands of a very secular society that often mocks and demeans our Christian faith.*

*This book puts forth a compilation of important faith issues which Christians have been wavering and yielding on for years. I simply felt that it was time to get these all in one place and address them under the theme and awareness of looking at just how far off course many of us have strayed.*

*Depending on where you currently stand on any of the given topics in the book, some of the chapters may be affirming to you. Others may surprise you, and some may present you with the challenge of having to change the way you practice your faith.*

*Even long time and faithfully committed Christians will find new things in this book. If that is the case for you, I trust you will take and use them in ways that*

*allow you to grow in Christ and become a better ambassador for Him in our world today.*

*It is certainly not my job to judge others. However, as a pastor, it is my job to state with affirmation what Scripture tells us. I trust that in this book, I have done that plainly and lovingly. Once you read the book you can see and determine for yourself how far off course you might be with regard to any of these topics and what if anything you will do to get back on course.*

*As you will see when you read the book, no one is perfect, least of all me. We should all pay attention to where we can make important course corrections in our faith, as we live daily for Christ. How open we are to doing that, will determine how effective we continue to be as Christians in this world. I trust you will find some things in this book that will be as much of a blessing to you as they have been to me.*



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## Chapter One

### Fly The Plane

*Your word is like a lamp that shows me the way. It is like a light that guides me. Psalm 119:105*

**Flying is something people dreamed about for centuries. Then a couple of preacher's kids named Wilber and Orville Wright made it possible for humans to fly. The world was forever changed.**

**Some people love to fly and of course, others hate it and avoid it as much as possible. Yet, whenever people do fly, one of the things they are concerned about and often comment upon most is how they feel about the landing. People say things like,**

*“That was a great landing,” or “That was a smooth landing.”*

**That makes sense, because for obvious reasons, good landings are important.**

**As the old aviation adage goes, “Any landing you walk away from is a good one.” I like the newer version even better. “Any landing you can walk away from is a good one, but a *really* good landing is when you can use the plane again!”**

**Landings are one thing, but most people are unaware of the scores of other important activities that take place in the cockpit during the course of flight, things that literally make sure that the plane and passengers get safely to their destination.**

**It begins with a good takeoff, yet we rarely hear anyone say something like,**

*“That was a great takeoff.”*

**Then along the way, there have to be numerous instrument readings, numerous communications with Air Traffic Control, fuel burn statistics, systems checks etc.**

**In today’s modern aircraft, most of that happens through computer technology, but pilots still have to be pilots. They must still be trained and ready to assume full flying command of the aircraft at any moment. Even when the airplane is on autopilot, they still have to be communicating with the ground and with each other, watching the instruments and staying on top of a whole list of things that lead to that eventual good landing we all enjoy.**

**One of the most important things during any flight is to make sure the plane is on the right course. Navigating correctly and being on course are absolutely critical to getting you where you’re supposed to go. Any deviation from that course, even a small one, in the long run, can cause you to miss your intended airport by hundreds of miles!**

**In modern planes today, there is an instrument called a Directional Gyroscope or DG. It is a gyroscope-based compass, which constantly shows what course the plane is flying.**

However, the DG is subject to drift errors. What that means is that as the plane is flying, something called “precession” or drifting takes place. This simply means that after a while, the course the DG is showing will actually be slightly off. The longer it is allowed to precess, the further off course it will read. Every 15 or 20 minutes of flight, the DG has to be reset or realigned to the correct course. In small simple planes, the pilot often does that manually. In more sophisticated planes, it’s done automatically.

The question, however, becomes what does the DG get realigned to, or reset to so that the course is always correct? The answer to that might surprise you. The DG is reset and realigned to match something that Federal law mandates still be installed in every airplane made, in spite of how expensive and technologically advanced that plane might be. It’s called a simple magnetic compass.

It isn’t electronic or computerized in any way. You’ll never see any wires coming out of it. It isn’t connected to anything except the magnetic North Pole and it will always read correctly. Therefore, the DG can be confidently corrected and reset to it during the flight. In fact, if the pilots were to lose all their high tech navigational equipment, that simple magnetic compass would still work and would be able to lead them home.

So the next time you board a big jet airliner and peek into the cockpit before you turn down the aisle to go to your seat, be assured that in that

**cockpit is a good old, low tech, accurate magnetic compass.**

**You might now be wondering about the next logical question. What assures us that the magnetic compass can be trusted to be accurate? Here's the answer. When any plane is first built, it is taxied out on the airport to something called a compass rose.**



**Airport Compass Rose**

**It's a place on the airport, sometimes called a calibration pad, where a compass has been literally painted on the ground. The directions of that compass have been determined to be exactly correct and the "N" or North arrow on that compass rose is pointing exactly toward magnetic North. Therefore, the airplane can be taxied up onto that compass rose and the plane's magnetic compass in the cockpit can be perfectly set to and aligned with the compass rose's correct directions. As a result, that compass can be trusted. The reason it can be trusted is because it has been set to and aligned with something that is absolutely true and correct.**

**For Christians, our Compass Rose is The Bible. Just like flying an airplane where the pilots have to constantly make sure they are reading and checking the compass to stay on course, we**

**Christians have to be constantly looking at The Bible and making sure we are in line with our spiritual Compass Rose. Otherwise, we too will “precess” and slowly begin to drift off course, many times without ever being aware of it. The devil loves to slowly deceive us and cause us to drift slightly off course, which then leads to drifting further off course in a very insidious manner. Then, sooner or later, we find ourselves in serious trouble, often before we even notice that anything is happening.**

**It’s one thing to notice that you are drifting off course and correct it, but it’s another thing altogether to be off course and to be unaware of it. In fact, many pilots have drifted way off course without ever seeing it happen, until it dawns on them that they are dangerously lost, all because they failed to pay attention to the compass.**

**One thing that my flight instructor pounded into me in flight school is the classic aviation phrase, which virtually all pilots are taught. It’s really simple. Here it is. “Fly the plane.”**

**Now that certainly sounds obvious enough. If you’re the pilot, you should fly the plane. However, what it really means is that whatever situation you find yourself in, make sure you pay attention to the business of actually flying the airplane. Keep it straight and level and under control. Be aware of what the instruments are telling you. Again, this sounds simple, but interestingly enough, because of various distractions, many pilots have broken**

**that cardinal rule of “Fly the plane.” When that happens, lots of bad things can take place. Here is a classic example of what happens when pilots are distracted and as a result, break the “Fly the plane” rule.**

**The beautiful brand new Eastern Airlines Lockheed Tri-Star 1011 was on approach to Miami International Airport. As the pilot lowered the landing gear, one of the three green lights on the instrument panel, which were supposed to come on to indicate that all the gear were down and locked, failed to come on. It was the light for the front nose gear. Since the light failed to come on, the pilots were unsure if the gear was down and locked.**

**The captain determined to break off the approach and was given permission by the tower to enter a holding pattern at 2,000 feet out over the Everglades, about 18 miles from the airport. The plane was put on autopilot to hold the pattern, while the captain and the other two pilots set about working on the issue of the light.**

**They put the landing gear up and down again, but the light still failed to come on. The captain felt that it was likely just a burned out bulb, so he chose to replace the bulb in the instrument panel with one of the spare bulbs they carried just for that purpose. He and the first officer started to take the light assembly apart so they could replace the bulb. At the same time, the second officer was told to go down below the flight deck to the**

**electronics bay where through a porthole, he was to visually check and see if the nose gear was down. Because it was after dark, that would be harder to see. In this kind of situation, pilots can also opt to do a “fly by the tower” to have controllers in the tower look at the gear with binoculars. Yet, even if they see that, it’s down, it still may not be locked, and only that green light coming on will give you that assurance. Between the three pilots, they had 59,200 hours of flight experience, with the captain having the most at 29,700 hours.**

**With the plane on autopilot and in a holding pattern at an altitude of 2,000 feet, all three pilots focused their attention on that \$12.00 light bulb. However, although that was a good thing, it was a distraction. Amazingly enough, they were so focused on that light bulb, that all three of them were about to break the rule of “Fly the plane.”**

**It was later determined that while doing their checking, at some point, the captain had inadvertently hit the yoke (steering wheel) and accidentally hit the switch on the autopilot. The result of hitting the autopilot switch and the yoke at the same time was that instead of holding the plane at 2,000 feet, the autopilot was now told to put the plane in a very, very slow descent, so slow, that it was unperceivable to the crew as they continued working the issue of the light bulb. At one point, a warning chime, located under the second officer’s seat, went off to warn that the plane was getting too low, but because he’d been sent below to the**



electronics bay he never heard it. The slow and gradual descent continued.

Now the plane was dangerously close to the ground, but it had all happened so slowly, so insidiously, that it was never noticed by anyone. Why? Because, they were all distracted and failed to pay attention to the details that really mattered, like “Flying the plane.” If they had just once checked the instruments, those instruments were telling them exactly what was happening.

At one point, the first officer called the tower in Miami to get permission to fly back toward the airport. He was told to make a left turn to the South to approach the airport. As he took the controls and put the plane in that left turn, he noticed something was wrong with the altitude. He asked the captain about it and just ten seconds later, the plane plowed into the Everglades at over 200 miles per hour. It was later determined that there was nothing wrong with the landing gear. It actually was just a burned out \$12.00 light bulb. The National Transportation and Safety Board concluded that “Pilot error” was to blame. In their official report, they detailed it as,

*“ the failure of the flight crew to monitor the flight instruments during the final four minutes of flight, and to detect an unexpected descent soon enough to prevent impact with the ground. Preoccupation with a malfunction of the nose landing gear position indicating system distracted*

*the crew's attention from the instruments and allowed the descent to go unnoticed."*

Translation: They forgot to "Fly the plane."

I respectfully suggest to you that Satan has done quite a job of distracting Christians today. That's his job and he's good at it. He has us taking our eyes off God's Word, our Compass Rose and instead has us concentrating on any number of other things which will lead us off course. He often does it quietly and in a very subtle manner, so subtle we never even notice it. If Satan were obvious, it would be much easier for us to catch the mistake and correct the course. However, The Bible tells us that Satan is a deceiver and has been a liar from the beginning. We should expect nothing less. We are told that Satan can even appear to us disguised as an "*angel of light.*" Amazing! The prince of darkness can even appear to be light to us.

In my opinion, the Christian Church and many of us in it have been slowly drifting off course for some time now on various topics. That actually puts us in a dangerous spiritual situation which begs to be corrected. As you read, you'll see that these aren't just topics like same-sex marriage or abortion, although those are included. They also include how we've drifted off course when it comes to things like extending forgiveness to others, what it actually means to have faith, and how the Harry Potter books and movies might just be one of Satan's greatest spiritual Trojan Horses ever.

**It would be my prayer that you would approach each subject openly. Check out your current position on that subject against the Compass Rose Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, and what He's clearly said about these subjects in His Word to us.**

**Christians can certainly agree to disagree on certain things. Yet on many things, one is either on course or off course and the latter is a spiritually dangerous place to be, especially if we fail to perceive we are off course in the first place. That's when Christians can find themselves confidently and calmly flying right into the ground.**

**God has given us our Compass Rose, His own Word, to keep us flying on course and to get us safely to our destination all through our lives. When we deviate from that Word, things can get very ugly. Many Christians are experiencing difficulty in their lives right now, simply due to the fact that they have strayed off course and are unaware of how far they've drifted. That's exactly how Satan likes it. That's why it's essential to realign ourselves daily with the Compass Rose of God's Word.**

**As a result of wandering and drifting from God's Word today, too many congregations are busy performing what I call "reverse miracles." By that I mean, they are making people who can see, become blind. As one person said, they are *"turning wine back into water."* In so many congregations today, their new song could be, *"I Once Could See, But Now I'm Blind."***

**For instance, look at the motto of the Church of Open Doors in Austin, Texas. They say,**

*"We've taken tradition and religious doctrine and thrown them out the window."*

**Online they call themselves a,**

*"New Non-Denominational, Non-traditional, Christ-Centered, Non-Judgmental, Love Based Church."*

**They say,**

*"We are to be known for our love, compassion, reconciliation, and liberation. . . ."*

**Notice, they say nothing about being known for the "truth."**

**You may have heard about their pastor Jordon Brown, who was caught lying about being discriminated against by Whole Foods in Austin. Trust me. Getting that far off course didn't happen in a week. It took years of gradual drifting.**

**These reverse miracles happen when we get off course and I respectfully suggest to you that in this book, you'll see major areas where many of us, as Christians, have seriously drifted off course. Moreover, we've often done so without seeing or noticing it. In fact, we've often convinced ourselves that we are actually on the exact right course.**

**What's more, we're convinced we've done it in the name of love grace, mercy, and justice. Jesus was certainly full of love, mercy, grace, and justice**

**and He expects us to be like Him. However, there is one very important difference, something we should never forget.**

**Jesus NEVER, EVER, traded any of those things for the truth. We must do nothing less.**

## Chapter Two

### Pull Up Your Tie

*And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes.*

Galatians 3:27



**As you saw in the first chapter, details matter. Staying aligned with the compass and correctly managing distractions are important disciplines for us to maintain. Distractions, even good ones, can bring disastrous results. So often, it starts with small things that we never even notice are happening.**

**I would suggest to you that in many areas of our society today, we have become somewhat more casual when it comes to paying attention to details.**

**You can see it in various places. One place I've noticed it is in how men today wear their neckties. Without a doubt, men are getting sloppier when it comes to wearing a straight and pulled up tie. On the surface, that may seem like nothing, but I**

**suggest it might be something. It might be one of a number of indicators that show we are paying less attention to details.**

**I'm not talking here about someone unbuttoning their shirt and loosening their tie to be more comfortable. At times that is entirely appropriate. Rather, I'm talking about guys who are supposed to be wearing ties correctly, but who are simply ignoring the appropriate details when they have one on.**

**When my Dad taught me how to tie a necktie, he of course taught me to be sure the knot was tied correctly. Yet, he also taught me to make sure my tie was straight and pulled all the way up. It had to fully cover the top button of my shirt and align perfectly with the collar on both sides.**

**Of course, lots of pastors and people have stopped wearing ties on Sunday mornings and that's fine if that's what the style is in their congregation. There are plenty of places in our country today where we've lost the suit and tie and that's just fine with me. When I first moved to Florida from New York, I attended a community pastors' meeting and went dressed in a full suit, which of course is very New York. I was told almost immediately, that I was in Florida now and I should feel free to lose the suit and tie and I was happy to comply.**

**I've preached and taught in everything from a robe, to a full suit and tie, to a jacket and dress shirt without a tie, to business casual, down to just**

**a collared shirt and jeans. Yet, when I am wearing a suit and tie, one of the last things I do before going in front of a congregation, is to go in front of a mirror to adjust and straighten my tie. If you are going to wear a tie, you should at least pay attention to the details of wearing it correctly.**

**In case you are wondering, I'm not the only one who has written about this sloppy tie thing. In my research, I've found others who have addressed it as well. If you'd like to confirm it, just look around you. You'll see it pretty much everywhere men still wear ties.**

**I've seen ties that look similar to the picture above, worn by major network news anchors and world leaders, talk show hosts appearing in front of millions of people, by movie stars and major sports figures and announcers. Sometimes I feel like donating a bunch of mirrors to the networks. Who in the world lets these guys go out there looking like that?**

**A psychologist friend of mine told me that he has also noticed what I have dubbed, Pull Up Your Tie Disorder, PUYTD. He feels it indeed can be one of many indicators out there today that shows that we are paying less attention to detail in our society.**

**In addition to how they wear neckties, many people today have also become much more casual in the way they see and read The Bible. Doing that can make us miss a lot of details that matter to God and that can make us drift off course. We will miss important details that are specifically there for us**



to see and that can make a huge, even eternal, difference in our lives.

I respectfully suggest that as Christians, many of us have let our “theological and Biblical ties” slide down a bit and get crooked.

It’s interesting to me that in The Bible God actually tells us how to dress for our everyday Christian walk.

In Galatians 3:27, among other places, we are told that as Christians we are supposed to “*put on Christ.*” Here it is from the Contemporary English Version of The Bible.

*“And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes.”*

The last part of that verse in the New International Reader’s Version says,

*“You have put him on as if he were your clothes.”*

The Greek word used here comes from the word ἐνδύω, pronounced “enduo” which means, “I put on.” It literally refers to the way one “puts on” their clothes in the morning. We are to wear Christ and if so, we should wear Him correctly. There should be nothing lax or shabby about the way we “wear” Christ in our lives. Again, details matter to God.

I’m aware of the fact that there are those who love the phrase, “*Don’t sweat the small things,*”

**and I get that. We can become too obsessed on small, relatively unimportant things and miss the bigger, more important picture. However, just because something is a small detail, doesn't mean it isn't important.**

**There are entire chapters in the Old Testament dedicated to small but important details. The directions from God on how The Temple was to be built are a perfect example. He specified what kind of cloth the curtains would be made of and what colors they would be. He ordered the exact kinds of wood to be used for different things, as well as how the overlays of silver and gold would be applied. He even prescribed exactly how the priests would dress, all of which had specific meaning from God for His people.**

**All of that was because God does things in an excellent, detailed, and wonderful way. Just take a minute and read I Kings 6 and you'll see that details matter to God.**

**Here's the bottom line. Details that matter to God should also matter to us.**

**When it comes to being Christians, it's important for us to pay attention to the details that matter to God. We have to straighten and pull up our theological ties. We just can't ignore and let slip the details of what God has put down in His Word.**

**We must actively guard against the distractions, even the good ones, or we will stray**

**off course and be totally unaware of it. We may have the best intentions, but we get busy and we put things off. We say things like,**

*“I’ll get around to actually reading The Bible one day. I’ll get around to getting more involved in ministering to other people, but right now, I have a lot of other things on my plate that I have to get done. I’m sure God understands.”*

**Here’s what a pastor friend of mine recently said in a sermon.**

*“Distractions may be one of the greatest dangers to the soul.”*

**He is so right.**

**The story goes that Satan called a meeting of his highest-ranking demons. The purpose was to go over strategy regarding what they could possibly do better to tempt people on earth in ways that would keep them from God and from learning about Christ’s salvation for their souls.**

**One demon said,**

*“We can tempt people to lie and cheat on their spouses to disrupt the family.”*

**Satan said,**

*“We’ve done that. We have to do better.”*

**Another demon spoke up and said,**

*“We can tempt people to get more dependent on drugs and alcohol.”*

**Satan said,**

*“We’ve done that for years. We have to do better.”*

**Another demon said,**

*“We can tempt people to be irresponsible with their finances, so they get trapped in debt because money issues are the biggest factors in marriages going bad.”*

**Again, Satan said,**

*“That’s nothing new. We have to have something bigger and better that will make sure millions of people will end up with us in Hell instead of with Jesus in Heaven.”*

**Then one demon spoke up and said,**

*“When it comes to getting serious about God, The Bible and accepting Christ, we can tempt them to veer off course with various good distractions and most important, when it comes to actually accepting Christ as their Savior, we can convince them that they have all the time in the world.*

**Satan said,**

*“Go!” That’s it. That will destroy millions.”*

**We have become so lax with Scripture that Christians find themselves questioning what The Bible says and even suggesting substitutes for what we feel might work better, rather than obeying**

**what is already there for us to see. We can't just read a section of The Bible, roll our eyes and say**

*"Whatever!"*

**There are no "Whatevers" when it comes to what God has said. God has put down in detail the things that are vital for our lives as Christians. To deviate from those details and to substitute our own way of doing things, will NEVER work and will always make us stray off course.**

**Yet that is exactly what is happening in the lives of many Christians today. A more casual, less detailed view of The Bible will tend to make you miss lots of important messages and teachings from God. Let me give you a simple example.**

**Chapter 8 of John's Gospel tells the story of Jesus dealing with a woman caught in adultery. Take a moment to read the short story below from the New International Version of The Bible.**

*"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*

*But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let any one*

*of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

*At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’*

*‘No one, sir,’ she said.*

*‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’”*

**Notice that Jesus says He doesn’t condemn her, which means that He is willing to forgive her. Nonetheless, Jesus also pays attention to some very specific details and clearly conveys them to the woman. The big picture is forgiveness and rightly so, but in the details we dare not miss, He also specifically tells her to leave her lifestyle of sin. He doesn’t say, “*Whatever!*” to her sin. He calls it sin and tells her to stop it. He specifically maintains the important details of her sin, while at the same time, providing the solution to her sin with His forgiveness, *if* she was willing to change her ways and stop sinning.**

**Today many Christians look at a story like this in The Bible and they get the big picture, the forgiveness part, but they ignore those smaller details of Jesus calling the woman out on her sinful lifestyle.**

**They seem to ignore the fact that even though Jesus chose to forgive her, He still maintained the detail that her behavior was sinful and had to stop.**

**They somehow miss the fact that He called her sin what it was and that her lifestyle of adultery was wrong.**

**However, if you listen to some Christians today explain this story, you'd swear that what Jesus actually said was something more like,**

*"I don't condemn you for what you did. Nobody's perfect. People are just too judgmental today. I'm not about judgment. I'm about forgiveness. So just go and do your best and whatever happens, I'll be here for you."*

**Nothing could be more wrong, but that is exactly what many Christians today are doing with The Bible. They are missing the important details and in so doing they are excusing sin in the name of Grace. They are trying to turn wrong into right and darkness into light.**

**They are veering way off course in their walk with The Lord and it is costing them dearly. They claim to be Christians, and I'm not saying they aren't, but their lives are a mess and they wonder why. Often, they never even see it until they are in a crisis and that's just the way the devil likes it.**

**Taking The Bible more casually is popular today with Christians who are theologically off course. For instance, many Christians are now saying there are multiple errors in The Bible. They've been convinced that over the years Scripture has been changed and altered in ways that simply leave us unable to trust the accuracy of what The Bible says. They are really letting their**

**theological neckties get loose. What they say on their website at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in New York City clearly shows this problem. They say and I quote,**

*“We take the Bible seriously, but not literally.”*

**They go on to say,**

*“We believe following Christ is the best path but not the only path to God.”*

**What these people are unaware of, and could look up and find out fairly easily if they had the intellectual drive to do so, is that The Bible has *in fact, not in theory, but in fact,* been scholastically vetted and proven to be the most accurately translated and passed down ancient document in history. What that means is that you can certainly disagree with what The Bible says, but you can't do it on the premise that what's in The Bible is inaccurate and corrupt, because that has been irrefutably proven not to be the case.**

**You might disagree with what The Bible says, but nonetheless, it has not changed or been corrupted over the centuries. Therefore, if what it says is in fact what God has told us, it seems to me that to dismiss it, ignore it, take it lightly or wander from it, is to take quite a chance with one's eternal status!**

**Ignoring the details, when the details matter, can be a costly mistake. We live in a world today where we are distracted by numerous things that make us forget to “Fly the plane,” and many of those things are actually good things, but they can**



**distract us nonetheless. Unless we are constantly aligning ourselves to the Compass Rose of The Bible, we are setting ourselves up for becoming off course Christians.**

**From experience, I can tell you that a number of things you'll read in this book may be new to you. You may simply never have considered some of these things before, or how far off course, people can actually get.**

**As you read them, if you discover that in some areas you yourself are off course, fear not. That's a good thing. When you learn you're off course you can correct your course and realign yourself with Jesus our Compass Rose. Because I've seen it happen in my life and the lives of so many others, I can make you this promise. If you stay on course regarding the topics that are discussed in this book, the results can be life changing for you.**

**So let's go. Let's "Fly the plane." Let's "Put on Christ" and let's "Pull up our theological ties." Let's take a look at some important areas of our faith, check them against the Compass Rose of Scripture, and see how we're doing in regard to staying on course.**

## Chapter Three

### You Have To Be Kidding Me!

*And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds; cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*  
Genesis 1:24-27.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* John 1:1-5.

**I assume that most all of us have had at least one of those moments in life when somebody tells us something and our basic and immediate response is "You have to be kidding me!" Actually, there are a few different ways to use that phrase.**

**In some cases, we use it to show surprise and even happiness with what we're told. Let me give you an example.**

**You come home from work and your wife says, "I have something special to tell you. Would you please sit down?" You sit down. You're all ears and she gives you the great news that she's pregnant with your first child. Even though you fully trust that what she's saying is true, you might still say something like, "You have to be kidding me. That's great!"**

**So, in some cases it shows amazement. On the other hand we also use that phrase to convey total disbelief in what we're being told. For instance, your husband comes home and tells you that he's just invested every cent of your savings in classic aluminum Christmas trees because he's sure that they are going to make a comeback and you are going to make a bundle of money selling them.**

**Now among other things, you might say, "YOU HAVE TO BE KIDDING ME!" and you'd say it in a way that expresses total disbelief in what you're being told.**

**That's exactly how I feel when someone tells me, that in their opinion, the world and all of creation came into existence by accident, without a plan, without a design and without a creator. When somebody tells me that, the response I prefer is,**

*"You have to be kidding me!"*

**That gets their attention and it allows the conversation to continue, which is my goal.**

**As Christians, I feel that it's important that we respond to people who make these claims with which we totally disagree and which clearly contradict Scripture. In fact, not saying something when we're faced with such things pretty much allows the other person to feel you hold the same position they do.**

**It's my feeling that when it comes to the discussion of creation vs. evolution, common sense has far too often been left out of the equation. Far too many people have been quite literally, as they say,**

*“educated away from their common sense.”*

**Let me give you a couple of definitions of common sense from the dictionary. Here's the first one.**

*“Sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts.”*

**I like this second one even more.**

*“Sound practical judgment that is independent of specialized knowledge, training, or the like. Normal native intelligence.”*

**When you call a company and you have to push 17 buttons to get a live person and then you get put**

**on hold for 15 minutes, tell me how that makes you feel. Don't you feel a little angry? Don't you feel a little frustrated? Do you know why you feel that way? It's because your common sense tells you there has to be a better way to do this.**

**When it comes to how we all got here, how life began and how the universe came into being, I'd like to suggest to you that much of what we're being told these days amounts to an effort to educate us away from our common sense. We are being pulled way off course.**

**I'm going to ask you to join me for a few minutes in considering some of God's labor and the results of His handiwork. When I look at the starry skies, the sun, the moon, and all of creation around me, my common sense tells me that I would be a fool to claim all of this magnificent creation came into being by itself, by accident, without a plan and without a creator.**

**You've probably heard it said that someone can be a very smart and intelligent person, but can also be lacking in common sense. Trust me. There are some very smart people out there, some very educated people, who've indeed been educated away from their common sense on these issues.**

**Let me be clear. I'm not anti-science at all. Yet when it comes to the issue of creation, I'm going with what The Bible says and what my God given common sense tells me.**

**Let me show you what I mean. You have probably seen pictures of the earth taken from space. In those pictures you can see how beautiful the earth is and how perfectly it is shaped. We're on a globe that is teeming with life and natural beauty. When I look at that, my common sense tells me that this couldn't have just happened by itself. In fact for it to have just happened by accident, makes no sense to me at all.**

**The earth is certainly incredible in and of itself. Yet if you pull back from the earth and look into the universe and beyond, things are even more incredible. If you like, go online and Google "Spiral Galaxy M81." It's a galaxy that we now have pictures of to study. It's 11.6 million light-years from earth.**

**Let's unpack that a bit. The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second, which is amazingly fast. Traveling at that speed, you could circle the earth over 7 times in one second! To put it another way, traveling at the speed of light, you could go to the moon and back in less than three seconds! Therefore, the distance of one light-year is how far you can go at the speed of light in a year's time. Since this galaxy is 11.6 million light-years away, what that means is that if you left today and traveled at the speed of light, it would take you 11.6 million years to get there.**

**Some parts of the universe are closer. For example, there is a cluster of stars that are located much closer to the earth than Spiral Galaxy M81.**

**At the speed of light, you could reach this cluster of stars in only 17,300 years.**

**Then there's the Whirlpool Galaxy with its beautiful shape and it's 31 million light-years from earth.**

**There are numerous galaxies called Spiral Galaxies. One of them is located 111 million light-years away from earth and interestingly enough, this one spins backwards. It drives astronomers crazy because they don't know why it spins backwards. Maybe God has a sense of humor.**

**Then there's Hoag's Object or The Ring Galaxy. It's a bit further out there. Traveling at the speed of light, it would take you 600 million years to reach. I suggest you take a sandwich for that trip.**

**This kind of thing is just amazing. When we look at these galaxies, they can make us feel so small and so insignificant. Yet at the same time, they can make us feel so incredibly loved, because the same God Who made all of these, also made you and me. Then He voluntarily traveled across the light-years of time to end up on The Cross of Calvary, so that we could end up in Heaven with Him forever.**

**When you ponder these things, tell me which makes more sense to you. Chaos or Design? Accident or Creator? The Bible says that Jesus was behind it all. The Bible says that all things**

were made through Him and I am going with that plan.

However, there are some very smart people, some brilliant people, who fly in the face of this, who do not agree with God's Word on this and who have come up with an entirely different approach that leaves God out of the equation completely.

One of those people is Richard Dawkins. You may have heard of him. You may have heard him debate the subject of creation on television or you may have read one of the books he's written.

He's a British evolutionary biologist and he's an avowed atheist. He's written a number of books, one of which is entitled, *The God Delusion*.

If you were to see his picture, you'd probably say he looks like a smart guy and he is a smart guy. He's a brilliant guy, but I'm guessing he's been educated away from his common sense.

Here's what he has to say about God and creation.

*"a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist and that faith qualifies as a delusion – as a fixed false belief."*

Notice that he says God,

*"almost certainly does not exist."*



**It seems to me he's not totally sure since he chose the word "almost." It sounds to me like he's trying to cover his bases, just in case he's wrong and God actually does exist.**

**Then, when speaking about how life began on the earth, he has this to say.**

*"But how did the whole process start? . . . Most, though not all, of the informed speculation begins in what has been called the primeval soup. . . Nobody knows how it happened, but somehow. . . a molecule arose that just happened to have the property of self-copying."*

**I wonder what the chances are of that happening. What he's saying is that a single molecule suddenly, all by itself, somehow got the ability to reproduce itself and millions of years later, all of us are here as a result. You have to be kidding me!**

**It so happens that a fellow countryman of Dawkins, named Fred Hoyle, disagreed with him on this subject. Hoyle was a brilliant astronomer and scientist. He was a professor at Cambridge and founder of the Institute of Astronomy there.**

**Here's what he said about how life began.**

*"So if one proceeds directly and straightforwardly in this matter, without being deflected by a fear of incurring the wrath of scientific opinion, one arrives at the conclusion that biomaterials with their amazing*

*measure or order must be the outcome of intelligent design. No other possibility I have been able to think of in pondering this issue over quite a long time seems to me to have anything like as a high a possibility of being true.”*

**He goes on to also say this.**

*“Would you not say to yourself, ‘Some super-calculating intellect must have designed the properties of the carbon atom, . . . Of course you would. . . there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”*

**Hoyle backed that up with his now famous illustration of a junkyard, a tornado and a Boeing 747. Here’s his proposal.**

**You have a junkyard and scattered across that junkyard are all the parts that it would take to build a Boeing 747 aircraft. Every part necessary to build that plane is scattered somewhere in that junkyard.**

**He then asks what the chances are of a tornado passing through that junkyard and from those scattered parts, accidentally assembling on the spot, a perfectly good and working 747.**

**Of course the implication is that such a thing could never happen. Yet his real point here is that there is actually a better chance of a working 747 being accidentally assembled by a tornado passing through that junkyard, than there is of life having**

**begun all by itself, by accident, without a design or Creator.**

**I agree with him on this issue and another Boeing aircraft assisted me in getting that point across to a friend one day. That plane is the Boeing 737-800 series aircraft. It's somewhat smaller than its big cousin the 747, but nonetheless it's still made up of over 367,000 parts that make it work and fly.**

**One day I was scheduled to fly to Oregon on one of those 737's. When I got to the airport that morning, I was in line and saw somebody up ahead wave to me. It was Jeremy. Jeremy was a flight instructor at Naples Airport. As a pilot myself, I had flown with Jeremy a couple of times. To remain current and legal to fly airplanes, the Federal Aviation Administration requires pilots to fly with an instructor every so often, putting them through the paces to check their flying skills. Jeremy and I had flown together previously for that purpose.**

**He was aware that I was a pastor and he'd made it clear to me that he was an avowed atheist. I had shared with him that I felt there was ample proof for the existence of God and I had tried to witness to him that there really is a God, but Jeremy would have none of it.**

**He always responded by saying something like,**

*“I don’t believe there is a God. Nothing indicates there is a God.”*

**He took the position that everything we see and hear around us, as well as life itself, came into being by accident, without a plan or a design.**

**When we both got through the line, we talked a bit and found that we were actually booked on the same flight. However, not only were we on the same flight, when we got on the plane, we were sitting right next to each other. I wonder what the chances are of that happening.**

**I was thrilled about it, because I now had Jeremy to myself for the next two hours. After we were airborne, we began to talk and I asked him how he and his family were doing.**

**Then I moved the conversation to the God question we’d previously discussed. I asked him if he was still an atheist and if he still bought into the whole theory of everything coming into existence by accident without God. His answer was “Yes.” He still held to the position that there could be no God and that physics and science backed his position.**

**So I said,**

*“Jeremy, let me ask you a question. Could you tell me what we’re in right now?”*

**Being a pilot, he gave me the technical answer.  
He said,**

*“We’re in a 737-800.”*

**I agreed and pointed out that we were traveling  
at about 500 plus miles an hour in this machine. I  
said,**

*“Jeremy, could I ever in a million years convince  
you that this 737-800 came into being by accident and  
without a designer?”*

**He looked a bit baffled and he said, “No.”**

**In essence he was admitting that claiming that a  
737 aircraft could come into existence by accident,  
wouldn’t be an intelligent position to hold and he’s  
right. It wouldn’t.**

**Then I asked him to take a look out the window  
at the sky and the universe beyond and I said,**

*“If it’s not an intelligent position to hold that this  
737-800 came into existence by accident, would you  
please tell me why it’s an intelligent position to hold that  
everything you can see outside that window and the  
universes beyond, came into existence by accident,  
when in fact they are far more complicated than this  
particular airplane.”*

**He then said something to me like,**

*“I never heard it put that way before.”*

**After we landed and I had left my seat, I was walking up the aisle to get off the plane and Jeremy who had stayed behind for something, called to me. When I turned around and looked at him he actually pointed up and said,**

*“Maybe someone did put us together on this plane today.”*

**Those are the kinds of questions that we should be ready to pose to people in conversations about creation and we should actually ask them to respond. We must put this question to them. If it’s not an intelligent position to hold that a Boeing 737 could come into existence by accident without a designer, how in the world can it be deemed intelligent to take the position that something far more complex, like entire worlds, galaxies and universes, could come into existence without a design and a Creator?**

**By the way, when you are talking to someone about this, your example doesn’t have to be an airplane. You can use whatever is around you to pose the same question. I use various things with that question depending on where I am at the time. I might substitute a car or a nearby building or a computer or a piano for the 737 because they all work just fine to make the point. You can ask someone if the computer on their desk could come into being by accident and without a designer. You’re not off the hook here just because you’re not on an airplane with someone.**

**Interestingly enough, evolutionists will tell you that all species took millions of years to evolve and become what they are today. Yet that is in direct contradiction to what we read in Scripture.**

**For instance, in Genesis 1:24, we read something very important. It specifically says God created the animals, the birds, the fish, and the plants “according to their kinds.” What that means is that he created them from scratch, as they are. It didn’t take Him a million years to come up with a fish or a specific type of bird or a cat.**

**It’s important for us to understand that God can in fact do this because He is God. When you really look at the evidence, both in the universe beyond us and the world around us, taking the position that this all happened by accident without a designer or Creator, simply isn’t an intelligent position to maintain and it doesn’t really make sense at all.**

**In Jeremiah 32:17 we hear these words.**

*“Ah Lord God! It is you who made the heavens and the earth by your great power and your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”*

**Consider this for a moment. If in fact nothing is too hard for God, why should we have a problem with His making a man or a woman instantly? Why should we have a problem with His making a complete tiger or a complete elephant or a complete whale, by His command?**

**The Bible says that's the way it happened. It seems to me that we should go with God's Word on this rather than subject His Word to the scrutiny of those who openly admit they feel God is a myth and that those who have faith in Him are delusional.**

**Interestingly enough, God can even make something new and at the same time, make it appear to be old. Did you ever consider that? One of the things evolutionists often focus on are the different layers of strata in the earth that they claim have taken millions of years to pile up on top of each other and it surely looks like that when you see it from this side of history.**

**Yet anyone who lives in a flood zone will tell you how quickly things can be moved around and how quickly things can pile up on each other when water is pushing them around with great force. Flash floods can pile things up in minutes that otherwise might appear to have taken years to get where they are.**

**In 1980 when Mt. St. Helens erupted, entire new canyons were created, canyons which only a few days earlier had not existed. The force of the eruption caused the waters of Silver Lake and the Toutle River to be powerfully displaced and to travel far beyond their normal shores. The result was what scientists call "rapid erosion" in which those waters literally cut brand new deep canyons in the area. Today those canyons appear to have**



**taken millions of years to form, but in fact were formed in just days.**

**Just consider for a moment what kinds of silt, clay, sand and various other ingredients of strata might have been moved around and piled up on top of each other if the entire earth were covered with a great God driven flood. It seems to me that lots of stuff could have gotten moved around, canyons could have been formed and debris, sand and many other materials could have been piled up on each other in the span of only 40 days, that otherwise would appear to have taken 40 million years to create.**

**This could easily explain why the fossil of a tropical animal can be found in a cold non-tropical zone. It doesn't mean that the animal was once native to that non-tropical zone where it used to be warm and then became extinct as the climate got colder. It could simply mean that the animal was deposited there from far away, due to the powerful waters of a great worldwide flood.**

**Interestingly enough, Jesus' first miracle, which He performed at the wedding in Cana, also goes against what one would see as a normal process of time. It's there that He turned water into wine. What's really fascinating is the kind of wine He actually made. When tasting the wine that Jesus made, the people asked the host why he had failed to serve that wine first.**

**You see, the custom was that you served the very best wine you had first. The implication here is that the wine Jesus made was superior to that which they already had been given.**

**The implication here is that the wine Jesus made was exceptional, perfectly aged and far better than what they'd already been served. That means, of course, that in a moment of time, He made brand new wine that was instantly old or perfectly aged, a process that normally takes years to happen.**

**So if He chooses, God can make something brand new that appears in every way to be old. He could have easily done the same with the earth. If He did, what scientists claim to be millions of years old may in fact only appear to be that old while in reality, it is much younger.**

**The Bible says that God made a man and a woman. It never says God set into motion a plan of evolution that would take millions of years to eventually produce a human being. The Bible says He made Adam and Eve brand new, fully adult and fully mature. If nothing is too hard for God, one has to wonder why people make such a big deal out of God being able to create human beings from scratch, fully mature and in a matter of seconds as opposed to eons.**

**Many of my Christian brothers and sisters have taken the position commonly called Theistic Evolution. This position, basically says that evolution is real and that it was caused and driven**

by God. In other words, Darwin simply discovered the way God did things. For them, evolution isn't a Godless thing. Rather it's how things happened and evolution was all God's plan to get things done. They feel that there is enough evidence to conclude that evolution must be taken seriously. Their desire is to see a happy marriage between evolution and theology and taking a position of Theistic Evolution gets that done. They have come up with a position that for them does that very thing. They keep evolution on the table by concluding that God did it that way.

The problem is that in an effort to marry science and theology, these folks have ignored major evidence, such as what the great flood (as I mentioned previously) could have done. This goes against the theory of evolution. They also ignore what the Bible says which, in my opinion, isn't something that we should be doing. The Bible says that God made the animals according to their kind and that He made Adam and Eve from scratch as fully developed human beings. If you don't accept that then one has to wonder what else in Scripture you are going to set aside in an effort to solve the issues of science and theology.

Interestingly enough, Charles Darwin himself made the following statement in his book *Origin of the Species*.

*"If it could be demonstrated that any complex organism existed, which could not possibly have been*

*formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”*

**I agree! In fact, examples of those species are all over the place. However, in his defense, with his limited scientific ability and tools, Mr. Darwin was unable to see them as such. People who take the position of Theistic Evolution have to basically ignore these facts or their theory falls apart just as Darwin himself said it would.**

**I certainly admit that the “evidence” for evolution is out there and it certainly can look like evolution is a real thing. However, there are too many major flaws in the theory to make it acceptable. Those flaws clearly do exactly what Darwin claimed they would do. They destroy his theory. I’d rather go with what God says in His Word concerning creation and have some unanswered questions on how things happened, than to ignore specific things God said happened, just so science and theology can be happily married.**

**Let me finish this chapter by sharing with you a few interesting examples which are indeed what Darwin would call complex organisms, but which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications and which therefore absolutely break down Mr. Darwin’s theory of evolution. They unquestionably defy the normal evolutionary process set forth by Darwin.**

**These are examples of what science calls “irreducible complexity” in a species. In other words, the species could never have been less complex than what we see today. It had to have certain complex traits and abilities in place from the very beginning or it would have quickly become extinct. It simply couldn’t have waited millions of years for these complex traits and abilities to evolve.**

**These examples directly confront Darwin’s theory in a way that science fails to have an answer for today. Even evolutionists will tell you that if they had to identify the best argument against evolution, it would be the many examples of “irreducible complexity” in species that exist. By the way, let’s never forget that what Darwin put forth is still a “theory” even though many speak of it as if it were a proven scientific fact. The following examples challenge that theory directly. See for yourself.**

**I give you the red headed woodpecker. Experts tell us that this bird has the toughest beak of virtually all birds in the world. It also has a unique section of cartilage inside its skull that acts as a built in shock absorber to protect it from the pounding it does all day long on tree trunks.**

**In addition, the woodpecker also has the ability to produce a special glue on its tongue as well as a special solvent for that glue, which quite literally saves the woodpecker’s life every time it eats a bug. As you’ll see, these things had to be in place**

**for the red headed woodpecker from the very first woodpecker God made. Here's why.**

**First of all, common sense tells you that if the first woodpeckers were without the strong beaks and the built in shock absorber type skulls to protect them, the first woodpeckers would have blown their skulls apart drilling holes in trees while trying to get at their food source of insects. It's clear that without special protection being in place from the start of the species, they would have quickly become extinct. Waiting for evolution to fix the problem was simply out of the question.**

**As I previously mentioned, woodpeckers also have the ability to produce a very special glue on their tongue. Because of that glue, when they stick their tongue into one of the holes they've drilled in a tree to get a bug, the bug sticks firmly to their tongue. However, there is a big problem presented by that glue. If the woodpecker has a bug firmly glued to his tongue and he tries to swallow the bug, he will also swallow his tongue in the process since the bug is firmly glued to it. However, there is a solution to this dilemma which is quite fascinating.**

**The woodpecker also has the ability, at will, to produce and squirt a special solvent on the glue. Therefore, he can squirt the right amount of solvent on the glue, which dissolves the glue, allowing him to swallow the bug without swallowing his tongue.**

**Again, common sense tells you that the ability to produce the solvent for the glue had to be there from the start. Even if woodpeckers survived the constant drilling of trees for a while, they would have choked on their own food and swallowed their tongues as a result of the glue. The woodpecker would have never survived the wait for that solvent to evolve.**

**Lastly, let's look at another amazing example that quite literally flies in the face of evolution. It is an example which evolutionists have simply never been able to explain. It's a small little bird called the Pacific Golden Plover. One population of these birds has what many would say is a great life. They spend their Summers in Alaska and their Winters in Hawaii.**

**The trip back and forth each year however, is something that amazes and stumps even the most hard core evolutionists. Research shows that these birds come and go from virtually the exact same spots in Alaska and Hawaii every year. Yet, they don't have a GPS. They don't have radar. They don't have jet engines or anything like what you and I would like to have to make the trip.**

**Nonetheless, every year they make the trip, travelling more than 2,000 miles over open-ocean, without any landmarks beneath them to use for reference. If they were water birds, they could land in the ocean and take a rest. However, they are shore birds and as such, they are without the protective waterproof feathers that water birds**

have. So if they were to land in the ocean to rest on their journey, their feathers would quickly become waterlogged causing them to sink and drown.

What that means therefore, is a non-stop flight of about 88 hours from Alaska to Hawaii. That in itself is amazing. Before they get ready to leave Alaska in August, they start to eat a lot more than normal, bulking up for the long flight because they will lose half their body weight flying that distance without stopping.

Yet, here's the really amazing thing about these little birds. During the Summer months, the birds hatch and raise their young in Alaska. Then Mom takes off for Hawaii while Dad stays another few weeks to fatten up the kids for their first long flight to Hawaii. Then Dad leaves too and actually leaves the kids behind!

A few weeks later, the young birds take off from Alaska by themselves and fly more than 2,000 miles over the open ocean to Hawaii **WITHOUT EVER HAVING GONE THERE BEFORE**. Even if they encounter winds which would blow a commercial jet off course, they somehow still find their way, settle in and enjoy Winter in Hawaii with Mom and Dad. All this has been verified by scientists with high tech tracking devices placed on the birds before they leave Alaska.

I was reading an article about these birds online and the author said that they are unaware of how



**the birds navigate this virtually impossible trip, especially since they've never flown it before, without any experienced birds to lead them. I can tell you how they do it. It's by design! They are creatures of their Heavenly Father Who made them and from day one designed them to be able to do this incredible thing.**

**Evolutionists will usually explain a particular bird's migratory patterns as having developed over time from shorter trips that eventually grew into longer trips over the years. However, that implies there was a way to stop and rest, or even settle in for a season if they so chose. Yet in this case that doesn't happen. As I said before, these birds are shore birds. If they were water birds they could stop and rest, but being shore birds and unable to swim, stopping is out of the question. It's clearly an all or nothing proposition for these birds.**

**In his book, *The Collapse of Evolution*, Dr. Scott Huse says something very important about this situation. Pay particular attention to his last sentence.**

*"The causes of migrations and the incredible sense of direction shown by these animals present the evolutionist with one of the most baffling problems of science. Evolutionists are indeed hard-pressed to explain how these remarkable abilities evolved piecemeal through mere chance processes apart from any direct intelligence.*

*The piecemeal development of such instinct seems highly improbable because migratory instincts are useless unless perfect. Obviously, it is of no benefit to be able to navigate perfectly across only half an ocean.”*

**My friends, many Christians today have veered off course when it comes to the issue of creation vs. evolution. They have compromised what God says in His Word to try to make sense out of what the “evidence” for evolution seems to put forth. That may even be where you are today. If so, let me encourage you to take God’s Word more seriously than evolution and by faith, trust more in what God has said than in what is said by those who call Him a delusion.**

**If you already do take a position that creation is the only way to go without being compromised by the theory of evolution, let me encourage you to engage with others in this discussion of evolution and creation. Let them hear clearly that you believe in God. Let them know that you feel God created the heavens and the earth and all that exists.**

**When somebody becomes convinced of this, their life will change and they are going to enter into a relationship with The Creator of the universe Who loves them more than all of the universes put together. That’s our goal when we share the story and the magnificence of God with others. Perhaps there is someone in your life who you could share this information with in a loving way. Let me**

**encourage you to do so. It will allow the discussion to continue and it will plant seeds they may never have considered before.**

**Like the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 8, let's all proclaim in our lives,**

*“Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth!”*

**Amen.**

## Chapter Four

### Faith: Little Word: Huge Results

*. . . for we walk by faith, not by sight. II Cor. 5:7*

The subject of this chapter centers around a single word. It is a very small word, but it has huge implications for our lives as Christians. We see this word used many times throughout Scripture. We use it in our prayers. We use it in our sermons. We use it in our teachings as Christians. A word with such a huge meaning might be called the engine that drives our very Christian lives. This little word, which has such a large impact on our lives as Christians, is simply the word “faith.” In II Corinthians 5:7, the apostle Paul says these words.

*“ . . . for we walk by faith, not by sight.”*

Therefore, if as Christians, we are going to walk in this life by faith and not by sight, we should be fully aware of what faith actually is and how it is supposed to work. We should be able to put it to practical use in our lives and ministries. Let's begin by coming up with a working definition of the word “*faith*.” If I were to suggest a definition, I would say that faith is the conviction or the assurance that something, which I am unable at the present time to see, actually exists.

In Hebrews 11:1, we see these specific words.

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

**What that means is that a person who has faith, has the assurance that something which they are unable to actually see, nonetheless does exist. If you can see it, you don't have to have faith. If I look at a tree, I don't have to have faith that the tree is there because I can clearly see it right in front of me. However, if someone were to tell me that there was a beautiful apple orchard, with the most delicious apples they'd ever eaten, just 25 miles from my home which I'd never seen, I'd have to have faith that that orchard was actually there. Until I saw it for myself, I would have to have faith that it actually did exist.**

**God wants us to have faith that He is God and that He does exist. Since we cannot see Him on a daily basis, we have to have the assurance and the conviction that He exists. We do see many evidences for the existence of God, but we cannot see Him physically, walking the earth like He did when He was here through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**We must have faith that He exists and beyond that, we must have faith that He can and will do the many things He has promised to do through us and for us. He tells us that if we have faith, He will accomplish those things through us for His purpose and His glory.**

**So many of us have gone off course when it comes to faith, including me. We feel that we can make things happen on our own. We see ourselves as gifted, talented Christians who can bring about wonderful changes and blessings in the lives of**

**others and ourselves. Yet we forget that it's God Who works through us and by faith in Him, gets those things done. We forget that apart from Him we can do nothing.**

**If we only have faith in what we can do ourselves and not in what God can do through us, we are going to find ourselves way off course and coming up short all the time. We simply cannot come up with the power or the ability or the gifts to live full Christian lives on our own. Rather, we must have faith in God, faith in His promises, faith in His Word, and faith in His abilities to do what He promises to do.**

**He says He will work mightily through us when we have faith in Him. It greatly pleases God when we place our faith in Him and it displeases Him when we put too much of our confidence and faith in ourselves.**

**In Hebrews 11:6, we read these words.**

*“And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”*

**The key is that we put our faith in Him. Throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, we see examples of God teaching us and telling us that we have to place our faith in Him. Abraham placed his faith in God. On Mount Sinai, Moses placed his faith in God. On Mount Carmel, Elijah placed his faith in God.**

**They trusted God to do and accomplish that which they were unable to see. They were convinced that what God said would happen, would happen. Yet at the time, they were unable to see it. It took faith and faith alone to get those things done. Scripture tells us that Abraham was justified by faith, not by anything that he could do on his own. Abraham's faith was severely tested by God when He asked him to offer up his own son Isaac as a sacrifice.**

**Abraham did so in faith, trusting that God would do the right thing, even though he was unable to see what that thing would be. He didn't know what that right thing was, but he was sure God would do it. He put his complete faith in God to do the right thing and God in fact did the right thing and as a result of his faith, spared Abraham's son. I wonder how we would have done in that situation.**

**Mary placed her faith in God to do the impossible and in fact, that's exactly what He did. Ten lepers placed their faith in Christ to heal them and that's exactly what He did. The Apostle Peter placed his faith in The Lord Jesus when he preached a simple sermon on Pentecost Day. He didn't know what was going to happen, but he trusted something wonderful would happen because of his faith. He was right. God rewarded his faith. Because of the faith that Peter had in God to preach that single sermon, we're told that about 3,000 people came to Christ that day.**

**What Peter saw that day as a result of his faith was a beautiful harvest of souls for Christ. It was growth that was produced by God because of Peter's faith. All of us long to see growth in our own spiritual lives, in our families and in the congregations that we serve or in which we are involved. We love to see the Spiritual Fruit born in our lives which comes from a ministry blessed by God. However, we must have our priorities straight, meaning that we must have faith that God will provide that growth. We cannot put trust and faith in ourselves alone because if we do we will always fall short of His glory. Only He can bring about the growth that we are looking for in our lives.**

**The Apostle Paul clearly states this in I Corinthians 3. He is dealing with different factions in the congregation at Corinth. Some people liked him more than Apollos and some people liked Apollos more than Paul. He tells them it doesn't matter who the workers are. What matters is that the growth comes through faith in what God can do versus what we can do.**

**In I Cor. 3:5-7 he says,**

*“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything but only God who gives the growth.”*

**If you have ever planted a garden, you have done something in faith. You take some tiny**



**tomato seeds; you till the soil and prepare the environment for growth. When you plant those seeds, you are trusting that you will see something in the future that you are unable to see in the present. The seeds go into the ground, but the next day there is nothing to show for it. There is no tomato on the vine, because the vine has not yet even sprouted. Yet you planted those seeds in faith, trusting that in time God would give the growth.**

**You may water the plants and you may do all kinds of things to feed the plants, but it is God who gives the growth. You and I cannot grow a tomato plant. We can only plant a seed in faith, nurture the plant and wait for God to give the growth.**

**It's the same thing with our spiritual walk. We have to plant seeds of faith trusting that God will give the growth as He has promised to do. I have heard far too many pastors say things which imply they have grown their congregations to a certain number of people. That's totally wrong and self-centered.**

**They didn't grow anything! If they feel they made the growth happen, they are taking the glory for whatever increase God has actually given them. Churches don't grow because of what pastors do. Churches grow because of what God does in keeping His promise to grow congregations when pastors keep their promise to have faith and correctly nurture the people, water the people, and trust The Lord to give the growth.**

I suppose that's why so many pastors who build up congregations in their own strength, find out that they really are not the kinds of congregations that they ought to be. In fact, those congregations are often pastor centered congregations when they should be Christ centered congregations. They revolve around the gifts and the ministry of the pastor rather, than The Gifts and ministry of The Holy Spirit and of God's people. They become congregations where the pastor is sometimes looked upon with more reverence and respect than Christ. Pastors and Christian leaders must make sure that they are placing their faith in Christ, rather than themselves. It's amazing how fast that rule of faith can be distorted and one can get off course.

As a pastor, I can tell you that even though we pastors are aware of where we're supposed to place our faith, temptation to put faith in ourselves and in our own abilities can be strong and can lead us off course. When we do that, we set ourselves up as the leader of the church in a way that God never intended. I've been a pastor now for nearly 40 years and I can recall in the early years of my ministry making this kind of mistake. I could be wrong, but I feel that many pastors are prone to what is called the *Messiah Complex*.

They feel that they have been chosen to be the leader of the congregation and they begin to see themselves as sort of *The Little Messiah* in the midst of the congregation. Without even seeing it, they put far too much trust and faith in their own

capabilities, actually factoring God out of much of their ministry. They end up leading the Bible studies, leading the board, doing the preaching, doing the teaching and many other things. Unfortunately, in doing so, they often keep the people of the congregation from using their God-given gifts. Because they are so involved in trying to be *The Little Messiah*, they fail in their job to equip God's people in the congregation for ministry with the gifts the real Messiah has given them.

To complicate things further, far too many congregations are comfortable with and actually encourage letting their pastor pretty much take over and do everything. They actually encourage that *Messiah Complex* in their pastor. The pastor then feels that it's their job to do pretty much everything and the congregation is all right with letting them do it. That is a bad combination for two reasons. First, it stops the members of the congregation from exercising their gifts in ways that bless the community of faith. Second, it puts far too much stress and responsibility on the pastor. I clearly recall falling into this trap in my ministry.

It came to the point where I was greatly overworked and greatly overstressed, and becoming less effective all the time. I came to the point of being burned out physically, spiritually and emotionally. I was frustrated because I was working so hard, without seeing the results I felt I should be seeing, considering all the work that I

was putting in. Yet, my ministry priorities were way off course. I was putting far too much faith in myself and far too little faith in God. I was trying to do it all myself, while at the same time, preventing others from doing what God had called them to do as members of the congregation.

Then, one December, just as we were gearing up for the whole Christmas season, I had a visit from a little nasty bug that was going around that year and it knocked me flat on my back for two weeks. I was so weak I literally had to crawl up the stairs hand over hand to get to the second floor of my house.

In fact, it was March before I felt back to normal. It was one of the worst bugs ever. There I was, flat on my back. I had to get people to preach for me on Sundays as I was out of the picture completely. Then I heard a comment that got back to me from the wife of one of the preachers who had filled in for me.

She had seen in the bulletin that a lot of activities and meetings had been canceled because I was out. Her comment was that when so many things in a congregation are cancelled because the pastor is out, something is very wrong in that congregation. I hated it, but she was right.

I'm not saying that God gave me that bug to knock me down and to get my attention. In fact, the way I was running myself into the ground may have made me all the more vulnerable to that bug.

**Whatever the case, God had me where He could speak to me because I was flat on my back and had stopped running at break neck speed trying to be “The Little Messiah” in the congregation. So that’s what He did. He spoke to me.**

**As clearly as I’m writing this chapter, I can tell you that one day, as I was lying flat on my back, very upset about all that wasn’t happening and all that I wasn’t able to do, The Lord spoke to me and gave me a very important message. It was like a text that came right from Heaven into my soul. I was sure it came from outside of me, because I would have never sent myself that kind of message. Here’s what The Lord told me that day.**

*“John, the job of Messiah is not open and even if it was, you couldn’t fill it!”*

**It was a shocking, but accurate message. I was in God’s way. I was frustrating what His Spirit was trying to do through me and His people. My priorities were all wrong. He was telling me to get out of the way. He was telling me to relax and to put more faith in Him so He could do through me that which He desired. He was telling me to have much more faith in Him and much less in myself.**

**Well, that was an important message for me to hear. I must admit that I did not want to hear it, but it was exactly what I had to hear. It had a great impact on me and I immediately started to take measures to correct the bad priorities that I had fallen into as a pastor**

**I purposed to trust Him more and to have more faith in Him to do what He said He could do in our congregation. I determined that I would encourage others in using their God given gifts to allow our congregation to grow and do the ministry we should all be doing, instead of trying to do it all myself.**

**When I started to trust The Lord more and put my faith in Him for things yet unseen, my ministry became His ministry. Then the ministry flourished and grew in a way that would never have happened had I continued trying to be “*The Little Messiah.*”**

**It should also be said here that this problem of trusting oneself too much and forgetting to look to The Lord in faith isn't a problem that only affects pastors. It can affect all Christians. It happens to everyday Christians all the time. Perhaps you are facing a situation right now in your life where you have tried to do everything that you possibly can to solve a situation. You may have spent hours doing things to try to make the situation better. You may have brought your finances and your emotions and your gifts and everything you have to bear on this situation. Yet, you still find yourself getting nowhere.**

**Perhaps it's time for you to step back and trust The Lord more in that situation. Perhaps you should pray and put more faith in The Lord to intervene in this situation. We can slip off course into self-reliance so easily. It's so deceptive. We should check ourselves periodically to make sure**

**our faith is more in Him than in ourselves. He has a much better plan for us than we could ever come up with on our own.**

**There are many examples of everyday Christians realizing that their faith is misplaced and should be more in God than in themselves. For instance, I have seen numerous marriages where one person is a Christian and the other is not. The Christian does everything they can to bring their spouse to Christ, but sometimes this makes things worse. The Christian can tend to badger their spouse, trying to get them to accept Christ. They end up constantly talking to them about The Lord and constantly pressuring them to read The Bible or to pray or go to worship on Sunday. This of course often has the opposite effect on the spouse, actually driving him or her further away from Christ than closer to Him.**

**Sometimes what has to be done is for the spouse to simply give that person over to God in complete trust. They have to pray to God and have faith that *God* will do something, that *God* will intervene, that *God* will bring something or somebody into their spouse's life that will make a difference, a difference they themselves cannot make. They should ask God to bring someone into their spouse's life that they might respect and hear better than they can hear their own spouse. When that happens, and I've seen it take place, God acts. He moves and uses people beyond the spouse to reach that person for Christ. He does it in ways that never would have happened had the spouse**

continued to place more faith more in what they could do, rather than what God could do.

Another example is when a person is in business and the business seems to be going poorly. They often do everything they possibly can to make the business get better. They cut prices and get feedback from their customers and sometimes even try to come up with a whole new business plan. They strategize. They do all kinds of work to make things go better for the business, but nothing seems to happen. Then, suddenly, they get the message. They see that this business belongs to God, not to them. Then they get on their knees and pray to God saying,

*“Lord this is your business. Please show me what to do. Please take this business and do with it as You please. Show me how to run this business. Show me which customers to go after. You give me the opportunities I should have to make this business better and I will give You all the glory. I will also give You a tithe from everything I make and I will give You the credit for making my business what it should be. I pray in faith that You and You alone can do all things. In Christ’s Name, Amen.”*

When people do this guess what happens. God is faithful. When they place their faith in Him, He is faithful and He brings into being things that would never have happened had that business owner not turned his business over to God.



**As God has designed it, faith is what opens the door to the blessings and the ministry that God has waiting for us. Our faith in Him and what He can do opens those doors. On the other hand, a lack of faith can close the doors to so many blessings and promises that God has waiting for us.**

**For instance, take the example of the spies who went into the land of Canaan and the report they brought back to the people of Israel. Joshua and Caleb both had faith that God would do what He said He would do. They trusted Him to empower the people to go in and settle the land.**

**Joshua and Caleb both felt that the people should go immediately into the Promised Land and do what God had told them to do. However, the remainder of the spies convinced the people that the land was not a good place and the people in it were far too large and far too powerful to be conquered. The people became very upset. In Numbers 14:4, we are told what happened.**

***“And they said to one another, ‘Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of all the congregation of the people of Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, rent their clothes, and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, ‘The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a***

***land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.’ But all the congregation said to stone them with stones.”***

**We know the rest of the story. The Israelites had their congregational meeting and voted to go with the majority of the spies and ignored what Joshua and Caleb had told them. The people determined it was too difficult to take the land, so they chose to rebel against God, disobeying His orders and refusing to move forward into the land. As a result, The Lord punished them by making them wander in The Wilderness for 40 years.**

**They were in The Wilderness because they refused to place their faith in what God said would happen, because they were unable to see it. Had Joshua and Caleb's advice been taken, the land would have been opened to them. But because their faith was placed more in their own abilities than the Lord's abilities, it cost them two generations of wandering in The Wilderness. I wonder how much time we each spend in “The Wilderness” due to our lack of faith in what God says He can do for and through us.**

**The faith of Joshua and Caleb was never forgotten by The Lord, however. The Bible tells us that Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were allowed to actually go into The Promised Land after the 40 years were up.**

**So we can see that when we place our faith correctly in The Lord, He does reward us, He does bless us, and He does keep His promises to us. Yet when we rebel against Him and place our faith more in ourselves and our own plans, we find ourselves wandering in some wilderness instead of seeing God's promises fulfilled in our lives.**

**It would certainly be the desire of most of us to have the kind of faith Joshua and Caleb had. Yet none of us is perfect and none of us can say that we have perfect faith. Some of the greatest heroes of the Bible found that out as well.**

**On Mount Carmel, Elijah saw one of the greatest miracles in the history of the world. Yet, three days later, he was sitting under a tree in The Wilderness complaining to God and telling Him he was ready to quit.**

**Peter and Thomas both had personally seen, right before their eyes, the miraculous works of The Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, they both fell into seasons of great doubt and lack of faith. We read in the Gospel of John that on one particular day after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, while Thomas was absent. The disciples told Thomas that Jesus had appeared to them, but Thomas doubted. Beginning in John 20:24 we hear these words.**

***“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in his hand the***

***print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.'***

***Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.'***

**Two very important things happen in these verses. First Jesus accommodates Thomas' doubts. He actually allows Thomas to place his hand in His side where the spearhead pierced Him and to put his fingers in the nail holes in His Hands, just as Thomas had requested. That's good news. It shows us that our God is a God of grace. He allows us to have our doubts and he accommodates us when we do, just as He did for Elijah, Peter and Thomas.**

**At the same time, He clearly chastised Thomas for being faithless. He'd been faithless when he refused to accept what the disciples had told him about The Resurrection. He wasn't there to see Christ and though the others said they had seen Him, Thomas was still unable to grasp that fact. He was unable to have faith in something he had yet to**

**see. He refused to have faith and Christ chastised him for that and encouraged him not to be faithless. He encouraged him to place his faith more in God and less in himself and that's what he did.**

**Perhaps the greatest example of faith that we might see from The Bible is the kind of faith that Jesus says resides in children. In Matthew 18, beginning with the first verse, we read these words.**

*“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’”*

**The faith of a child is an amazing thing because it is a faith that is virtually without question. A child loves his mother and father without question. A child will trust what his mother or father says to do without question. That is of course, until a certain age, when they start to question all kinds of things. Yet, little children have an amazing faith. Some people call it a blind faith, but it's really a totally trusting kind of faith. It is the kind of faith that Jesus is speaking about in Matthew 18.**

**Interestingly, Jesus says that unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The word “turn” here in the Greek, is the word for “repent.” It means literally to turn 180° and go in the opposite direction. He is**

telling His disciples that they have been going in the wrong direction and they are way off course. They have to repent, make a 180° turn and go in the opposite direction. It is almost as if Jesus were saying that they were operating on “adult faith” when they should have been operating on “childlike faith.” Adult faith has too many doubts and too many questions. He says they should change, turn, and become like children again, because their adult faith was falling way too short, thereby frustrating so much of what God wanted to show and do through them.

Childlike faith, childlike humility, childlike trust is what Jesus is telling us to have in our lives as His followers. As we grow into adults, we tend to lose our childlike faith. As we grow up, many of us begin to be less trusting. We only trust in what we can see. Therefore, faith becomes something that is difficult for us.

Children have the wonderful ability to trust their father or mother completely. If their mother or father says something will happen, they trust it will happen, even if they are unable to see it at the present time. That is why Jesus tells us as adults that we have to turn and become like children again. Childlike faith trusts implicitly in The Father.

I like to use the following illustration to make this point. Let’s say my son is 1 ½ years old and we are visiting the Grand Canyon. If I were to take him firmly in my arms and lean him out over the

edge of the Grand Canyon so he could see better, he would be fine. He wouldn't scream or panic. He would be perfectly happy being held in his father's arms. I of course would never do such a thing, but if I did, he wouldn't be afraid at all because of his faith in his father.

Now on the other hand, if I were to make the suggestion that I hold you in my arms and lean you out over the edge of the Grand Canyon, there would be a very different reaction. You'd likely do everything you could to avoid that from ever taking place. That's the difference between childlike faith and adult faith or lack thereof. Even though we are adults, Jesus calls us to turn, to repent, and to be like children again when it comes to our faith in our Heavenly Father.

Let me share an example with you of childlike faith that I was privileged to see in my own son many years ago. The first congregation I served as a pastor was located in New England. New England is of course famous for long, cold Winters. We used to look forward to Spring when things would get warmer and we could get outside again and enjoy some good weather. In the early Spring, in the month of March, it is typically quite windy in New England. It's a good time to get out and fly a kite, which is something that I used to love to do with my kids. On this particular day we went out as a family. My wife and I took our two boys out to fly their favorite kite. The boys were perhaps about five and three years old. We were looking forward to a good day of kite flying together.

**We found a large parking lot area where we managed to get the kite airborne and it was flying very well. Yet, as I said earlier, that time of year in New England is famous for being windy and because it was quite windy that day, the kite began to use up more and more of its string. I had 1,500 feet of string with us that day, but as the strong winds carried the kite higher and higher into the sky, it demanded more and more string from the roll in my hands.**

**In a relatively short time, all of the string was gone and the kite was like a small dot in the sky, very far away from us. The wind was pushing the kite hard and therefore the kite was pulling hard on the string.**

**On a less windy day, the kite would simply have flown nicely at the end of the string without any problems, but because it was so windy, the wind continued to push the kite harder, asking for more string, even though all the string was gone. The string became very tight and my concern was that the pressure on the string would continue to grow until the string broke, which is exactly what happened. The kite was pulling so hard that the string snapped.**

**When my older son saw what had happened he was so upset. His kite was now loose and being driven further and further away by the strong wind. It disappeared over the horizon and out of sight. I had been flying kites for many years and the height the kite had reached and the amount of wind that**



was pushing it that day, told me our kite could possibly end up miles away from where we were standing. So I told my son that we could get another kite and that we should probably take some time as a family to go and get something to eat at our favorite pizza place.

However, my son would have none of that and instead told us that he felt we should go and search for the kite. I felt that was a waste of time, but to make him happy, we started to look for the kite. We walked all around the area. We walked up and down the road where we had parked the car. We searched the woods on the other side of the street and we spent a significant amount of time trying to find that kite. All the time we were searching, I was fully aware that the kite could be miles away, but my son felt we should keep looking.

After spending a decent amount of time without finding the kite, I again suggested that we get in the car and get over to our favorite pizza place for a nice meal together. However, my son was still insisting that the kite could be found and he suggested that we continue searching, so that's what we did for another significant period of time. We, of course, failed to find the kite.

Finally, I was able to convince him that we should get back in the car and go get that pizza. Our favorite pizza place was down the road and up the highway a bit.

**But even as we climbed in the car and were ready to go, my son, in his childlike faith, was still holding onto the possibility that even though he was unable to see his kite, he was somehow going to get his kite back. So he asked me a very specific and simple question.**

**He asked,**

*“Daddy, does Jesus know where our kite is?”*

**Now there is only one answer that you can give to a question like that from your child. The answer has to be,**

*“Yes son, certainly Jesus knows where our kite is.”*

**In my adult faith, I mistakenly assumed that he was simply asking if Jesus knew where the kite was so he could feel better about it. I assumed that after I assured him that Jesus knew where the kite was, he'd be satisfied and we could move on to getting that pizza. I was wrong.**

**Again, in his childlike faith, he asked another question. He said,**

*“If Jesus knows where our kite is, why don't we pray to Jesus and ask him to show us where it is?”*

**It was a perfectly legitimate question. What was I as a father to do? Was I to tell him?**

*“No we shouldn't pray to Jesus about finding our kite?”*

**Should I have told him he was foolish to have such faith?**

**In my adult faith, I said to myself that I should allow him to pray his little prayer, even though the possibility of finding that kite was virtually zero. So we all bowed our heads and my son said his prayer, which went something like this,**

*“Dear Jesus, we know that you know where our kite is. Please show us where it is so that we can find it. I pray in The Name of Jesus. Amen.”*

**I have to tell you that when that prayer was over and I opened my eyes, I felt the purity of his faith so strongly it was as if I could almost touch it. I said to myself that his prayer was prayed so purely, and in such childlike faith that it was a prayer God simply had to answer. Yet, how was He going to answer that prayer? In my adult faith, I was still aware of the fact that the kite could have crossed the border into Massachusetts by now. So after encouraging my son for his faithful prayer, in my adult faith, I convinced him that it was time for us to all go and get that pizza.**

**We started up the car and drove down the street to the main road into town. We made a turn onto that main road and drove the distance to get to our favorite pizza place. As we drove into the parking lot, I started looking for a parking space that would be close to the front door of the pizza place. This particular parking area was quite large. There were many stores and businesses in that complex, of which the pizza place was just one.**

I spotted a space I felt would be a good place to park, and I pulled my car into that space. It's important to note that in this parking lot, they parked cars nose to nose. In other words, when you pulled your car into a space, the front of your car faced the front of another car facing you. As I pulled my car into the space I had chosen, I looked up and the vehicle that was in the parking space directly in front of me was a rather large pickup truck. As I pulled into my space, I was looking at the front of the truck to make sure I didn't get too close to it.

As I did that, I looked and trapped beneath the front end of that truck was our kite! It was being held securely, protected from the strong winds and was virtually unharmed. In fact, when you wonder how it got there, you have to take into consideration the many things that could've happened to it along the way. It could have smashed into a building. It could have been caught in the high branches of a tree and ripped apart. It could have been run over by other vehicles. But there it was, safe and secure right in front of us. Let me tell you, there was great rejoicing in our car when we all saw that kite.

Even more incredibly, that parking spot was the *only* parking spot in the entire parking lot that I could have chosen which allowed me to see that the kite was there. If I had chosen the space beside the truck, or a few spaces further down, or somewhere behind that truck, I never would have seen the kite. Yet, because I pulled into that

**specific parking spot, directly in front of the truck, I could see it. My son in his childlike prayer, having faith in his Heavenly Father, asked Him to show us where the kite was and that's exactly what He did.**

**How wonderful it was to see that God answers the prayers of his children. In this case, a child who had a very childlike faith, trusted God for that which he was unable to see and God led him and all of us to see it right in front of our eyes. That is why Jesus told his disciples, as He tells us, that we must turn from our adult faith (which actually lacks faith), and become more like children, whose faith is pure and who trust totally in their Father. If we put childlike faith to use in adult circumstances, we will see God do miraculous and blessed things in His name and for the sake of His Kingdom.**

**Let me close this chapter with a story that comes out of the former Soviet Union. This is a wonderful story of faith. I was privileged to go to Russia many times and one of my responsibilities there was to teach at the New Life Bible College in Moscow. The Bible College trained and graduated scores of students to be pastors and Christian leaders in the former Soviet Union and beyond. One of our graduates is Sanjik (pronounced San-jeck) Kukeev. Sanjik is from the country of Kalmykia, which is a former Soviet Union country located on the Northwest shore of the Caspian Sea. It's the only Buddhist country in the former Soviet Union and Sanjik was from a royal family there. He was actually being groomed to become the next Buddhist Llama of Kalmykia.**

**Yet God had different plans for him. Through the ministry of Athletes in Action, which was then, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, Sanjik was witnessed to and came to Christ as his Savior and Lord. Then one of the members of the Athletes in Action team suggested that he might consider going to the New Life Bible College in Moscow to be trained as a pastor.**

**This was a huge step for a man from a royal family in a Buddhist country, who was being groomed to be that nation's next top spiritual leader. It could mean all kinds of trouble for him, including being rejected by and cut off from his family. However, his new found faith in Christ led him to take that giant step of faith and he moved to Moscow to study at our college and to become a Christian pastor.**

**In his first week at New Life Bible College, along with all the other students, Sanjik was trained in how to share his faith with others. Yet when it came to witnessing outside the Bible College itself, he didn't want to go. He said that he didn't believe that anyone could be saved outside the building where a specific congregation met. It sounds strange but somehow he felt that the only way a person was ever really saved was to be witnessed to and led to Christ inside the four walls of a building used by a congregation. For whatever reason, that is what Sanjik saw as his reality.**

**We aren't sure where he came up with that particular theology, but nonetheless, he was encouraged to go out on the streets of Moscow with a second-year student who was very experienced and very good at sharing his faith with people. Sanjik did go and on that very day he saw someone come to Christ as Savior and Lord on the streets of Moscow. The next week, he led his first convert to Christ. Every week thereafter, when he came to follow-up with those who had received Christ, they brought at least one friend to have Sanjik talk with them.**

**Every week new people were coming to Christ and becoming Christians. By the end of his first year of study, Sanjik had actually planted a new congregation in one of the dormitories for workers in Moscow. Things had changed for Sanjik. He saw people come to Christ in all kinds of situations and settings and he certainly saw how people could come to Christ anywhere. He became an evangelist. He loved to share his faith and he did so all over the Moscow area while he was in school studying there.**

**Yet, he also had a deep desire to share his faith with his native people in Kalmykia. It was his dream to become an evangelist in his own country and he started working on that plan. Yet he faced the issue that I mentioned earlier of his home country being a Buddhist nation. Many doors in his nation would remain closed to him because he was a Christian, as opposed to being a Buddhist. Yet, Sanjik refused to see those doors as remaining**

**closed, because he was well aware of the fact that God could open any door for him that He chose to open. So with a childlike faith in Christ, Sanjik went forward with his plan to see those doors opened for The Gospel in his country. Sanjik had faith in God's word.**

**In Revelation 3:8, we see these words.**

*“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”*

**A short time before he was to graduate from our school in Moscow, Sanjik asked for something that was very unusual. He asked the staff if he could be excused from the graduation ceremonies. This was a very strange request because students loved to go to graduation. After studying so hard for so long, graduation was a wonderful celebration. It was even mandatory for students to attend. Yet Sanjik was asking to be excused. The staff asked him why he desired to be excused from such a wonderful event. He explained that it had been arranged for him to have a personal meeting with the President of his country the day after graduation. It was a time when Sanjik would be able to share Christ with his President and tell his President of Christ's love for him.**

**Since it would take two days on a train to get to Kalmykia from Moscow, it would be impossible for him to attend graduation and then keep his appointment with his President the following day.**



**The staff at the Bible College felt that was a pretty good reason to be excused from the graduation ceremonies. Yet at the same time, the staff really desired that Sanjik would have the opportunity to graduate with his classmates.**

**So they took up an offering amongst themselves to pay for an airplane ticket for Sanjik. That way he could go to the graduation and afterwards fly from Moscow to Kalmykia in time to keep his appointment with the President of his country the next day and that's what he did.**

**During the meeting with his President, he shared The Gospel of Jesus Christ with him. He also brought him a gift. It was a personal Bible just for him and he invited his President to accept Christ as his Savior and Lord.**

**The President was very kind and courteous to him, yet he told Sanjik that he was not yet ready to accept Christ as his Savior. However, he said that he was very impressed with Sanjik's faith and his level of commitment to Christ. In fact, he was so impressed with Sanjik's faith, that the President told him that he would give Sanjik free use of all and any public buildings in the country of Kalmykia to be used for the ministry of Christ in his home country.**

**Now that's what I call opening doors for someone and rewarding their faith. Sanjik had faith that God could open any door and God literally opened doors all over the Buddhist country of Kalmykia for the work and ministry of The Gospel**

**of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in I Samuel 2:30 that he who honors God, God will also honor.**

**It is clear that God honored Sanjik because of his faith in Christ. That Summer Sanjik and the Athletes in Action staff worked together to bring The Gospel to various sports venues in Kalmykia. They also went to orphanages, and retirement homes. In one retirement home, Sanjik shared The Gospel with a woman who was more than 90 years old. She said to Sanjik with tears in her eyes,**

*“I have waited all my life to hear this.”*

**Since his graduation, Sanjik has planted at least two congregations, evangelized numerous cities and villages, and has sent six men to study at the New Life Bible College in Moscow to become pastors in Kalmykia. When he left our college, he had a written 17-year plan to evangelize every single person in his home country of Kalmykia.**

**Years after his graduation, I checked and he was still on course with his plan to bring Jesus to every single person in his country. Praise God for His faithfulness in keeping His Word to us. When we trust Him with that childlike faith, we will experience things that are yet unseen. We can trust our God as He tells us in His Word that we are to walk by faith and not by sight.**

**I trust that this chapter has in some way been a blessing for you, has encouraged you in your faith and encouraged you to assist others in their faith. If you find you may have strayed off course a bit**

**when it comes to having childlike faith in God, perhaps it's time to get back to basics. May we all strive to have the *childlike faith* in our Heavenly Father that opens many doors for Him to work in our lives.**

## Chapter Five

### The New Mumpsimuses of Divinity

*How terrible it will be for those who say that what is evil is good! How terrible for those who say that what is good is evil! How terrible for those who say that darkness is light and light is darkness! Isaiah 5:20*

**The English word “mumpsimus” is an old word. Like mine, your spell check probably never heard of it. However, when you look it up, there is plenty of information on it. Its history is tied to a priest, who during the celebration of Communion, kept mispronouncing the Latin phrase “*quod in ore sumpsimus*” which literally means “*which we have taken into the mouth.*”**

**Instead of saying “*sumpsimus*” at the end of the phrase, the priest would always say “*mumpsimus.*” Mumpsimus was not even a Latin word. Yet, for whatever reason, the priest felt it was and he used it instead of the correct Latin word *sumpsimus*. It is reported that upon being shown his error, the priest said he’d been using *mumpsimus* for all those many years and wasn’t about to change his *mumpsimus* for someone else’s *sumpsimus*. In other words, he was going to ignore the facts and cling to his mistaken point of view.**

**Based on its history with the stubborn priest, *mumpsimus* later did become an English word. It is used to describe someone who maintains a**

certain practice or claim, even after having been shown that the practice or claim is unreasonable and incorrect. A modern day example of a person being mumpsimus would be someone who insists on continuing to pronounce the word “nuclear” as “nucular,” even though they’ve been told “nucular” isn’t a word. An extreme example would be the more than 400 people today who still make up the membership of “The Flat Earth Society,” and who continue to maintain that the earth is flat.

The first time the word mumpsimus showed up in print was during the 16<sup>th</sup>. Century in the midst of the Protestant Reformation. It was used by Protestant reformers to describe their theological opponents. Its first use in print is traced to William Tyndale in his book *The Practice of Prelates* written in 1530. A year earlier in 1529, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey had publicly pronounced Tyndale a heretic for translating The Bible into English so the average person could read Scripture. Translating The Bible into English was in fact a threat to the hierarchy and power of officials like Wolsey. Once The Bible was accessible to the average Christian, folks found out that the way the Catholic Church was being run by people like Cardinal Wolsey, was unbiblical and should be reformed.

In addition, Tyndale objected to the efforts of Cardinal Wolsey and others who were trying to convince Pope Clement VII to annul King Henry VIII’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn. Tyndale felt the annulment

was unscriptural and therefore in his book, he labeled Wolsey and his allies as “*mumpsimuses of divinity*.” Mumpsimus was also used in two sermons written by Protestant reformer Hugh Latimer. It was later used by King Henry VIII himself.

Church officials had one of their most infamous “*mumpsimus moments*” 102 years later in 1632. That was the year Galileo publically made his case which proved that the earth revolved around the sun instead of the other way around. Yet, in spite of the facts, the “*mumpsimuses of divinity*” stubbornly clung to their mistaken position of claiming the sun revolved around the earth. They forced Galileo to stand trial and convicted him of being “vehemently suspect of heresy.” Upon threat of execution, he was forced to recant his position and was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life. So much for the facts.

In my opinion, it’s time we bring back this old word, because it accurately describes many Christians today who support same-sex marriage. In my opinion, they are “The New Mumpsimuses of Divinity.” Why? Because they continue to cling to and advance the false claim that same-sex marriage is equal to that of heterosexual marriage in virtually every respect, in spite of ample scientific research, documented evidence, and irrefutable facts to the contrary.

Same-sex couples make the claim that their relationships, in all areas of their lives together, are

**virtually the same as that of heterosexual couples. Yet in fact, there are many areas in their relationships where that claim significantly breaks down.**

**Normal sexual relations are one of those areas. By “normal sexual relations,” I mean what a couple normally does when they engage in sexual activity. So if we’re talking about a gay male couple, normal sexual relations refers to what those two men normally do in their sexual relations with each other.**

**Marriage is certainly about much more than sex. Yet, most people would agree that normal, healthy sexual relationships play an important role in a marriage and should be some of the most intimate, safe, blessed and joyful times a couple can share together.**

**In an opposite-sex marriage where both partners are committed, monogamous and healthy, normal sexual relations pose no dangers at all to either partner. In fact, the only reason to use protection would be to avoid a pregnancy. That is clearly not the case for same-sex marriages.**

**For instance, it has been scientifically documented and proven beyond any doubt, that normal same-sex sexual relations, between two completely healthy gay men, *including those in committed, monogamous relationships*, always come with numerous inherent physical dangers,**

**which simply never exist in normal sexual relations between healthy, committed and monogamous heterosexuals. By the way the dangers I'm speaking of have nothing to do with HIV/AIDS. Even if HIV/AIDS never existed, these dangers would still be present.**

**In fact, non-Christian pro same-sex individuals and organizations openly recognize, and proactively warn people about these very dangers all the time. They feel it's their ethical responsibility to do so.**

**So, given the facts, one might assume that pro same-sex Christians and organizations would do the same thing and in a pastoral and discreet way, proactively educate and warn gay couples about these dangers. However, that assumption would be wrong.**

**In fact, when it comes to these dangers, my experience has shown time and again that pro same-sex Christians and organizations often react to the reality of these dangers with intolerance, anger and an unwillingness to even discuss them. You have to wonder why so many pro same-sex Christians keep these dangers so quiet, while pro same-sex non-Christians freely acknowledge them and warn people about them all the time.**

**I have personally researched and compiled these dangers in an in-depth study paper called *"Homosexuality: Blessing or Sin? The Facts Many Pro***



*Same-Sex Christians Are Keeping Very Quiet.*” Since what’s in this book could fall into the hands of young people, I have chosen to avoid discussing the details of these dangers in this chapter. However, if you’d like to see what these specific dangers are, how they have been scientifically documented and how they clearly refute pro-same-sex theology, just go to [PastorJohn500.blogspot.com](http://PastorJohn500.blogspot.com) and the paper will be there for you to read.

**HOWEVER, BE WARNED!** The facts are not pretty.

Although everything in the paper is completely factual and documented, the facts are explicit, and some people could find them difficult to read. Some who read them might very well wish they hadn’t. So, if you are a person who is fine with the fact that The Bible says homosexuality is wrong and that’s good enough for you, perhaps you shouldn’t read the paper.

Yet, if you are someone who encounters Christians and others who say they are in favor of same-sex marriage because acceptance is the Christ-like and compassionate thing to do, and you feel you should lovingly and intelligently speak up in those situations, this paper will give you plenty of information to assist you in doing so.

The bottom line is that many Christians have never seen or been presented with any of these

**specific scientific facts. The paper will give you those facts and will assist you to appropriately and lovingly engage in conversation with Christians and others who maintain and preach that as long as those involved in same-sex marriages are healthy and monogamous, there is virtually no difference between heterosexual and homosexual marriage and that both are equally designed and blessed by God.**

**In the paper, I make the case that the existence of these inherent and constant dangers in same-sex relationships, indicates a serious flaw in the picture of same-sex marriage being painted by pro same-sex Christians. The fact that even committed, monogamous and completely healthy same-sex partners are always subject to these dangers, indicates to me that they are not of God's design. Does it make sense that God would design sexual relations for people, which by their very nature, present inherent and serious health dangers to those involved in them?**

**Some people have argued that since the greater inherent physical dangers pertain to men, gay women would therefore be acceptable to God. Yet, Scripture prohibits same-sex marriages for both sexes. It really would not make much sense to have a situation where same-sex marriage was acceptable for women and never for men.**

**It should be noted that gay women also have significant issues regarding dangers in their**

**relationships. Different from men, many of their issues are psychological in nature and are disproportionately high when measured against the general population. They are briefly discussed in my paper.**

**I realize, of course, that people may disagree with my theological conclusions, but disagreeing with my theology doesn't make these dangers go away. Therefore, those who advocate for same-sex marriage and who are aware of these dangers, but deny or ignore them, are in fact displaying mumpsimus behavior which literally puts gay Christians at risk. One has to wonder why any Christian would purposefully do that.**

**I realize I just used the phrase "gay Christian." Some people feel that's an oxymoron and that gay people cannot really be Christians. Those same people must then also feel that alcoholics can't be Christians. I disagree. There are many Christian alcoholics. They fight bravely every day to do what is right in Scripture and to stay away from the alcohol which can destroy their lives.**

**The same goes for gay Christians. There are many gay Christians who do everything in their power and through God's Holy Spirit every day to refrain from acting on their same-sex attraction. They don't see it as coming from God. As you'll see if you read my paper, I count them as some of the greatest spiritual heroes of the faith today.**

**Being gay and living in a way as to obey Scripture in that situation is an amazing act of faith and dependence on God. It's the opposite of caving in and saying that God made them that way and that their same-sex attraction is a blessing from God.**

**Just because someone is born a certain way doesn't mean that is a good thing and comes from God. Science has determined a genetic predisposition for alcoholism, but I've never heard of any movement saying that alcoholics are just born that way and their alcoholism is a gift from God. I've never heard of an "Alcoholics Pride Parade."**

**Yet pro same-sex Christians affirm gay Christians all the time who say they were born that way. Yet there isn't a shred of credible scientific evidence to prove that claim. Moreover, the inherent dangers I've spoken of are real.**

**I have shared these dangers with numerous top national leaders in the Christian same-sex community and respectfully asked for their comments. One executive director of a large national Christian pro same-sex ministry responded by telling me that it was likely that my sources were homophobic.**

**I then pointed out to him that among others, my sources include The Center for Disease Control in the U. S., and National Health Service in England**

and Dr. Stephen Goldstone, a nationally respected and honored non-Christian gay surgeon in New York City who has written a book about these dangers to specifically warn the gay community about them.

After that, he changed his tune. Instead of continuing to label my sources as homophobic, he chose to switch tactics and make me out to be homophobic, unloving, and intolerant for bringing such things up in the first place. It was as if attacking me would somehow make the dangers go away. Yet in the end, and in spite of all the facts presented to him, he continued his display of mumpsimus behavior and maintained the false claim, that as long as those involved are monogamous and healthy, there are virtually no differences between normal homosexual and heterosexual sexual relations.

When I suggested to the board of his organization that they might include some appropriate information on their website about these dangers to pastorally and proactively warn the gay Christian community about them, the same way non-Christian pro same-sex organizations do all the time, the board did give me an official response. In their words, they said that my concerns,

*“ . . . lie outside the scope of our mission.”*

**It's shocking to me that providing information that will protect gay Christians from serious physical dangers, which they face daily in their relationships, is seen as being outside the scope of the mission of a pro same-sex Christian ministry. They warn about lots of other dangers like bullying and homophobia, as well they should, but interestingly enough, somehow these sexual dangers "lie outside the scope" of their mission.**

**An executive director of yet another large national pro same-sex Christian ministry politely refused to discuss these dangers with me at all. However, one of his staff did take the time to scold me for lecturing gay people on their health issues, because gay people, she said, are more aware of their health issues than any straight person could ever be.**

**If that's so, why do gay Christians continue to end up in the emergency room as a result of the dangers which I'm aware of, but which they claim never to have heard of before arriving at the emergency room?**

**Of course, some have accused me of being homophobic and of desiring to harm the gay community by pointing these dangers out, as if keeping quiet about them will somehow make them go away. What's ironic is that if my goal really was to harm the Christian gay community, one of the best ways to do that would be to do exactly what many pro same-sex Christians are currently doing,**

**that is keeping these dangers a secret and refusing to acknowledge and talk about them, thereby allowing gay Christians to find out about them the hard way.**

**Some people are simply irresponsible in how they go about supporting same-sex marriage. One of those people is a nationally recognized PhD, a professor of psychology and an author. He is in favor of same-sex marriage and as a full professor at Hope College, a respected Christian college, he advocates it as being blessed by God. He responded to these dangers by telling me that he had no particular expertise in the differences between gay and straight sex. Yet he is promoting same-sex marriage on a regular basis at a Christian college. One might assume that a person of that stature would have done his homework. He hadn't.**

**However, after having been presented with the facts, you might assume from a purely ethical point of view, he would at least adjust his message to appropriately include the dangers of what he's advocating and supporting. Yet, in classic mumpsimus fashion, he would have none of it. The facts were obviously inconvenient facts, which ran counter to his already well entrenched, but errant position. So like a spiritual ostrich he simply stuck his face back in the spiritual sand and politely ended our conversation.**

**To show you just how far some people stray off course, one of my colleagues recently told me that**

he and another pastor were speaking with the pastor of a large congregation in North Carolina about his support of same-sex marriage. The pastor was asked based on what The Bible says, how he could justify support for same-sex marriage. His answer was nothing short of astounding.

He said, “Sometimes you just have to set Scripture aside.” That is about as mumpsimus and unbiblical as you can get!

Nonetheless, the question remains. Why do so many pro same-sex Christians and ministries seem so reluctant to discuss or even acknowledge the documented dangers of same-sex relationships, while non-Christian pro same-sex organizations acknowledge them freely and warn people about them all the time? What possible reasons or benefits are there for pro same-sex Christians who are aware of these dangers, to keep them quiet?

Here’s my take on it. If you make the claim that a same-sex relationship between two healthy, monogamous and committed men is as God-designed and God-blessed as a committed and monogamous relationship between a healthy man and woman, it doesn’t bode well for your theological position, to then have to add a caveat admitting that the normal same-sex relationship always comes with serious inherent physical dangers, which committed, healthy, monogamous partners in a normal heterosexual relationship never experience.



**After all, if God had designed and blessed normal same-sex and opposite-sex relationships equally, why would one always come with inherent dangers while the other does not?**

**When presented with these facts, many pro same-sex Christians get upset because when you show them these facts it's like you are handing them a box of spiritual Kryptonite. These facts really are the Achilles Heel of their Biblical and theological position.**

**On the other hand, it makes perfect sense that non-Christian pro same-sex organizations would openly acknowledge and warn about these dangers. They aren't trying to present same-sex relationships as something which God has designed, blessed, and pronounced good. They have no Biblical or theological position which these dangers clearly contradict. They simply recognize the dangers for what they are and deal with them as best they can, free from having to justify or explain them Biblically or theologically.**

**Yet, in spite of the facts, and in classic mumpsimus fashion, pro same-sex Christians continue to paint a picture of same-sex marriage that is quite disingenuous and which puts gay Christians at serious risk.**

**Here's one way in which it happens. Let's say that you are a gay man who is considering**

**marriage and you go to the website of one of these large national pro same-sex Christian organizations I referenced earlier. You are looking for things to read about same-sex marriage. You trust the website to give you a good and accurate picture of what you can expect. On these websites, you find numerous articles about same-sex marriage in which people share their experiences and you learn what they consider to be the positive side of things. Yet, you'll find nothing mentioned about the inherent health risks and dangers I document in my paper.**

**Nowhere will you be advised or warned about these very real dangers. You will just be encouraged to continue your walk toward same-sex marriage as if it were as normal as can be. The physical dangers which could potentially ruin your life will never be brought up. That's something you may just have to find out in the emergency room.**

**It seems to me that it's time to call for some accountability from pro same-sex Christians who continue to downplay, to deny, and to basically ignore these proven and clearly documented inherent dangers. It's time to call for them to wake up to the facts and to stop their mumpsimus behavior. It's time that pro same-sex organizations recognize that denying these dangers, refusing to discuss them, incorrectly claiming that they don't apply to committed, monogamous relationships and calling those who bring them up, mean-spirited**

**and homophobic, will not make these dangers go away.**

**It's also time for pro same-sex Christians to have the intellectual integrity and honesty to address these dangers theologically. It's time to give some rationale for why these dangers exist as an inherent part of what is supposed to be a God-designed and God blessed relationship. Why are they an inherent part of normal same-sex relations while never a part of normal heterosexual sexual relations?**

**If that's something they are unwilling or unable to do, it seems the least they can do is to admit the facts and to warn the gay Christian community of these dangers in a responsible and pastoral way. Anything less is to choose to purposefully and unnecessarily put gay Christians at risk in ways which are irresponsible, dangerous, and avoidable. This is serious stuff and when faced with it you can't just stand there with your fingers in your ears singing,**

*"La, La, La, La, La!"*

**I certainly realize that when a straight Christian man, who isn't in favor of same-sex marriage writes a chapter like this it will be interpreted in various ways. My motives will be called into question and my sincerity will be challenged. So be it. For the record, the reason I wrote this chapter was to expose the many pro same-sex Christians who are**

**turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to the specific and unique dangers of same-sex relationships and by doing so are choosing to put gay Christians at risk.**

**The fact that I disagree theologically with my gay brothers and sisters who support same-sex marriage, doesn't mean that I hate them and it certainly doesn't mean I wish them any harm. If you read my paper, you'll see that very clearly. In fact, my love and respect for them will not allow me to stand idly by and remain silent about the very things which threaten to do them harm. Ironically, some of their biggest supporters are currently doing just that. For the life of me, I can't see how Jesus would be pleased with that kind of mumpsimus behavior.**

## **Chapter Six**

### **A Pastor Ponders Abortion**

*You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb. Psalm 139*

**The subject of abortion is one that is often very difficult for people to discuss for various reasons. It's a highly charged topic and my goal isn't to upset anyone. My goal is simply to share with you what I have learned over the years. You may agree or you may disagree with what I have to say, yet what I'll share with you isn't something that came to me in a moment of time. Rather, it has come out of studying and dealing with this subject as a pastor for nearly 40 years. I trust what I've learned may be of some assistance to you as you consider this very important topic.**

**I am certainly aware of the various arguments regarding when life actually begins and that surely is an important conversation. Without doubt science says that what is inside the mother, even at conception, is definitely alive. Yet what is it? Some maintain that it is just a group of living cells**

**that will later form into a human being, but have yet to become human. Yet, at just 18 days old, the baby has a pulse and lots of other functioning parts.**

**So if you will, let me share the logic with you behind why I have come to the conclusion that from the moment of conception, what we have is actually a human being in process, at his or her earliest stages of life. One thing is for sure. If in fact, life does begin at conception, then the moment after conception, you do have a developing living human being, early as it may be in his or her formation. Therefore, it logically follows that removing that child from the womb through an abortion, is actually stopping the life of a living human being in process.**

**As strange as it may seem, it was aviation and training to be a pilot that taught me something very practical about abortion. See if it makes sense to you. In their training, pilots must learn to execute what is called an “aborted takeoff.” What that means is that until the aircraft is fully off the ground and in the air, a pilot must be ready, for whatever reason, to stop or abort that takeoff if necessary.**

**When you look at it, the practical implication here is that you can’t stop or abort something, in this case a takeoff, that hasn’t already begun. When you look up the word “abort” in the dictionary, one of the definitions is**

*“to stop something before it is finished.”*

**So by definition, when you abort something, you are in fact stopping something that has already begun.**

**Back to aviation. You can only abort a takeoff if the takeoff has already begun. Once you begin what is called the “takeoff roll” down the runway, even though the plane isn’t yet off the ground, the takeoff has nonetheless begun. That’s why stopping it is called an “aborted takeoff.”**

**On the other hand, if I’m sitting at the end of the taxiway, ready to enter the runway to begin my takeoff roll and I call the tower and tell them that for whatever reason, I would like to return to the gate, that isn’t considered an aborted takeoff. Yet once I’ve been cleared for takeoff and actually take the runway and move that plane even one inch down the runway, the takeoff has begun. It is in process. If I then stop that process for whatever reason, I have aborted the takeoff. It doesn’t matter whether I’m one inch down the runway or three thousand feet down the runway, if I stop the process, I have aborted the takeoff, because the takeoff began the moment I started the takeoff roll.**

**So again, the bottom line is that by definition, “Abortion stops something that has already begun.” If you apply that analogy to a pregnancy, at the moment of conception, the “takeoff” if you will, a human life has started, even though the runway may be nine months long. Even though it’s early in the “takeoff,” process, a human life has nonetheless begun. A human being is now in the process of developing and left alone, a human being will be the result of that process. It won’t become anything other than a living human being and to stop or abort that process is to stop or abort something that has already begun, namely a human being, albeit early in that human being’s life.**

**Without trying to be judgmental, I have found that people, myself included, before I became a Christian, who argue that what's in a mother's womb at one or two months of pregnancy, isn't a human being yet, often make that argument for selfish reasons. If one can come to the conclusion and be convinced that what is in their womb isn't a human life yet, they can stop it with a much clearer conscience.**

**Interestingly enough and this has happened to countless couples, the same couple that chooses to abort what they say is just a fetus and not a baby, after two and a half months of an unwanted pregnancy, will later, during a planned and wanted pregnancy, call what's in the womb, at even one month, their "baby." They will buy clothes for that baby, work on a nursery for that baby, pass out sonogram pictures of that baby and tell people they just found out they are having a baby, even though it's at the exact same stage of the pregnancy, or even earlier than when they previously aborted what they said wasn't a baby.**

**Couples don't say after one month of a wanted pregnancy, "We just found out we're having a fetus." On the contrary, they say "We just found out we're having a baby." The tee shirt the Mom wears with an arrow pointing down to her stomach doesn't say "FETUS," it says "BABY."**

**So one has to wonder how at two and a half months of pregnancy, a woman with an unwanted pregnancy is only carrying a fetus, a bunch of cells, a non human, but then later that same woman during a wanted pregnancy, at the same two and a half month stage, is now carrying a baby. It sounds harsh, but for many the bottom line is that if you want it, it's a baby. If you don't, it's a fetus or**



**a non human bunch of cells. It's a double standard that people have become convinced actually makes sense. Otherwise they would have to admit that they are aborting actual babies. That's how far off course one can get in this area.**

**Perhaps you are aware of some of the amazing double standards that exist in the laws of our country on this subject. For instance, almost half of our states, 23 to be exact, have special homicide laws that specifically apply to pregnant women. For instance, if a person shoots a pregnant woman and the baby is lost, under specific state statute, that person will be charged with the murder of an "unborn child" rather than an unborn fetus.**

**However, there is a specific exemption which is written into those laws which prevents that law from being applied to people like surgeons, who are authorized by law to perform abortions. Ironically, surgeons cannot be prosecuted under that law for doing the very same thing a shooter might do, namely taking the life of a woman's unborn child. The main difference is that the surgeon has the consent of the mother to take the life of the baby and current law backs it up.**

**And yes, in case you're wondering, a number of those homicide laws specifically state that they apply to any stage of the pregnancy beyond conception. The law in Illinois for example, states the following,**

*"The law defines 'unborn child' as any individual of the human species from fertilization until birth."*

**So, if I shoot a pregnant woman and take the baby's life it's called murder. On the other hand, if a trained surgeon with surgical tools and with the**

**consent of the mother, cuts that same baby to pieces and sucks it out of her womb, it's called a woman's right to choose and the surgeon remains a highly respected member of the community.**

**In the town in which I live a man was recently arrested and charged with aggravated animal cruelty, which is a felony, for kicking a bird on a fishing pier that had taken a fish off his fishing line. I personally would never have kicked that bird, nor do I advocate such a thing, but only a few miles away from that spot, babies are regularly ripped from their mother's wombs at a Planned Parenthood facility and nobody is ever arrested or charged with anything. I'd like to suggest that the lives of ten thousand of those birds, which I also see as God's wonderful creatures, would never be equal in value to the life of one precious unborn child, a child made in God's image.**

**The problem here lies in the fact that people have been deceived into concluding that what is in the womb isn't a human being. I'm convinced that the overwhelming majority of women who have abortions, are actually convinced that they are not aborting a human being, especially in the earliest stages of the pregnancy. Most people, regardless of the many issues they might have going on in their lives, still won't willingly take the life of something they feel is an actual human being. That is clearly supported by statistics which show that after seeing a sonogram of their baby, 90% of the women who were planning to have an abortion, choose instead to have their baby.**

**In my opinion, The Christian Church has to stand up for the most innocent and vulnerable of our population, namely the millions of unborn children in our nation. Yet, at the same time we**

**can't just be *against* something. We also have to be *for* something. We can't just be against abortion. We have to be for things that will make a difference for these women and men contemplating abortion, things that will save babies.**

**We also have to be for extending forgiveness to the many people, who after an abortion, have come to see that what they aborted was indeed a human being and have now begun to deal with the horror and guilt of what they did.**

**Christians and congregations especially, should reach out to these women, as well as to the men who were involved in the choice for an abortion and embrace them in the forgiveness Christ has given us and also offers to them.**

**As a result of becoming Christians, thousands of women have also come to see that their previous abortions were a horrible thing to have done and these women pay a heavy price in guilt and brokenness. We Christians must be there for them. We must reach out to these women and minister to them and love them through the guilt and the shame, bringing them into the forgiveness and restoration only Christ can provide.**

**Something else we have to be actively in favor of and encourage, is finding workable alternatives to abortion that actually save the lives of the unborn. By that I mean that we must be able to tell a woman with an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, that if she feels she's unable to raise her child, her baby can and will be placed in a Christian home for adoption if that's what she wishes. Because of a ministry called Bethany Christian Services, that is a promise you and I can make to any woman at any time.**

**Bethany Christian Services is one of the largest adoption agencies in the country. It is fully Christian and they openly guarantee that if a mother, for whatever reason, has chosen to give birth to her baby, and would like for her baby to be placed for adoption with Christian parents in a Christian home, they will make that happen. It's really that simple and their record proves it. By the way, this also includes babies who were conceived through rape or even incest.**

**What's more, Bethany Christian Services will lovingly work with the mother from day one to love her throughout the process and give her a detailed look at all available choices, including ways she might even choose to keep and parent the child herself, if that is what she ultimately determines is best.**

**This means that you and I can actually tell a person with an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy who is considering abortion, that if they will choose adoption over abortion, Bethany Christian Services will lovingly work with them and will place their baby with Christian parents in a Christian home. I previously served on the board of a regional office of this ministry and I've seen what they do first hand. It is simply amazing. Their website is [WWW.Bethany.org](http://WWW.Bethany.org) and what they provide is an incredibly viable alternative to abortion that really works. What's more, their services are free.**

**It should be noted that as of early 2019 a Michigan court ordered Bethany Christian Services to place foster children in LGBT homes. They are compiling for now, but are appealing the case. They are still against same sex relationships on Biblical principles. This law is only in effect in**

**Michigan and does not impact their adoption cases in any other state, internationally or in private adoptions.**

**So to sum it all up, in my opinion, babies are babies from conception. As I said, you simply can't abort something that hasn't already begun. Therefore, stopping that process through abortion is taking a human life and that's wrong, especially if a ministry like Bethany Christian Services exists and will promise a good adoption plan, in spite of whatever the circumstances of the pregnancy happen to be.**

**There is however, one situation that merits some clarification. That situation is when during the pregnancy, a condition arises where it is determined that either the mother's life or the baby's life or possibly both lives will be lost unless something is done. Those times are very rare, but at that point, it must be determined which one will be saved. If the one to be saved is the baby, everything should be done to save the baby's life and if the mother's life is lost as a result, that is the choice she made.**

**On the other hand, if it is determined that the mother's life is to be saved, everything should focus on saving her life. However, that doesn't mean that the baby's life should be actively taken to make that happen. If however, during the efforts to save the mother, the baby's life is lost without proactively taking the baby's life, it isn't an abortion. It's simply the outcome of determining to save the mother's life. Some people certainly may disagree with such a choice and say that the baby's life should always have the top priority, but in my opinion, that choice must be left up to the parents.**

**It's important to note that there are surgeons who will tell women with an ectopic pregnancy that the baby must be taken to save the mother and that a normal birth isn't possible. In fact, that isn't accurate. Ectopic babies have been successfully transplanted from the Fallopian tubes into the womb resulting in normal and healthy births. So one has to be ready to say "no" to what might be poor advice from surgeons who might mean well, but who are uninformed about what can actually be done to save both the mother and child in the case of an ectopic pregnancy.**

**Let me conclude by saying again that none of us are perfect. Even though I feel Christians should be against abortion, people do make mistakes. For various reasons they later come to see abortion as a terrible mistake. If that is you or someone in your family or someone among your friends, getting Christian counseling through a pastor and a solid Biblical congregation is vital. I can promise you one thing. Jesus will forgive you. He will love you and He will carry you through what can be a rough time. He can even bring you to the point where He can use you in very concrete ways to minister to and be a blessing to others who may be considering abortion as their only option.**

**Wherever you are when it comes to this important subject, may God bless you as you continue to seek out His Will for you and those you love.**

## Chapter Seven

### Possibly Satan's Greatest Trojan Horse Ever!

. . . the devil, . . . there is no truth in him . . .  
. . . he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

Christians certainly should be well informed on things that are going on in the world around them. The Harry Potter collection of books and movies is one of those things. Harry Potter books and movies have captivated both the secular and Christian world. Millions of Christians are engaged in the reading and recommending of these books and movies for themselves and their children. This series is often put forth as a wonderful and completely innocuous fantasy that is good for adults and especially good for our children. However, as you'll see in this chapter, I suggest that the Harry Potter series of books and movies might just be one of Satan's best Trojan horses of all time.

Many people, including numerous Christians, are saying that these books and movies are filled with good reading, wonderful fun, and fantasy. Some even make the case that the Harry Potter series is actually good Christian literature, intended by the author to be a Christian allegory for The Gospel.

**To fairly evaluate this series it's important to first be aware of what Scripture has to say, if anything, about the kinds of things that are found in the Harry Potter books and movies. If they are good, wholesome fun and harmless fantasy for our children, that certainly would be a good thing. On the other hand, if they're not, it seems to me that Christians should be aware of that fact and act accordingly. So let's take a look.**

**First of all, there is no doubt that the author, R. K. Rowling, has placed the subject and practices of witchcraft squarely at the center of her books and movies. In fact, she said that she specifically researched witchcraft to make sure that the different things depicted in the books and movies were accurate, authentic and that they faithfully and literally represented the actual words and teachings of witchcraft itself.**

**It's irrefutable that witchcraft is a major component of the Harry Potter series. Anyone who claims otherwise isn't paying attention. Moreover, it is presented to the reader and moviegoer in a very acceptable and harmless manner. It's as if there is nothing wrong with witchcraft and nothing in Scripture to contradict it. However, there is actually ample Scripture that specifically addresses witchcraft from God's point of view and interestingly enough, God never sees it as harmless, fun or acceptable.**

**Witchcraft, or Wicca as it is more commonly called these days, is a pagan religion practiced by**



nearly a million people in the U. S. and millions more around the world. What each Wiccan group practices and puts faith in can vary greatly. The best way to get a grasp on it all is to go to a Wiccan website and do some reading if you're interested. [WWW.Witchology.com](http://WWW.Witchology.com) will give you lots of information.

In my research of 16 different versions of The Bible, witchcraft was mentioned a total of 61 times. That number goes even higher when one takes into account that in still other versions, the word "sorcery" is used instead of witchcraft. If you'd like to do your own word study, one site you can use is [WWW.Biblestudytools.net](http://WWW.Biblestudytools.net).

In reality, The Bible never sees witchcraft as either fantasy or harmless. In Scripture God says that witchcraft is an "abomination" to Him. If you look up the word "abomination," you see it means something which is disgusting, revolting, vile and detestable. Simply put, anything to do with witchcraft completely disgusts and even angers God. Why then is it all right to give books to our children that are filled with a positive and engaging presentation of witchcraft?

Surely, if witchcraft were harmless and without any real power, God would never have the numerous verses in Scripture addressing and dealing with it from His perspective. If you are unaware of the fact that witchcraft is addressed numerous times in The Bible, perhaps you should check out what God has to say about it. Until one

takes the time to read The Bible from cover to cover, there are a lot of things that can be missed. That was surely the case for me. Until I read and studied the passages, which deal with witchcraft, I too was clueless as to how God feels about it and the reasons why. I was clearly way off course on this subject.

As I said, according to The Bible, witchcraft is something that disgusts God and makes Him very angry. It is never mentioned in Scripture in a good way. It is always seen as something that is both anti-God, and anti-Christian. The main reason is because witchcraft, as it is practiced, is a completely different religion from Christianity. It directs people to place their faith in a false god and in things that do not come from God and in powers that although real, are ultimately opposed to God and all He stands for in this world.

In I Samuel. 15:23, we see that God gets very upset with King Saul for his rebellion against Him. In fact, God likens Saul's rebellion to being as bad as practicing witchcraft. Some of the many other references regarding witchcraft, found in Scripture, can be seen in Deuteronomy 18:10 and 18:14 in the New American Standard Version. In the Revised Standard Version we are told in Leviticus. 19:26,

*" . . . You shall not practice augury or witchcraft."*

It therefore seems to me, that one has to ask the following question. If in fact, witchcraft really is simply a fantasy and if there really is nothing to it

**or any power behind it and if it really is harmless for our children to investigate, discover, and dabble in, why does God's Word speak so often about it, giving numerous strict warnings in Scripture to avoid it?**

**Moreover, one must wonder why any Christian parent would purposefully allow their child to immerse themselves in books and movies that are inundated with things that disgust God and which for our own good, He commands us to avoid.**

**I have of course heard the rationale of parents who claim that children are pretty smart and when they read the Harry Potter books, they will be able to discern the difference between fantasy and reality. However, in many cases, that simply fails to hold up.**

**Perhaps that's why on the toy version of the broom Harry flies in the movie, which went on sale to children in stores across the nation, they had to print this actual disclaimer, "Broom does not really fly."**

**One of the biggest deceptions in this whole topic, is the lie which claims witchcraft has no real power, that it is pure fantasy and really quite harmless. Nothing could be further from reality. As mentioned above, God sees witchcraft as neither fantasy nor harmless. He sees it as real, with real powers. In fact, millions of people worldwide who actually practice witchcraft would**

be insulted if you were to tell them there was nothing to it.

For years, even as a pastor, I was virtually unaware of the fact that there is real power in witchcraft. I simply was uneducated in this topic. Wiccans or witches themselves, certainly claim varying kinds of power in what they call their *"magick."* By the way, what you just read isn't a spelling error. Witches prefer to spell the word "magick" with a "k." The reason they do that is because they claim that "magic" without the "k" is just a bunch of illusions and sleight of hand tricks.

However, "magick" with the "k" denotes something that contains real spiritual power and comes from a power beyond themselves. They're right about that and that's the problem. The power in witchcraft isn't from our God and that's why God addresses it in Scripture.

When God takes witchcraft seriously and warns us to have nothing to do with it, it behooves us to pay attention. It especially means we shouldn't allow our children to immerse themselves in books and movies that introduce them to it, glorify it and portray it as harmless.

Children lack the ability to discern such grown up spiritual issues. I watched a child about 9 years old, get interviewed on television after seeing the latest Harry Potter film. When asked what he liked best about the movie, he said he liked the,

*"witchcraft and all that good stuff."*

**My wife, who teaches in an Evangelical Christian school, had one of her second-grade girls come to her and ask if she would please call her Hermione from now on. My wife asked her why she wanted to be called Hermione. Another child called out and said the reason she wanted to be called by that name is because it's the girl's name in Harry Potter. My wife's student had been to see the film over the weekend.**

**One author shared what he observed at a bookstore one day. He saw some young children in the occult section looking at books on witchcraft and trying to find out how to say the right words to cast spells on people. As it happened, a high Wiccan priestess, or witch, was also in the store and saw the children in that section and what they were doing.**

**She went over to them and told them that they were messing around with things that were far too powerful for them and that they should stop it. She then shooed them away from the books.**

**I find it amazing that an actual witch was more concerned about the dangerous spiritual powers some children might innocently encounter as they investigated and dabbled in witchcraft, than many Christians today who are openly encouraging and allowing their children to be exposed to the very same things through the Harry Potter books and movies.**

**Jesus said in Revelation 3:20,**

*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him. . . .”*

**It’s a mistake to assume the devil will do the same thing, namely that he will be polite and knock and never come in unless invited. That’s a very spiritually dangerous assumption. Give him just one little crack in the door and he will come in ways you may regret for years.**

**Some parents say that the Harry Potter series is wonderful because it is getting children into books and into reading which is a very good thing. Reading is indeed a good thing for kids, but if what we give our kids to read is laced with spiritual poison, that’s a dangerous thing to do. Teaching our kids to swim is a good thing too, but we don’t encourage them to do it in polluted rivers and lakes, nor do we teach them to swim in lakes filled with alligators and snakes.**

**Some parents also say that they can use Harry Potter as a tool to teach their children right from wrong, because in the books, right from wrong and good from evil are clearly distinguished.**

**That too is actually false. First of all, let me suggest that there are many good Christian and secular books and movies that do teach right from wrong and good from evil, without presenting witchcraft to our children as innocuous fantasy and fun. However, what is disturbing is that if you really look at it, Harry Potter’s interpretation of what is right and wrong is often way off course**

**from what Christianity and Scripture teaches. More on that shortly.**

**Christians seem to be coming up with some really strange homemade theology regarding these books and movies. One Christian author pointed out that some Christians are basically saying,**

*"Alright, I agree with Scripture when I read that witchcraft is an abomination to The Lord, but what other reasons are there to keep my child from being exposed to it?," as if witchcraft being an abomination to The Lord is somehow not reason enough!*

**The author points out that it's as if some Christians have come to the point where they feel that perhaps God has somehow "gotten over" His previous objection to witchcraft and no longer sees it the way He originally did when He wrote it in The Bible for us.**

**Maybe it would be good to look at this issue from another perspective. Let's say that instead of witchcraft, the Harry Potter books were about a young boy named Harry who discovered that he was gay. Let's then assume that the books and movies were written and produced in an age appropriate way that presented same-sex relationships to children as a healthy and acceptable alternative lifestyle.**

**My guess is that evangelical Christians who allow their children to indulge in the Harry Potter books and movies that promote witchcraft, would**

**take a very different view of a Harry Potter series that promoted homosexuality.**

**Trust me; I can hear the objections already. Come on pastor. Are you saying that witchcraft and homosexuality are similar sins? Well, let's put it this way. Unless you can quickly answer "yes" to that question, you are either ignoring how seriously God takes witchcraft, or the appropriate level of seriousness has yet to become clear to you from His Word. In either case, a bit more digging in God's Word might be a good thing for you before you get any further off course.**

**When the Roman Catholic Church in New Jersey banned The Harry Potter books in their schools, it should give us cause to stop and wonder why. They don't do things like that lightly. When The Harry Potter books joined the distinct list of the top 100 books of all time with the most complaints against them, one should wonder why. If witchcraft were just fantasy without any real power, if there's really nothing to it, why would over 300 avowed witches from all over the country gather each Halloween in Salem, Massachusetts to do what witches do?**

**Let me challenge you to take seriously what Wicca or witchcraft is really all about because trust me, many of our kids who read these books and see the movies will be unwittingly and innocently drawn in to the spiritual dangers of witchcraft which they neither grasp nor have the power to ward off.**



**As I said before, Jesus stands at the door and knocks, but won't come in unless He's invited. The devil works differently. All he has to see is the door open just a crack and he'll come in uninvited.**

**As parents, we are making a mistake, when we willfully ignore God's Word on any subject, especially something as dangerous as witchcraft. Allowing vulnerable children to be exposed to things which God warns us against and which He sees as abominations, is a dangerous and serious spiritual mistake which could have long range, very negative consequences.**

**Based on nearly 40 years of ministry experience, I can tell you a few simple things with confidence. First, there will be Christians years from now who stand up and give their testimonies of how they were delivered by Christ from the wiles of witchcraft and the occult. As they do, I am sure that many of them will also share that they got their start in the occult and witchcraft through becoming fascinated with such things through what they were exposed to in the Harry Potter books and movies.**

**Second, I am convinced that Jesus would never give a Harry Potter book to any child to read, nor would He ever advise parents to take their child to see any of the Harry Potter movies. He would in fact be repulsed by the suggestion!**

**He would however, advise us to address these issues with our children, according to His Word and to appropriately teach and protect our children**

**from what may be the single most spiritually dangerous series of books and movies ever written and produced for children.**

**A later chapter in this book on Halloween will give you actual, real life examples, on what Witchcraft can do and how it can destroy lives.**

**Now let's get on to the claim by some Christians that the Harry Potter books and movies are actually epic Christian writing and good Christian allegory intended to share The Gospel message.**

**The author, J. K. Rowling, has been asked if it was her purpose all along in the Harry Potter books, to write a specific and intentional Christian allegory. Even though that is a pretty simple question to answer, Rowling consistently avoided answering it for years.**

**She clearly stated that her plan from the beginning was to “withhold inserting any religion (specifically Christianity)” into her books.**

**So if it's supposed to be a Christian allegory, why would she specifically withhold inserting Christianity into her books?**

**However, witchcraft seems to be the exception to her rule of not inserting any religion in her work. Either she doesn't consider witchcraft a religion or she's making witchcraft the one big exception to her rule about not including religion in her books.**

**If she doesn't see witchcraft as a religion, she is totally out of sync with the millions around the world who do and who practice Wicca on a regular basis, claiming it as their religion. She's also out of sync with the governments of the United States and her native England, both of which see Wicca or witchcraft, as a religion worthy of protection by their government.**

**In an interview in October 2007 Rowling says that the parallels to religion were always obvious to her, but she never spoke of them because that might give away where she was going, as if giving away where you are going in a Christian allegory is a bad thing. She said she had always deflected questions on the issue in the past to avoid disclosing the direction in which the books were heading. She said,**

*"To me, the religious parallels have always been obvious. . . . But I never wanted to talk too openly about it because I thought it might show people who just wanted the story where we were going."*

**I wonder why that is a problem for her. One thing is for sure. She's not stupid. If she'd given an indication that the books were going to end up with a so-called Christian focus, people might have steered clear of them and millions of dollars in sales might have been lost. Come on. If you are really trying to reach people with a Christian message, you don't hide it.**

Then in the third book, two verses from The Bible are used, Harry is resurrected and resurrects others and all of a sudden we have our Christ figure. The problem is Harry Potter is not a genuine Christ figure. More on that shortly.

You have to admit that for Rowling to purposefully refrain from putting in the very things of which Christian allegories are made, because somebody might actually recognize the allegory, (which is what those who purposefully write Christian allegories are trying to make their readers do) seems a bit odd. In other Christian allegories like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the authors never seemed to be concerned about hiding the very point of their book.

Certainly one can make an argument for the themes of good and evil being present in the Harry Potter series, but one could make the same argument for Star Wars, which was never written as a Christian allegory. As they say, just because you are standing in a garage, doesn't make you a car. Just because you can find themes of good and evil and light and darkness in a work of literature, doesn't mean it's a Christian allegory.

Whatever faith Rowling has, it seems to be an under developed faith at best. It's not the mature faith others who have gone before her, who wrote clear Christian allegories, have exhibited. In fact, she has many doubts about the Christian faith and to her credit, has been honest about saying so.

**She clearly has numerous doubts about Christ's Resurrection and whether it is Christ's Resurrection through which one gains eternal life. Listen to her own words.**

*"The truth is that, like Graham Greene, my faith is sometimes that my faith will return. It's something I struggle with a lot," she revealed. "On any given moment if you asked me [if] I believe in life after death, I think if you polled me regularly through the week, I think I would come down on the side of yes — that I do believe in life after death. [But] it's something that I wrestle with a lot. It preoccupies me a lot, and I think that's very obvious within the books."*

**Again, to her credit, that is an honest statement and it reflects that an afterlife is something she seems to desire, but has failed to be fully convinced actually exists. Moreover, there are millions of people who say they do feel there is an afterlife, but who would never claim that it is through Christ that such an afterlife is made possible.**

**If you do some research on the famous British author and playwright Graham Greene whom she mentions, you'll see that Rowling may have been very influenced by his life and writings. His works often included themes of good and evil and light and darkness. He has lots of religious overtones in his work which come from his Catholic background. His works reflected his own journeys in life that were often very difficult.**

**Although he had converted to Catholicism, he objected strongly to being described as a Catholic writer. He preferred to be called a writer who happened to be Catholic. He did the best he could to reflect in his writing some of his many struggles and doubts as well as his wishes concerning life and faith. Yet his life did not reflect a serious commitment to his adopted religion. On the contrary, he walked far from it and strayed way off course. Hence the saying that Rowling quotes above, where he says that his faith is that someday his faith will return.**

**This seems to be something Rowling can relate to well. She was raised hearing about Christianity and is still a member of The Church of Scotland. However, being a church member, does not necessarily a mature Christian make. There are plenty of people whose names are in a congregation's membership books, but whose names are not yet in The Book of Life. I know, because for many years I was one of those people.**

**In an interview on the Today Show in July 2007 Rowling said the following concerning the last book in the series.**

*"So ... yes, my belief and my struggling with religious belief and so on I think is quite apparent in this book."*

**Again, she's being honest here and good for her. She's not claiming to be a mature Christian and not claiming to have written a purposeful Christian allegory. So one has to ask then, if she's not claiming it when asked, why do others feel they must claim it for her?**

**She has said nothing about trying to intentionally make an Evangelical witness to the world and to promote Christianity as the purpose of her books. Her use of self-sacrifice and resurrection in the concluding book is certainly clear. However, the fact that she used those images to allegorically promote Christianity and advance The Gospel is not clear at all. Given the fact that she has had ample opportunity to tell the world otherwise and correct those who say this isn't a Christian allegory, I have to conclude it's not a purposeful Christian allegory at all.**

**Rowling may be sincerely searching for meaningful faith. Yet, the bits and pieces of Christianity sprinkled throughout her books appear to have come from her past. They seem to reflect more her unresolved life struggles and what she wishes for, than a clear statement of what she has found to be a living, meaningful Christian faith, that she is confident should be shared with all whom she meets.**

**That being the case, what she has written in the series cannot be trusted to give good Christian direction to anyone, least of all our children. In**

**fact, there are many things in the books and movies that a mature Christian would never cast in such a positive light.**

**The most serious deception would be how witchcraft is so positively lifted up and how that position is never retracted or recanted, even at the end of the series. On the other hand, there are many things left out that should be there if this is to be considered a Christian allegory. In my opinion, this confusion reflects Rowling's own confusion regarding the Christian faith. This confusion isn't something I would like passed on to my children.**

**The biggest problem is her "Christ Figure" Harry. As I said before, he's not very Christ like at all. For instance, the one who ultimately gives up his life for others and is resurrected, is also the one who practices witchcraft, who lies and who promotes self-advancement over others. The message to the children reading the books is that the "Christ Figure" if we're going to call this a Christian allegory, is also one who is okay with witchcraft being used for selfish reasons to control others and lying whenever it's deemed appropriate. Since these things are never retracted or shown as inappropriate in the books, they are left intact, which will definitely plant seeds of confusion in the lives of those who read these books, especially children.**



**If then we are left with a "Christ Figure" who practices and approves of witchcraft, lying and selfishness, all of which are anti Biblical and anti-Christian, we are clearly being presented with a false Christ, something a genuine Christian allegory would never do.**

**You can't redeem a book that is flooded with witchcraft and other anti-Christian behavior and practices, by suddenly inserting a few Biblical verses and resurrecting the main character without recanting all the previous anti-Christian behavior in the books and movies. She lets all the previous anti-Christian themes and behavior stand and in fact has her "Christ Figure" embrace them. That is clearly something you cannot do in a Christian allegory.**

**There is much more in these books that can confuse, mislead and cause readers, especially children, to become fascinated with and choose to dabble in witchcraft, rather than build them up in a solid Christian faith.**

**Pope Benedict XVI put it nicely when he said of the books that their,**

*"subtle seductions, which act unnoticed ... deeply distort Christianity in the soul before it can grow properly."*

**Like someone once said,**

*“A half a brick is more dangerous than a full brick because you can throw it further.”*

**Half Christianity and half something else isn't Christianity and what we see in Harry Potter isn't even half Christianity. Therefore, it certainly isn't something we should be liberally pouring into our children's souls. It's a sure way to get them off course early in their little lives.**

**Peter Smith, The General Secretary of the British Association of Teachers and Lecturers from Rowling's own country said the following.**

*“The premiere of Harry Potter the movie will lead to a whole new generation of youngsters discovering witchcraft and wizardry....Increasing numbers of children are spending hours alone browsing the internet in search of Satanic websites and we are concerned that nobody is monitoring this growing fascination.”*

**Blurring the lines between what is actually good and what is actually evil is something that causes great confusion for children. Genuine Christian allegories make very clear throughout the work that good is good and evil is evil. Yet Rowling routinely veers from this norm. Listen to what occult expert Caryl Matrisciana points out on this subject.**

*“But in the Potter series, the line is not so clear. The “good” guys practice “white magic,” while the bad guys practice the “Dark Arts.” Readers become*

*fascinated with the magic used (explained in remarkable detail). Yet God is clear in Scripture that any practice of magic is an “abomination” to him. God doesn’t distinguish between “white” and “dark” magic since they both originate from the same source. . . ”*

**One author wrote,**

*"While some argue that Harry and his friends model friendship and integrity, they actually model how to lie and steal and get away with it. Their examples only add to the cultural relativism embraced by most children today who are honest when it doesn't cost anything, but who lie and cheat when it serves their purpose."*

**Cult expert Jack Roper said,**

*"When such a hero uses evil as a problem solving tool, we need to be warned. . . Potter makes spiritualism and witchcraft look wonderful,"*

**Isaiah 5:20 sums this up nicely.**

*"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, . . . ”*

**In a valid Christian allegory, you wouldn't see what God calls evil, being used for so called good ends. That happens in the Harry Potter series all the time. Moreover, common people, who are without any magical powers in the books, are seen**

**as a lesser class of people. That is clearly something Christ would never teach.**

**Even if one were to give Ms. Rowling the total benefit of the doubt and say that this series was planned all along as a Christian allegory, one must wonder why, to this day, she still refuses to confirm it. I mean the series is complete. The end is written. She's already a billionaire with nothing to lose by such a confirmation.**

**If she had intended the series to be a Christian allegory from the start, wouldn't she at least tell us that now? If her goal is for her readers to see Christ in her work, what about all those who read it and miss the allegory?**

**Shouldn't they be clued in now so that the goal of bringing people to Christ is advanced? The fact that she isn't claiming that her work is a Christian allegory speaks volumes and should stand on its own.**

**What an honor it would be for her to be listed among the other great writers of Christian allegory who have gone before her. However, it seems that she has enough Christian ethics in her to falsely accept such an honor and for that she should be applauded.**

**At the end of the day and with all due respect to Ms. Rowling, what we have is a series of books that she intended to be a fantasy, but which are laced**

**with the reality of witchcraft, which God hates and which is erroneously presented as a wonderful, innocuous thing for all to enjoy.**

**The fact that in the end, she includes a couple of Scripture references and has Harry resurrected, in a way that resembles Christ, doesn't make the entire work a Christian allegory for The Gospel. It simply borrows a Christian image to make a point and a happy ending. It doesn't lift up Christ as The Way, The Truth, and The Life. It doesn't teach The Gospel in a way that is clear. It uses evil to do good and never teaches that Christianity is the best way to go in life. It sends all kinds of mixed moral messages to its readers, especially children.**

**So let's be very clear. What we have here may be a lot of things, but it isn't good Christian teaching or allegory. The Harry Potter books certainly fail to teach what the Christian life is all about and teaching what the Christian life is all about is what Christian allegories do. There are far too many mixed messages in the books and movies to consider them good Christian allegory for our children, or anyone else for that matter. Moreover, there are far better works for our children to read which will clearly and lovingly point them to Christ.**

**To date, we have yet to see anyone who has done the proper Biblical research, make a case for ignoring The Bible on the subject of witchcraft and**

**the occult. Until that happens, I recommend staying with God's Word as written.**

## Chapter Eight

### **A Biblical Look At What It Really Means To Forgive**

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Colossians 3:12-14.*

**The subject of the next two chapters is forgiveness. Many of us as Christians are way off course when it comes to extending proper forgiveness to others. We'll take this important subject in two parts. In this chapter, we will look definitely and Biblically at what forgiveness actually is. Then in the following chapter, we will take a very practical and real look at how forgiveness can actually be offered and put into practice in the real world. It is a wonderful subject to study and something that lies at the very center and core of our Christian faith.**

**However, if we are honest, we will admit that forgiving people for the things they may have done to us or to others we love, may not always be the easiest thing to do. Scripture calls us to extend to other people the exact same kind of forgiveness that Christ has extended to us, but again, if we are honest we must admit that sometimes we are much more willing to receive forgiveness than we are to give it.**

**It's important therefore, to take an in-depth look at the subject of forgiveness, to get a good working definition of what forgiveness really is and then to look at how the Scripture teaches us to apply forgiveness in our lives and in the lives of others.**

**We will also be looking at a number of subjects that are connected to forgiveness, such as repentance. The subject of repentance often comes up in relation to the subject of forgiveness, as it should. For instance, the question comes up regarding how we are supposed to deal with people who have harmed us in some way, yet have no remorse, and show no repentance for anything they've done. What is the Christian response to those people? What does God expect us to do and how does He expect us to treat them?**

**So we will be looking at various aspects of forgiveness. As we get more deeply into the Scriptures, we will likely see that how we give forgiveness and how we receive forgiveness in our own lives, has much to do with our overall spiritual, emotional and even physical well-being.**

**One of the things we should do as we begin this chapter is to get a good working definition of what it means to forgive. What does the word forgiveness actually mean? If we are going to really forgive someone for something they've done to us, or to someone we love, it is important to grasp fully what it means to actually forgive them. What does the Scripture teach us and what does**



**God expect of us with regard to our treatment of such people?**

**If you look up the word “*forgiveness*” in the dictionary, you will normally find a definition that has the word “*pardon*” in it somewhere. The original Greek word for forgiveness is defined as “*to pardon*.” To forgive someone then, is for you to personally pardon them for what they have done against you, or perhaps for what they have done against someone you love. To forgive them is for you to declare that you have personally pardoned them for that offense.**

**Now there are situations where someone may have done something against you or a loved one and even though you have personally forgiven them, society may still hold them responsible for what they have done. Society may consider that what they have done is both an offense against you and an offense against society itself. Therefore, even if you have forgiven them personally, the society may still require that the person pay a penalty or be punished for what they’ve done.**

**For instance, let's take the example of kidnapping. Let’s say a person kidnaps a member of your family. Then let’s say that the police find your family member, return them safely to your family, and also capture the kidnapper.**

**You may determine as a person to forgive the kidnapper of that particular offense against you and your family, but the society considers kidnapping a crime against all people at large and**

**may still charge that person with the crime of kidnapping and may make them pay the penalty for it. As a result, the kidnapper may end up spending considerable time in prison.**

**So what we are talking about in this chapter is forgiveness on a personal level between you and the people who may have offended you. Even if society determines to hold them accountable for what they have done to you, you may still choose to forgive them on a personal level.**

**Jesus has done the incredible thing of making our forgiveness possible by going to The Cross and taking onto Himself the punishment we deserved for our sins, even before we asked for it or realized that it was necessary, even before we repented or showed remorse. He has made forgiveness possible. He has done what is necessary to make anyone's forgiveness possible and therefore we can ask for His forgiveness.**

**If we sincerely repent of our sins and show the proper, sincere remorse, we can receive the forgiveness that He has already made available to us on The Cross of Calvary. It is such an amazing thing that the God of all creation did what is necessary to establish our forgiveness, even before we asked for it.**

**It says in Romans 5 that "while we were yet sinners," Christ died for the ungodly, meaning us. We must recognize that His forgiveness is necessary in our lives and we must ask Him to apply it to our lives. If we do, He is willing to give**

**us the forgiveness that we seek. However, He also calls us to extend that same kind of forgiveness to others. It would be the height of hypocrisy to receive Christ's forgiveness without being willing to extend it to others as He's commanded us to do.**

**There are of course numerous examples in Scripture of God and others extending forgiveness to people. The story of Joseph is a perfect example. We see in Genesis 37, that his brothers selfishly, vehemently, and viciously sold him into slavery; something that anyone would find difficult to forgive. Yet The Bible tells us that over the years Joseph was promoted to higher and higher levels of responsibility in Egypt and that God actually allowed him to become the second most powerful person in that entire nation.**

**Later on, we hear that when his brothers and his father were facing a severe famine in their country, they went to Egypt for assistance and without even being aware of who he was, they came before Joseph to get assistance for their family.**

**Joseph, however, was aware of who they were and Joseph determined to do something very Godly. He determined to forgive them and to pardon them for what they had done to him, rather than to punish them.**

**He actually had the authority to execute them for what they had done. Instead he chose to pardon them and forgive them and lift off of them**

the punishment that they certainly deserved. He acted toward them as if what they had done had never happened.

We see in II Samuel 11 that David committed great sins against God. He took part in the planning of a murder and he committed adultery. We also see that David was remorseful, that he did repent of his sins and he went to The Lord to seek His forgiveness. The Lord then pardoned him for the great sin he had committed. Yet, we also see that David paid a dear price for the consequences of his sin. There are times when even after God forgives us, the consequences of our behavior must be accounted for in the society. In David's case, he even lost his son as a result of the consequences of his sins.

Amazingly, God is also willing to both *forgive* and *forget* our sins, to cleanse us from them and to remove them from our lives completely. When God forgives our sins, The Bible tells us He also forgets our sins and that is very important. He expects the same of us when we forgive others. He does not want us to continue to keep a record of sins against us.

Admittedly, that is a lot easier for God to do than it is for us to do because He's perfect and we are anything but perfect. Yet, before we get deeper into the discussion of forgiveness itself, I would like to look at this issue of forgetfulness.

Most of us may say that we are willing to forgive people, but we feel it's impossible to forget

**what someone has done to us, especially if what they have done caused us great harm. Let me assure you that to feel this way is perfectly normal. However, if we were to perfectly forgive someone, as Jesus forgives us, we would also forget what they had done against us. We would look upon them as if they had never committed the offense in the first place. That's the way Jesus forgives us and that's the gold standard to which we should aspire, difficult as it may seem to be.**

**Now again, I fully realize that to forgive someone might be difficult enough and to forget what they have done might seem downright impossible. But if we can both forgive and forget what they have done against us, we will see that it is much better for us.**

**It is possible with the power of His Spirit to both forgive and forget. It's vital to see that we cannot forgive someone the way we are supposed to in our own strength or by our own wisdom or by our own will. We must allow the Holy Spirit to do that through us. Only by His power can this kind of forgiveness be accomplished.**

**Let me give you a small example of what I mean. The first congregation I served was a small one in New England. One day I was walking through the Sanctuary where an elder was doing some volunteer painting. I said something to him briefly and he took the opportunity to say something to me that was uncalled for, very unkind and disrespectful to my ministry.**

**I determined that I would forgive him for those very unkind words purposefully said to harm me. I did forgive him and by God's Grace actually forgot what he had said. The reason I am telling you that I forgot is because a couple of years after it happened, this man got into a lot of trouble in his life and came to me for some pastoral assistance.**

**As we were talking together, he felt guilty about the mean things he had said to me and he actually apologized for saying them. He asked if I recalled his having said those things and I had to honestly tell him, I had forgotten that it happened. The Lord allowed me to both forgive him and forget the sin that he had committed against me.**

**I fully realize that this is a rather small thing compared to some of the greater things that might happen to a person, but even bigger things, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, can be moved aside in ways that allow us to move forward. That keeps us from having to focus on those things every day of our lives in ways that drag us down and ruin us. God can even take the greatest difficulty, the greatest rock in our path if you will and by His power, move it out of the way, so that we can move forward in our faith and in our life. In the next chapter, I'll show you specific examples of how people have done that in their lives.**

**For us, it is critically important to have our sins completely removed from us if we are going to enter into Heaven. That's why Christ went to The Cross, to forgive and remove our sins from our**

**soul. The Bible says they are completely gone and that they will never get in the way again. God totally forgives and forgets them and never brings them up again. He casts them completely away from us.**

**In Micah 7:19 we read these words.**

*“He will again have compassion upon us. He will tread our iniquities under foot. Thou wilt cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea.”*

**This is a beautiful image of God taking our sins and casting them into what some people have called the “Sea of Forgetfulness” or into the depths of the sea where they are remembered no more, where they cannot be fished out, where they are forever gone, as if they had never happened in the first place.**

**In Psalm 103:12 we read these words.**

*“. . . as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”*

**This is wonderful news because when we are forgiven for our sins we do not want them clinging to us. We do not want them to be anywhere near us. We want them to be completely removed from our soul, thrown into the sea of forgetfulness, and removed from us as far as the East is from the West.**

**It is amazing that God uses this particular image of removing our sins as far as the East is from the West. One has to wonder why He chose**

**those two cardinal points of East and West. Why didn't he say He removes our sins from us as far as the North is from the South? The Bible is very particular in what it says and God does things with a clear purpose. He did not say that He removes our sins as far as the North is from the South because North and South eventually meet.**

**Let me give you an example. If a pilot takes off in an airplane to fly around the world, flying due North, he will fly North until he reaches the North Pole. While he's flying, his compass will read 360° or due North. However, when he reaches the exact spot of the North Pole, his compass will change and begin to read 180° or due South because he will have crossed the actual place where North and South meet.**

**Yet, if that same pilot were to take off to fly around the world going East to West, he would fly all the way around the world and come back to where he started, without his compass ever showing a change in direction. On the entire trip, his compass would read 090° which is due East and would remain 090° until he returned to the place where he took off. He would fly all the way around the world with his compass reading the same thing.**

**On the other hand, if he took off and started flying West and flew all the way around the world, his compass reading would always be 270° which is due West. It would remain that way the entire flight until he circled the world and returned to the**



**spot where he took off. It would never change. The reason for this is because unlike North and South, East and West never meet. Therefore, God says I will remove your sins as far as the East is from the West.**

**This illustrates that your sins will never meet you again. They will be removed from you forever. Praise God for the wonderful and complete forgiveness that He has offered to us.**

**However, we must also never forget that He has told us to forgive others in the same way that He has forgiven us. In Colossians 3:12 we hear these words.**

*“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

**That passage clearly does tell us that we must forgive other people in the same way that Christ has forgiven us. The word used is *must* forgive. That means it's not up for a vote. It is not something that we can do or not do. It's not a suggestion. It's a *command* that says we must forgive others in the very same way that Christ has forgiven us and as you'll shortly and in the next chapter, see there is good reason on God's part for this.**

**So far in this chapter, we have looked at what it means to forgive someone who has harmed us or someone we love.**

**We have also seen that when it comes to God, His forgiveness is perfect and complete. When we sincerely admit our sins and ask for His forgiveness, He casts our sins into the “Sea of Forgetfulness” and recalls them no more. He removes them as far as the East is from the West!**

**Now that we’ve taken the time to define and see what forgiveness is, we can move on to look at some of the reasons behind why God not only forgives us but why He calls us to forgive others. It’s one thing to theorize about forgiveness. It’s another thing to actually see the purpose behind it and the difference it makes when we practice it correctly. So let’s take a look at how to apply it in our lives and the lives of others.**

**It may seem obvious, but from a practical perspective, the first thing that we have to do when it comes to forgiving someone else, is to determine that we would like to forgive them. We must actually agree with God and say that we should extend forgiveness to the person in obedience to what God’s Word says.**

**I sometimes say to people that if you are unwilling to forgive someone for what they’ve done to you, perhaps the first thing you should do is pray to The Lord and ask Him to give you a desire to forgive them. Ask Him to give you the spirit of forgiveness that is necessary for you to forgive**

**them the way The Lord says we should. Only then can the door be open enabling you to forgive and to forget the way that God says to do, versus the way we might be trying and struggling to do in our own strength.**

**We should never try to forgive anyone the way God calls us to do in our own strength. We cannot do it. We must have the power of The Holy Spirit working in and through us. Only He can enable us to forgive the way God calls us to forgive. It's critical to forgive other people the way God calls us to forgive them.**

**You may be surprised to find that God has very good and specific reasons for why He calls us to forgive other people. Those reasons are for our own good, as well as for the good of others. When we forgive others, we set them free from the burden and the guilt of the sin that they may have committed against us or those who we love. Most of us certainly are aware of how wonderful it feels when we are forgiven by someone for something that we have done against them. We should desire to give that same joy to someone who may have sinned against us. It is so important to be set free from the guilt and the burden of our sins. When God forgives us He sets us free and we can set others free as well when we forgive them.**

**Yet there is another very important reason why God tells us to forgive others. It's because we too, through giving that forgiveness, are freed and blessed in our lives. If we don't forgive the way**

**God tells us to forgive; if we continue to hold grudges against people; if we continue to seek vengeance on our own and if we continue to have the spirit of unforgiveness in our soul toward other people, we will in fact see ourselves very troubled and potentially experiencing difficulties that otherwise would never be there. We are going to find ourselves at risk spiritually, emotionally and even physically.**

**If we refuse to forgive others, our own lives can literally become miserable. When we free others, we also free ourselves. The Lord commands us to forgive not only for the good of those who have sinned against us, but also for our own spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. The Lord is fully aware of the fact that when we keep hate and vengeance inside, it eats us up. The negativity can build up and can affect us spiritually, emotionally and even physically.**

**For our own good, He commands us to forgive other people in the same way that He has forgiven us. He tells us to let go of the hatred, to let go of the vengeance and to forget what has been done to us as much as humanly possible in the power of the Holy Spirit. That way, the vengeful, hateful things that we might hold against someone else, will also be let go and will not continue to work on destroying us in the process.**

**In fact, He warns us in His Word that to disobey His command to forgive other people can bring real difficulties into our lives. He even calls us to**

**account in the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray, commonly called The Lord's Prayer. There is a particular line in that prayer in Matthew 6:12 that really should get our attention, but most of the time we say it without even considering what we are saying.**

**Here is the verse.**

*“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”*

**I wonder how often we really consider what we are asking God to do when we say that line of The Lord's Prayer.**

**We are actually asking Him to do something very specific. We are saying to God,**

*“Please forgive my sins against You in the very same way that I forgive others when they sin against me.”*

**That is an amazing statement. If we mean it, we better be about the business of forgiving others correctly, because we are asking God to forgive us in the very same way that we forgive those who sin against us.**

**One time when I shared this insight during a Bible study, a woman said that she had never considered it that way before. What this means is that if we don't forgive other people, if we don't release them from the burdens of the offenses they have committed against us, we are giving God the same permission not to release us from the burden**

**of sins that we may be committing against others or against Him.**

**We see this further clarified in what some people find to be some very difficult verses that are just a little bit further on in Matthew 6:14-15.**

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*

**What an amazing statement that is. On the surface it looks like God is saying,**

*“If you don't forgive other people their sins, I am not going to forgive your sins.”*

**Now as Christians, we are aware of the fact that our sins must be forgiven for us to get into Heaven. So in one sense, this particular Scripture brings a lot of difficulty to some people because they say,**

*“Well I certainly don't always forgive other people. So if I'm not forgiving other people of their sins the way I should be, then according to this Scripture, God isn't going to forgive my sins and then I will still have sins on my soul and therefore I will be kept out of Heaven.”*

**On the surface, that seems to make some logical sense. On the other hand, the Scripture teaches us that God has forgiven us completely and that if we are saved, we are going to go to Heaven by His Grace.**

**Certainly He does not expect us to be perfect because we are human beings and we continue to sin even after we're saved. This passage troubles some people because they feel that they have to work at being forgiven by forgiving others. In other words, they will get God's blessing of forgiveness when they give the proper forgiveness to other people. Yet, if they fail to give proper forgiveness to other people, God's blessing will fail to come to them. They will be left with sin on their soul and therefore kept out of Heaven. In this case, they can actually start to look at salvation as something that has to be earned by good works such as forgiving other people.**

**Yet again, The Bible makes it very clear that we are forgiven by God's Grace alone. There is absolutely nothing that we can do to work our way to Heaven or to earn the status of being forgiven by Christ. Therefore, this passage must be seen in its proper context. This passage is not an eternal passage. This passage is a temporal passage. What that means is that this passage is intended by God to teach us a lesson for this life. It is not about how to get to Heaven. It is about how to live while we're here on earth.**

**This passage is actually a very serious warning to Christians. What God is saying to us here is that if we refuse to forgive other people the way He has forgiven us; if we refuse to pardon them and lift from them the burden of what they have done to us; then God will refuse to lift from us the daily burden of our sins.**

**This means that there are Christians who have a spirit of un-forgiveness. They refuse to forgive other people even though they would like to be forgiven themselves. It's a position of hypocrisy and God hates hypocrisy. This passage is clearly telling us that there will be Christians who are saved, who have received Christ as their Savior, but who refuse for whatever reason to obey God and extend the same kind of forgiveness to others that He's extended to them. That means there will be lots of unforgiving, frustrated Christians living in this world. There will be miserable Christians. The phrase "*miserable Christian*" should be an oxymoron.**

**Perhaps you have seen these miserable Christians. I have seen them. They are a part of most congregations. They take part in the fellowship and ministry of the congregation. They give 10% of their income to the work of The Lord, if not more, and they sit on boards and committees.**

**Yet they have a spirit of unforgiveness and you can see it in them. They are miserable. They are joyless Christians. This is something that should never happen, but it does. In this passage from Matthew 6:14-15 we see Gods' warning. We see Him warn us and tell us to forgive other people the way He has forgiven us. When we do, He will also beautifully lift the burden of our own sin in this life.**

**The burden of our own sins can act like a logjam in the river of the Water of Life and God would like to clear that all out. If we're willing to**



**forgive other people, he will clear it out and allow the rivers of Living Water to flow in us again.**

**Yet, if we refuse to forgive other people, He will let the burden of our sins, stay upon us. Even though the sin itself is forgiven and we remain saved, we will still carry the burden of it in this life, often experiencing a miserable Christian life. It's a terrible thing to see. But it does happen, and God warns us against it in this passage.**

**This is actually a very practical and loving piece of advice to us from our Lord. If we dwell on and focus on what people have done to us, if we harbor hate and anger against another person, if we refuse to release them in the loving forgiveness Christ has commanded us to give them, it could possibly do more harm to us in the long run than whatever it was the person did to sin against us in the first place.**

**As I said, there are miserable Christians. They've accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord. They're saved, but they are miserable in this life because they refuse to obey Him when it comes to things like forgiving others the way Christ has forgiven them.**

**They tend to be very judgmental people and they have an unforgiving approach to life in general. To maintain that lack of forgiveness they work hard at maintaining their anger and frustration. They look for ways to get revenge or get even. That works negatively on their own life**

**and in their own soul. It can in fact destroy them spiritually, physically and emotionally.**

**Only as we forgive others the way Christ has forgiven us, do we release ourselves from having to be under the burden of maintaining that vengeful unforgiving attitude in our lives.**

**We can see clearly from Scripture that it is God's plan to forgive us and to do so in such a way as to lead us to forgive others in the same way. When we forgive people the way Christ has forgiven us, we open the door for Christ to continue to forgive and release us from the guilt and burden of the sins that we continue to commit in our lives.**

**However, like I said before, sometimes people indicate that they don't want our forgiveness at all and they are anything but repentant about what they've done to us. Jesus says to forgive them anyway. We often fail to see what a blessing it is to us when we forgive others. By doing so we receive the blessing that comes from us releasing all the anger and vengeance and hatred that might be accumulating in our life against others.**

**Even if they are unaware of that forgiveness for them or if they've told us that they do not want our forgiveness, we can still forgive them. When we do, as it says in Proverbs 25: 21-22, we heap burning coals on them and we give them a wonderful witness of God's Love.**

**As I said at the beginning of the chapter, if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that many of us have limitations when it comes to forgiveness. We are often more willing to receive forgiveness than we are to give it. We expect to get forgiveness in the very same circumstances in which we refuse to give it to others. So we have a number of questions for The Lord that are very real, questions that we would like to ask Him about the whole subject of forgiveness.**

**We'd like to ask Him things like,**

*“When do we stop forgiving someone? How many times do we have to forgive someone? How many times do we have to put up with someone's bad behavior before we can really say, I'm not going to forgive you anymore? If a person shows no repentance and no remorse do I still have to forgive them?”*

**We've already touched on that last question in this chapter and the answer to that one is “Yes.” The Lord does desire us to forgive other people, even if they aren't repentant. The reason is that it's a great witness for God and perhaps more important, it releases us from keeping the hate and anger and frustration inside that goes with an unforgiving attitude and spirit.**

**This, of course, never means that we are supposed to allow people to walk all over us and use us for a spiritual, physical, and or emotional doormat.**

**We should always protect ourselves from further harm from somebody who has harmed us. Yet, we can still forgive them if we choose to and that is what God chooses for us. We can write them a letter or tell them personally that we have forgiven them, even if it's poorly received.**

**However, questions like how many times we should forgive someone still linger. Interestingly enough, we're not the only ones who have asked that question. The Apostle Peter had that very same question and he brought it to Jesus one day. We see this exchange recorded between Jesus and Peter in Matthew 18:21-22. Listen to what Peter said to Jesus.**

*“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him. I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”*

**It seems fairly obvious that Peter must have been dealing with someone who had offended him more than once. So he went to Jesus for His advice. He was basically saying to Jesus,**

*“How many times does somebody have to sin against me before I can stop forgiving him and instead, really hold it against him?”*

**Peter actually offered the suggestion of forgiving someone seven times. My guess is that maybe the person Peter was dealing with had just sinned against him for the eighth time. He was clearly in favor of setting some limits on**

**forgiveness and drawing some lines in the sand. He was, after all, willing to forgive seven times and was asking for Jesus' blessing to withhold his forgiveness on the eighth time.**

**From a legal standpoint, Peter's offer was actually very generous. According to Jewish law you only had to forgive someone three times. After the third time you could hold it against them and stop forgiving them.**

**Peter was actually offering twice the legal limit, plus one. I assume Peter was waiting for encouragement from Jesus. My guess is that Peter was probably expecting Jesus to say something like,**

*“Peter, what a generous offer you are making. You are offering to forgive someone twice the legal limit, plus one more time because you are such a good person.”*

**However, Peter was in for a big surprise, because Jesus said,**

*“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”*

**Of course, 70 times 7 is 490, but these numbers are really symbolic. 70 times 7 was symbolic of infinity. It meant there really is no limit to Christ's forgiveness that we extend to others. As I said, Peter was probably expecting a different answer from Jesus.**

**Again, we must protect ourselves and our family from being continually offended and abused by someone. If someone really is sincere about seeking forgiveness, the chances are they will stop doing whatever it was they asked forgiveness for in the first place.**

**However, if we determine their request for forgiveness is insincere or it's something they are using to further manipulate us, we can still forgive them, but then we should protect ourselves against any further offense they may cause us.**

**All right. Enough theory. We have taken a good look at what forgiveness is, how it's defined Biblically and when and how we can apply it in our lives.**

**Now it's time for the practical part of forgiveness. We can talk all day about what forgiveness is and theorize when and where to apply it, but actually practicing it and applying in specific situations is what counts.**

**In the next chapter, we'll look at this closely. I've always been one who feels that it's one thing to teach the theory of something, but unless you give practical examples of how the theory works in real life, you haven't done much good. So please turn over to the next chapter and you'll see a number of real life, down to earth examples of forgiveness extended and applied in various situations and circumstances.**

## Chapter Nine

### Putting Forgiveness Into Practice

*When you are praying and you remember that you are angry with another person about something, forgive that person. Forgive them so that your Father in heaven will also forgive your sins. Mark 11:25*

In the previous chapter, we looked at God's Word and got a good picture and definition of what it means to forgive someone. We saw that Christ has called us to forgive others in the very same way that He has forgiven us. We said that it is not always as easy to extend forgiveness as it is to receive it, but it is something God has commanded us to do, both for the good of the person being forgiven and the person who is giving the forgiveness. We saw that our own physical emotional and spiritual well-being is often tied directly to how willing we are to forgive those who have sinned against us. God has made it crystal clear in His Word that He has made forgiveness possible for us and that we are to follow in His footsteps and extend forgiveness to others.

We've come to the point now where we should have the theory down pretty well. Therefore, it's time to look at how one can take the theory and the theology of forgiveness and put it into practice in our lives and in the lives of others. It's one thing to learn something in theory. It's quite another thing to take that theory and actually put it into practice. Of course, one of the best ways to learn how to do

**something is by observing the example of others. In the case of forgiveness, we of course have the example of our Lord Jesus Christ on The Cross at Calvary, taking the punishment for our sins onto Himself. He has told us that our forgiveness is now possible through His Grace and He has told us to extend that kind of forgiveness to other people.**

**Therefore it is important that we look at examples of how people have done just that, extending forgiveness to others in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of The Holy Spirit working in them. In this chapter, we are going to take a look at some amazing real life situations where forgiveness has been applied according to The Scriptures.**

**All the examples that I will be sharing with you are actual examples of forgiveness that have happened in our time. They are not ancient, but are current. They are examples of how Christians have taken what Christ has said about forgiveness and applied it to their lives and the lives of others. By taking the time to see how other brothers and sisters in Christ have extended the Grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to others, we can learn, we can be encouraged and we can be assured that we can do the same.**

**The first involves Pope John Paul II. As you may be aware, back in May of 1981, a man tried to assassinate Pope John Paul II. He shot him a number of times which necessitated major surgery and a long recovery.**



**After he recovered and two days after Christmas, the Pope made a special trip to the prison cell of his convicted, would-be assassin. He spent 20 minutes with the man who shot him. The Pope told him that he had pardoned him. He told him that he forgave him. The Pope demonstrated an amazing example of extending the forgiveness of Christ to someone who had greatly harmed him.**

**It doesn't matter what you feel about the Roman Catholic Church. It doesn't matter what you feel about the Papacy itself. What Pope John Paul II did was clearly a Christian and Christ-like thing to do. He did not have to do it that way. He could have announced in the papers or through the media that he had forgiven the man. But he determined to go to the man himself, face to face and let him look into his own eyes and see that he had been forgiven. You can read about the visit by Pope John Paul II to the prison cell of his would-be assassin on the Internet and you can see actual official pictures of the Pope spending time with this man. What the Pope did that day was to extend forgiveness to a man who had caused him great harm. Doing so was a tremendous witness to that man, and to the world. It certainly lifted a great burden from the Pope to forgive this man as Christ commanded us to do. Continuing to harbor the anger and hate which can build up in such a situation would be detrimental to anyone under those circumstances.**

**Let me share a couple of other stories with you that I am personally familiar with as they happened**

while serving my first congregation in New England. A man who was part of another congregation in the area was on a business trip to another part of our country. While he was away, he received a phone call telling him that both his parents had been murdered in the backyard of their house by the man who lived next to them. When the man found out that his parents had been murdered, he immediately came home and went through all of the things that he had to go through to deal with this very difficult situation.

However, once all of those things had been done, he determined to do something that he felt was absolutely necessary to do as a Christian. The neighbor who had committed the murders was in jail. However, this man determined to do an incredible thing. He invited the murderer's family to his home for a meal together. It was his goal to bring this family together around his table and to explain to them that he had forgiven their husband and father and that he did not hold any animosity toward them.

Now again, this is an amazing thing to do because he did not have to do it that way. He could've written them a note or a letter and told them as much. Yet, he insisted that as a Christian, he should bring this family into his home and explain to them that what their husband and father had done wasn't their fault and it was his desire to extend his forgiveness in the name of Christ.

**Some of us would say that we could never do such a thing. Well, with Christ's assistance, we could and we should. Again, doing so lifted a great burden from the man who lost his parents and was a great spiritual and Christian witness to the murderer himself and to his family.**

**The next story of forgiveness is about a young couple in New England who were friends of ours. They were trying to start their family and had determined it was time to have children. However, as much as they tried, the wife seemed to be unable to get pregnant. She went through a number of tests to find out what the problem might be. She was told that there were some physical issues that were preventing her from becoming pregnant. She was also told that these issues would always prevent her from becoming pregnant. Moreover, she was told that these issues would complicate her health in general and that it would be necessary for her to have a hysterectomy, just for her to have a normal healthy life.**

**They were encouraged to consider adopting children as a good way to start their family, which they were open to doing. After looking at all of the options presented to them by the experts, they determined that adoption would be the way to have their family and the wife prepared to have the hysterectomy to correct her own situation. She had the hysterectomy. The surgery went very well and she was on the road to recovery. Then the tests came back from the laboratory. They showed**

**without any doubt that at the time of the surgery, she was already pregnant.**

**This was a horrible mistake, that should never have happened! This was something that not only took away their unborn child, but also took away their ability to ever have children again. The fact that she was already pregnant should have been noticed by the professionals who were dealing with her, but they totally missed it and as a result, this young couple was greatly harmed.**

**However, as Christians, they made the determination together to forgive those who had made this horrible mistake. They made it clear that they were Christians and that we all make mistakes. They were sure that this had not been done on purpose to harm them. It was a mistake and they determined to forgive those who had done this to them and chose not to sue anyone. They would not seek retribution.**

**By forgiving those who had done this to them, they were making a great Christian witness and at the same time they were relieved from a tremendous burden of anger and bitterness that could build up and do them great harm. What a wonderful example of forgiveness and Christian love on the part of this couple.**

**As we discussed in the last chapter, God tells us to forgive for very specific reasons, both to be a blessing to those we forgive and to receive the blessing in our own lives of letting go of the hatred and the vengeance that can build up inside of us.**

**Try to fathom what it would have been like for the Pope or my friends to keep the anger and hatred inside themselves that may have built up for years and years. It could have ended up doing more damage than the problems that happened in the first place. Never forget that forgiveness is a blessing to those who receive it and perhaps more important, to those who give it.**

**At this point, I would like to share a very personal story with you regarding the subject of forgiveness. I feel it's important to do this because when I'm writing about a subject like forgiveness, you should be aware that I too have to do my best to practice what I preach.**

**This story is something that happened to me, and my wife Barbara. It has to do with our daughter Emily. After having two biological sons of our own, we felt that The Lord was calling us to adopt a little girl. The Lord opened all of the doors for us to do so and we adopted Emily from Korea when she was 2 1/2 years old. Emily grew up in our home with her two brothers and we had a wonderful family together. We were so thankful that she had come to be a part of our family.**

**However, when she was about 14, she started to show signs of rebellion. We found out that when they become teenagers, some adopted children start to struggle greatly with the issue of being abandoned by their parents. They feel that their biological parents should have kept them. They begin to feel that that if they were worth keeping**

and worth loving, their parents would have never given them up for adoption in the first place.

As a result, they can develop a deep sense of worthlessness and the bottom drops out of their self-esteem and value as a person. They begin to feel that they are unworthy of love. They began to feel that they are unworthy of being in a family that loves them and they begin to do things to rebel against that family. They begin to associate with people who will do them more harm than good because, deep down inside, on an unconscious level, they feel that this is what they really deserve.

This is exactly what we saw begin to happen with Emily. One day my wife Barbara was talking on the phone and had to have a piece of paper to write down a message. One of Emily's school notebooks was nearby, so my wife picked it up to get a piece of paper out of it and as she did, a rather suspicious looking letter fell out onto the floor.

Upon further examination, we found out that this letter clearly indicated that Emily had been involved with a number of people who we discovered were involved in numerous bad things. When we spoke to Emily about what we had learned, she became very defiant, claiming that we had no right to ask her these kinds of questions. She said her life was her life and we had nothing to do with it.

She continued to associate more and more often with these troubling people and began to

disassociate more and more with us. We later found she had been sneaking out of the house after we had turned in, staying out most of the night with her new so-called “friends.” She would then sneak back into the house an hour or so before she had to go to school.

This of course was very difficult on her physically and caused her studies to decline. Every time we tried to talk with her about these problems, she became more and more defiant. Her rebellion against us as her family was growing.

At times, she would disappear for four or five days. We were unaware of where she was or what she was doing. Each time we sent the police to try to locate her and each time they found her and brought her home. She was very upset by this and continued to become more rebellious in her behavior.

To complicate matters, we found out that she was associating with gangs in our area and these gangs were involved in committing robberies and other crimes. She actually became the girlfriend of the gang leader. Unfortunately, he abused her sexually, and took advantage of her in other ways. When we spoke with her she was very angry and very rebellious. She said some very hateful and terrible things to us. She told us that we were not her family. She said the gang was her family and she preferred to live with them. She told us that we had never ever really been her family. She told us

**that she hated us, and more than once, she threatened to murder us. One day she said to us,**

*“You tell me what is going to stop me from going into your room at three o’clock in the morning and putting a knife right in your chest!”*

**Obviously, this was a very difficult time for all of us. Yet, during this time, my wife and I stood together as one in what we were doing to deal with our daughter. We never fought about it. We prayed about it. We worked through these things together in The Lord. We never allowed the devil to put a wedge in our marriage and to get between us. We stood firm in Christ as a married couple, took all of the big knives out of the kitchen and looked to The Lord to give us a solution.**

**We prayed and we sought counsel and wisdom from the Scriptures and from our friends and colleagues around the country. We researched many Christian ministries that focused on dealing with rebellious young people. Thankfully, she never became addicted to drugs or alcohol, but she was definitely addicted to rebellion and we looked for a ministry that had expertise in that area and could assist us.**

**After much research and prayer, we chose Teen Challenge to be the ministry through which we would minister to our daughter. You may have heard of Teen Challenge. It is a worldwide ministry that began back in the 1960s in New York City. It specializes in dealing with people who have been involved in gangs, specifically those who are**



**addicted to drugs and alcohol as well as those who are addicted to rebellious behavior.**

**Their record of ministry was a good one. 88% of all troubled youth who went into that ministry's program for assistance, were still free of their problems five years after they left the program. It was a 15-month live-in program. She would be given her schooling as well as counseling and ministry for her difficulties. Their facility was located about three hours from our home. We had to take her there against her will as she was very uncooperative. The program required that as part of her ongoing counseling, parents had to visit with their children on a regular basis, which we did. So we were able to visit with Emily and be a part of her counseling and progress.**

**Her progress, however, was very slow because she hated being there and was very uncooperative with the staff. That is normal behavior for young people who are in rebellion, but the staff was used to it and they loved the kids through it. After she had been there for about five months, she told us that one morning she was up doing some chores. Her chore that day was to sweep the floors. As she was sweeping the floor, the broom she was using slipped and went out from under her. She fell flat on her face on the floor.**

**She later told us that as she was lying there on the floor, it dawned on her that it was about seven o'clock in the morning, she was in a place she hated, and she was there as a result of her own**

**behavior. It hit her that something had to be wrong. That was the beginning of a turning point for Emily.**

**She stayed in the program and graduated 10 months later. During her time at Teen Challenge, she opened her life once again to God's Word and repented of what she had done. She began to study The Bible and rededicated herself to Christ. We were so thrilled and so very thankful to God for this miraculous change in our daughter.**

**After graduating from the program in December, she was able to be home for Christmas and she came back to live with us. She even went with us on a mission trip to Moscow. We were able to visit with a Teen Challenge ministry in Moscow where she gave witness to her life and the changes that Christ had made in her difficult situation. That was in March of 2003.**

**When we returned from Russia, she continued to live with us, but unfortunately, the devil was not done tempting her and trying to destroy her life. By May we saw signs that perhaps she was starting to slip back into her old ways, being tempted once again to be involved with the wrong kind of people.**

**It was horrible to even consider the fact that perhaps she was beginning to slip again, but in fact, that is exactly what was taking place. By the end of May, we had to confront her once again about her behavior and all over again, we received the defiance, the hatred, and the rebellion.**

**Unfortunately, she was now in that small minority of only 12%, who after graduating from Teen Challenge, continued to have the same problems they had in the first place.**

**However, we found out that Teen Challenge has a special program designed for those who have been in the program previously, who graduated and who then got back into trouble. It was a much shorter program, and we felt that it would be good thing for her to go back with the people who had been so meaningful in her life. This would allow her to once again receive the kind of ministry that had made such a difference before.**

**Once again, we had to take her by force and against her will to the place where she would be staying. However, things had changed at the facility in Florida, which was closer to our home. The directors had moved to become the directors of a different facility in Alabama, nearly 600 miles from our home. However, they were very willing to take her back, to work with her, and to do all that they could to minister to her once again.**

**It was a very difficult trip. Right before we left, she tried to run away and I had to physically chase her down, tackle her, and force her to get in the car. Since she threatened to jump out at any red light or stop street, I had to literally sit on her in the back seat while my wife drove the car. After a few hours, she fell asleep and things were a bit easier. However, we left at 9:30 P. M. for a 9 ½ hour drive and we couldn't stop for anything to eat because**

she threatened to tell people to call 911 because she was being abducted. Even when we stopped to get gas, I had to physically restrain her from jumping out of the car and screaming at people to call 911.

By God's grace we made it to the facility at about 7:00 A. M. However, she told us that when she got there she would defy us completely and would run away from the facility as soon as she had the chance. She made good on promise as soon as she was able to do so. They were driving in the van on their way to worship, and when the van came to a stop at a traffic light, she just opened the door, jumped out and ran away with nothing but the clothes on her back.

For weeks, we were totally unaware of where she was or whether she was even alive. At one point, she did contact us and told us that she had become friends with some people she had met down by a river. She had moved into their home and was babysitting for them to make a little bit of money.

Unfortunately, this led to a relationship with a man who was not good for her at all. He physically abused her and pretty much controlled her life for a year or more. When she finally broke that relationship off, she went to live with some of her girlfriends. Yet, as it turned out this was the beginning of even more trouble for Emily.

She began to associate with some people who were burglarizing local businesses. She was

**videotaped by a surveillance camera inside one of the businesses they had broken into which led to her arrest. She was found guilty and as a result spent the next eight months of her life in jail.**

**When she was arrested, she called to tell us what had happened. She told us her version of the story, which we later found out to be completely false. She was still lying to us, still deceiving us, and at the same time asking us to post bail for her so that she could get out of jail. We found out from one of the police officers working her case, that she and the others, with whom she was involved, had a plan. If they were allowed out on bail, they were planning to jump bail and simply run away. He advised us not to post bail for her because it would only lead to further crimes and more difficulty for her. We agreed and we refused to bail her out. That was a tough choice to make, but we felt that God told us to do it trusting Him for the results.**

**She, of course, was upset by that and continued to maintain that she was innocent of the charges. The lies just kept coming. When we confronted her with the fact that the police had a video tape of her in the building, she just became angrier and more rebellious.**

**We kept in touch with her during her time in jail. We wrote letters to her. We talked with her on the phone and tried to encourage her in every way we could. As it turned out, staying in jail was probably the best thing that could have happened to her.**

**She learned about a life there which she later said she'd never go back to. After serving her jail sentence, she went to live with a couple of girls with whom she had been friends before she went to jail.**

**There were times during all of these difficult phases of her life when she would apologize to us to some degree, but the fruit of her life was still very bad. We were in contact with her from time to time. She would sometimes call on holidays to kind of check in with us, but our relationship with her was on the rocks and very unstable. We were unable to trust her at all. We never knew whether she was lying to us and that was a very difficult foundation upon which to try to build any kind of new relationship.**

**However, the subject of this chapter is forgiveness and it was important for my wife and me to forgive our daughter for all she had done to us, to herself and to our family. That is not to excuse what she had done, but if we were going to follow what The Scriptures tell us to do, we had to forgive her in the same way that Christ had forgiven us.**

**My wife and I determined that in fact, we would forgive her. We would tell The Lord that we have forgiven her and we would extend that forgiveness to her, even if she rejected us, because it is not about us. It is about forgiveness and doing what Christ says to do. We did what Christ says to do,**

**we did forgive her, and we told her that we had forgiven her.**

**That didn't mean that we trusted her and welcomed her back into the midst of our family without question. Nor did it mean that we were going to put ourselves in a position to be further lied to and deceived by her. What it meant was that we were going to consciously forgive her for the things that she had done to us and to our family. That is what Scripture says to do and by the Grace and power of The Holy Spirit, that is what we were enabled to do. We were able to forgive her. We took the time to tell her that we had forgiven her, that we still loved her, and that we had never stopped loving her. We told her that it was our desire to build a new relationship with her for the future of our family. Throughout all of this, we always told her that we loved her and that it was our desire that she would change and follow Christ the way she had been taught.**

**As I shared earlier in this chapter, it was absolutely essential for our own well-being that we forgive her. If we had chosen to continue to harbor the anger over the difficulty this situation brought us, it would certainly have worked negatively on us in various ways and for a long time. That is why God tells us to forgive as He has forgiven us.**

**Some people have told me that it was amazing that Barbara and I were able to forgive her. Yet she is our daughter. We desired to forgive her. As I said earlier in this chapter, the first thing you have**

**to do is desire to forgive someone. We desired to forgive her. We desired to try to build a new relationship with her. We desired to see her set free from the difficulties of the bad choices she'd made.**

**By God's Grace, we were able to forgive our daughter and to share with her that we had forgiven her. We trusted that this in fact would lead to a foundation for a future relationship with our daughter. Then we waited.**

**Thanks to God, my wife and I never found it too difficult to extend the forgiveness to Emily that we felt Christ called us to give. She was our daughter and had messed up royally, but we felt we must forgive her for her sake and for our sakes. With God's assistance and blessing, that's what we were able to do.**

**HOWEVER, I must tell you that during all of this time, there was something that was very difficult for me to do and it also had to do with forgiveness. It was almost impossible for me to forgive the person who I consider to be the one who was the most responsible for destroying my daughter's life, namely the leader of that gang with whom she got involved, who sexually abused her and got her into all kinds of trouble.**

**In many ways, he destroyed my daughter's life and brought so much difficulty and trouble to my family. This was the person I had a hard time trying to forgive. When someone does that kind of thing to your daughter, even if you are a Christian,**



**even if you are Christian pastor like me and even if you teach about forgiveness, you still must have the basic desire to forgive that person.**

**Without that desire, you are going to be stuck in the midst of hatred and anger toward that person and it will just eat you up. I must admit to you that forgiving this gang-leader the way I had forgiven my daughter was very difficult to do. Trust me. It was not something on the top of my list of things to do.**

**Rather, it was my desire to see him caught, arrested, and punished for what he had done to my daughter. Yet that never happened. Because it never happened, it made me very angry. I lost sight of the fact that this guy was someone that Jesus loves as much as He loves me. I lost sight of the fact that Jesus went to The Cross to pay for his sins as much as He went there to pay for mine.**

**I lost sight of the fact that the vision that Christ had for him was to be saved and to have his life changed by the power of God in the same way that my life had been changed by the power of God. I must honestly admit to you that God's vision for this guy and my vision for him were two very different things. I was way off course regarding how to respond to him.**

**Let me tell you about my vision for this guy. We live in a city in Southwest Florida, adjacent to the Everglades. For those who are unfamiliar with the Everglades, it is a huge area of land in the middle of the Southern part of Florida. It remains**

pretty much in its natural state today and is protected by the government from further development. The United States has even made a large section of it one of our National Parks. It has a subtropical climate and is filled with alligators, poisonous snakes, and now even pythons!

My vision for this guy who destroyed my daughter's life and destroyed so much of our family's life was as I said something very different from God's vision for him. My vision for him, to be honest with you, was to see him tied to a palm tree in the middle of the Everglades with raw chicken hanging around his neck, because raw chicken is one of the favorite foods of alligators.

What this guy did to my daughter and what he did to my family was horrible. I am telling you right now, if I weren't a Christian, I probably would have done something to make my vision come to pass.

Even though I am a Christian, I was still tempted as Christians are, to do the wrong thing, especially when it came to him. I even had a specific offer from some people that was very tempting. It just so happened that at the time all of this was happening to our daughter and our family, one of my sons was working in a local restaurant. Working with him at the restaurant were a number of Latin American guys from our community. Those Latin guys and my son worked together well as a team and had mutual respect for each other.

**As it turned out, the leader of the gang who destroyed my daughter's life was also a Latin American. The Latin American guys who worked with my son were aware of who he was and the kinds of things that he had done to her. Because they had respect for my son and for my family and because they felt that what had been done to my daughter by this gang leader was a horrible thing and because they saw what the gang leader had done as a disgrace to the Latin community in general, they made me a specific offer through my son. Here is what they basically offered me.**

**They told my son to tell me that they knew who this guy is and where he lives. They considered him to be a disgrace to their community and they were willing to go to his house and deliver a message to him for me. However, they promised that it would never get out that I had anything to do with it. They said that if all I would like to have them do is to really scare him and threaten him, as he stands in his own home they would do that. Yet, if I preferred, they would also arrange it so that he could hear the sound of his own bones breaking. It was my choice.**

**To be honest with you this was a pretty tempting offer. If I had not been a Christian, I probably would have taken them up on it because that would've fit very nicely with my vision for this guy. Yet as I said before, The Lord had a different vision for this young man. The Lord's vision was that he hear The Gospel and that he be saved. The Bible teaches that when we become a Christian and**

**accept Christ as our Savior and Lord, The Holy Spirit of God takes up His residence inside of us. He's there to teach us, to guide us, to protect us and to convict us of our sin.**

**So in the midst of this very difficult time, God made it crystal clear to me that He expected me to comply with His vision for this gang leader rather than mine. First, He made it clear that I was to forgive this young man. I was to forgive him for the things that he'd done to my daughter and to my family and I was to let it go and give it to The Lord.**

**Second, The Lord made it clear to me that He would like me to witness to this guy and share The Gospel with him and to let him hear the reason why my wife and I had forgiven him for what he had done to my daughter and family. The Lord showed me that I was to do this by writing a personal and loving Christian letter to this gang leader. I have to tell you that even though I felt that was the right thing to do, it was certainly something that I was not eager to do. It was something that I had to do in obedience to God's Word, but it may have been the last thing I would have come up with on my own.**

**Yet it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to tell someone else that you had forgiven them, that Christ loved them, and that The Gospel was for them as well. How could that possibly be the wrong thing to do? I knew it was the right thing to do and I started to do it, but it took me quite a while to get that letter out of my computer. I**

also felt led to include a copy of *The Four Spiritual Laws* written in Spanish along with a Spanish copy of the book called *The Cross and the Switchblade*, which was written by David Wilkerson, who was the founder of Teen Challenge and who worked with gangs in New York City.

After finishing the letter to this gang leader I put it, and the book and the *Four Spiritual Laws*, into an envelope and sent it to his home. I wish I could tell you what his response was, but I have never heard back from him. However, I sent the letter in obedience to what God said to do and I trust that in some way the letter affected this young man's life.

Perhaps one day I will hear that maybe our witness played a part in bringing him closer to Christ. Whatever the case, my wife and I were able to forgive this man for what he had done to our family and especially to our daughter. Therefore, as The Bible says, that burden was lifted off of us. We no longer had to keep that kind of hate and anger inside of us. He had been witnessed to and Christ had been shared with him in a loving way that we trust will one day make a difference.

For many years, we had friends, family, and colleagues praying for our daughter, asking God to get through to her. We had prayed that she would respond to Him and would start making the right choices in her life to give herself a new start in The Lord. After she was released from jail, she was able to get her old job back as a server in a

restaurant which was a blessing because she was able to support herself.

Then she started dating a man who was a much better choice for her. He was a nice, stable, hard-working guy with a good job. Later that year, she contacted us and said that she would like to get together. We of course saw this as a wonderful answer to prayer and arranged a time and a place for us to get together. It had been over six years since we had seen her face-to-face and the fact that she was taking the initiative to make this meeting happen was a double blessing for us.

When the day arrived, we were all pretty nervous, but as she stepped out of the car and into our arms once again, it was as if The Lord had begun the healing process and was giving us a whole new chapter in our life together as a family. We had a wonderful visit together and she continued to keep in touch with us on a regular basis.

We then got to meet her boyfriend, who has since become her husband. They both have presented us with our first grandchild Elijah. Our relationship has been healed. We are a family again, in fact a bigger family because of James our son-in-law and Elijah our grandson. We love to Skype and visit each other as much as possible. There had been more than one day when we never felt this would ever happen, but for God nothing is impossible!

**So, let me encourage you to clearly see that extending forgiveness to people the way Christ tells us to do and as The Bible teaches us to do is the right thing to do and it really works. It really brings healing. It really brings new relationships, and it sets us free to be what Christ has called us to be without the hindrance of the many difficulties that come through an unforgiving spirit. Also, as I said previously, when you forgive, God enables you to forget and He's done that with this situation too. We don't sit around and hate the gang leader every day for what he did to Emily and our family. We've given that all up to The Lord.**

**I've seen it work so many times in my life and in the lives of others. I've seen it work in numerous cultures and in numerous countries. Forgiveness is something that God has shared with us and He expects us to share it with others in spite of where we come from or where we live. God's Word goes across all countries, all people and all times.**

**Let me close this chapter with an example of forgiveness I will never forget, nor will you once you read it. I had the privilege of teaching what I've written in this chapter on forgiveness, to a number of indigenous Indian tribes deep within the jungle of Panama.**

**Two of my former students from a Bible college in Costa Rica had been ministering to these tribes of Indians. They invited me to come there to lead a special Christian conference designed especially for those Indian tribes. The chief of the tribe**

hosting the conference had only become a Christian a few years prior and had allowed Christianity to be shared with the rest of his tribe.

Some people who came to this conference actually walked for 24 hours just to get there. It was an amazing time of worship services, prayer, watching *"The Jesus Film,"* along with ministering and teaching in different seminars. One of the seminars that I was asked to share was based on this chapter and the subject of Biblical forgiveness. I was told that prior to the introduction of Christianity to these tribes; forgiveness was pretty much a foreign thing. I was told for instance that the men of the tribe simply never forgave each other for things that happened in their tribe. There was a lot of vengeance and a lot of hate. If they didn't like what someone had done, there could also be violence, including murder. It made me wonder how a seminar on forgiveness would impact these people, even though they had become Christians.

They had a very long history of unforgiveness. The men in the tribe worked hard at looking ferocious and trying to give the appearance of strength and power over other people. In fact, in order to look more powerful and more ferocious, some of the men in the tribe actually took a metal file and filed all of their front visible teeth to a sharp point.

When you looked at them, every single tooth you saw was filed to a very sharp point, all so that



**they could look more dangerous to other people. Let me tell you something as someone who was there to see it. It works!**

**These were the kinds of folks I was asked to teach about forgiveness and that's what I did. I taught the same thing that's in this chapter to that group of unforgiving Panamanian Indians in the middle of the Panamanian jungle who had only very recently become Christians. I left the results up to God and let me tell you something. God showed up and was present by the power of His Holy Spirit. He did some wonderful things. After I was done teaching, I saw grown men who had previously never forgiven each other, going to one another and asking for forgiveness. They had tears in their eyes. They were hugging each other. They were showing the love of Christ to each other in a way that they had never experienced before in their lives. All of this was happening because God works in the lives of those who have placed their faith in His Son. God worked through the teaching that day to change lives.**

**Let me encourage you to consider doing a few things. First, if there is someone in your life who has harmed you and who you have not yet really forgiven, let me encourage you to forgive them. If you don't want to forgive them, be honest about it and pray to God. Ask Him to give you a desire to forgive them.**

**Once you are willing to forgive them, go to The Lord in prayer, and tell The Lord that it is your**

**desire to forgive them and that you do forgive them. Tell The Lord you would like to be released from the difficulty of maintaining all of the hatred and the anger that may be stored up inside of you as a result of this issue.**

**Then in whatever way is best for you, let that person know that you have forgiven them. Perhaps you can write them a letter or talk to them in person. Whatever the case, let them be aware of the fact that you have forgiven them. Even if they are unreceptive to you, still let them hear that you have forgiven them.**

**In a letter, you can take the time to put the words in a kind and loving way. As long as the person is still alive, you can try to communicate with them in some way. Perhaps whatever happened, took place a long time ago before you were even a Christian. So let them hear that you have become a Christian and that you feel that forgiveness is the way to go.**

**This would be a great witness to them and it might even heal your relationship with this person. It might restore a friendship that has been broken for years. If you have lost contact with them, simply pray to The Lord and tell Him that you have forgiven them and ask Him to bless them.**

**Yet even if the person is unreceptive toward you and your forgiveness, you will still have done the right thing according to The Lord. You will then be released from the burden of carrying all that unforgiveness within your soul. You will be free to be**

**the Christian that you should be and you will have offered this person the opportunity to receive the blessing of being forgiven as well.**

**Next, let me also invite you to receive forgiveness from The Lord in an area of your life that perhaps you have never allowed yourself to receive before. Perhaps there is something that you have done that only you are aware of and somehow you feel that what you have done is so bad and so horrible that God simply just will never forgive you. Let me tell you something. There are many people who feel that they have done something that is so bad that The Lord would just never forgive them. This is false. It is not Biblical. It's a lie of Satan.**

**There is only one thing mentioned in the Bible that is called the unforgivable sin and that is blasphemy against The Holy Spirit. Many Christians concern themselves with whether they have committed the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against The Holy Spirit. However, blasphemy against The Holy Spirit is a pretty extreme thing, something that most Christians never do, but here's why it's unforgivable. Blasphemy against The Holy Spirit is actually taking the position that The Holy Spirit is false and does not exist. If you take the position that The Holy Spirit is a fake god, if you say that, then you are blaspheming The Holy Spirit. God is simply not going to ignore the fact that a person says He doesn't exist. So if you take that position and don't put your faith in Him, then that position will not be forgiven.**

**Otherwise, blasphemy against The Holy Spirit should never be anything a Christian would have to concern themselves with in their entire lifetime. A committed Christian would never commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because they would never take the position that The Holy Spirit or God is false. However, since a committed Christian would never take that position, the issue of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is pretty much a non-issue.**

**As Christians, we trust The Lord. We put our faith in The Lord. Saying that He is a false God would be the last thing we'd probably ever do. However, any other sin that you have committed IS forgivable, unless of course, you've found another unforgivable sin that God somehow forgot to mention in The Bible. If God says that blasphemy against The Holy Spirit is the only unforgivable sin, then it must mean that any other sin IS forgivable. That means that anything else you or I have done in this world, can be forgiven by God and He is happy to give us that forgiveness if we seriously confess the sin and ask Him to forgive us. He is glad to release us from the burden of carrying that sin around with us.**

**So let me encourage you to go to The Lord in prayer with any sin you may have committed, lay it before Him and tell Him you are sorry for it. Tell Him that you repent of it and that you would like His forgiveness in your soul. I promise you He will forgive you because He has promised to do so and He always keeps His promises.**

**It has been my privilege to share these two chapters on forgiveness with you. I trust that you have found some things in them that will be good for you in your Christian walk and will perhaps guide you back on course regarding forgiveness if you have veered off a bit. I trust that you will share these lessons with others, especially your children, so that forgiveness can become more real in your life and in the lives of those you love. We praise The Lord for extending His forgiveness to us.**

## Chapter Ten

### Once And For All!

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Psalm  
33:12*

**In this chapter I will be dealing with the issue, which over the years, has come to be commonly called,**

*“The Doctrine of Separation of Church and State.”*

**I put those words in quotation marks, because in spite of the fact that many people argue to the contrary, those words do not exist in the U. S. Constitution. Christians especially can use this chapter to be better versed and equipped to discuss this issue with others. Thousands of Christians today are way off course when it comes to what our nation’s Constitution actually says and means with regard to the relationship between religion and the state.**

**It’s fair to say that many, if not most Americans today, including a fair number of Christians, have adopted the widely held “modern day” position on this subject, namely that the U. S. Constitution makes a clear case that The Church should have “absolutely nothing” at all to do with government. However, a look at the facts clearly shows that this “modern day” interpretation of the U. S. Constitution is actually very different from the**

**position that was held by the founding fathers and the majority of the people who founded our nation.**

**If you would like a deeper, more detailed and scholarly look at the subject, you really should read *Kingdoms In Conflict* by Chuck Colson. In his book, Colson does a great job of detailing specific court cases and events over time, which have drastically changed what the founding fathers of our nation felt on the subject of Church and state.**

**I find, for the most part, that those today, who take the “modern day” position that The Church should have absolutely nothing to do with government, belong to one of two camps. Often they have really never seriously studied the historical facts and are fairly uninformed on the position of the founders of our nation with regard to this issue, or they are informed on the facts and are doing their best to deny and or alter them.**

**When one does do their homework on this subject, one first finds that the phrase, "Separation of Church and State" cannot be found anywhere in the original U. S. Constitution. The original U. S. Constitution, before it had any amendments, was written in 1787 and ratified on June 21, 1788. It went into effect on the first Wednesday of March in 1789. When people today use the phrase, "Separation of Church and State" they are referring to one particular section of the First Amendment to the original U. S. Constitution.**

**The First Amendment was the first of ten**

**amendments to the U. S. Constitution, which were sent to the states on September 25, 1789 for ratification. Those first ten amendments are commonly known today as "The Bill of Rights," and were ratified in 1791.**

**So after doing the math, one can see that for twelve years, our new country functioned with nothing but the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. Then in 1787, the original U. S. Constitution was written and was approved in 1788. The next year, on September 25, 1789, the first ten amendments to The U. S. Constitution were written and sent to the states to be ratified. The ratification process was completed on December 15, 1791 and the first ten amendments were added to The Constitution. Over the years, seventeen more amendments have been ratified by the states and added to our Constitution.**

**The First Amendment reads as follows.**

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”*

**Although the words “separation of Church and State” are not found in the first amendment, that phrase is taken from a letter from President Thomas Jefferson to a Baptist church in Connecticut which had written him asking about**



**this subject. However, as you will see, the First Amendment was never designed to enforce, nor did Jefferson advocate for the *complete* separation of Church and state as we hear it put forth today.**

**With regard to religion, the main concern the founders had was that something be written into the Constitution that would prevent a scenario where one religion or Church was given special status over others and recognized or “established” as the “official” religion or Church of our nation. That is what they meant when they said that Congress shall make no law “*respecting an establishment of religion.*”**

**In modern day English that translates to,**

*“Congress shall never pass a law that respects and sets up one Church or religion above all the others and gives it the status of being the official Church or religion of the nation.”*

**The founders had already seen that problem in England with The Church of England being granted that special status. They were trying to avoid such a thing being duplicated in the United States and well they should.**

**Moreover, and perhaps more important, one should clearly notice what the First Amendment does not say. It does not say that religion and government should never have anything to do with one another or that the government should never recognize and rely on what The Church might have**

**to say regarding how it should conduct its business as a nation. It does not say that prayer in schools or prayer before and during government or public school functions should be considered unconstitutional.**

**In fact, nothing could be further from the original intention of the founders. The founding fathers were in favor of God and of praying to Him and officially acknowledging Him as a nation. They clearly felt and wrote that we owe what we have as a nation to Him and we must depend on God for our well-being and success as a nation. If you read what the original signers of the U. S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence themselves said in those documents, you will see that they clearly acknowledged and believed in God and they were willing to name Him and depend on Him in the very documents they drafted and ratified. Take a look for yourself at what they said in The Constitution.**

*“Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,”*

**Then starting with George Washington they all signed their names.**

**It should also be noted that in the Declaration of Independence, the authors clearly mentioned their**

**faith in God with the words familiar to most Americans.**

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

**Later in the document, one sees God mentioned again in the closing section.**

*“And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”*

**God is also mentioned twice in the Articles of Confederation that acted for a short time as our nation’s first constitution until being replaced by our current constitution in 1788.**

**By what they wrote in these foundational documents, the founders were clearly and intentionally relying on God as a nation and they expected His Divine Blessings in their lives as they followed Him.**

**Now comes the big question! Are we really to believe that these same founders, who had purposefully included God in the Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation and the main body of the U. S. Constitution, had come to see it as a mistake and therefore drafted and approved the First Amendment as a way to mend**

**the error of their ways? Was that in any sense, what the First Amendment was all about? Nothing in the historical record suggests any such thing. In fact, just the opposite is the case.**

**Nonetheless, many claim today that the First Amendment was about far more than just guaranteeing freedom of religion by assuring that a law could never be made that would establish one specific Church or religion as the “official” religion of the nation. They claim that the main purpose of the First Amendment was and is to ensure that Church and State should always be kept completely separate and should never have anything to do with each other. That’s the “modern day” interpretation. They will tell you that those who worship and put their faith in God and The Church certainly have the freedom to do so, but that God and The Church should never be mentioned, affirmed, or proclaimed in any official government documents or by government officials in the carrying out of their official duties.**

**If in fact the writers of the First Amendment were correcting their prior improper inclusion of God in the founding documents, one would naturally assume that there would be no more mention of God or religion by government officials from that time forward in the carrying out of their governmental duties. To do so would clearly be unconstitutional on their part.**

**Therefore, in the future, if the President or governor of any state were to positively reference**

**God or The Church in anything he spoke of or officially wrote in the carrying out of his official government duties, that person would have clearly been in violation of the First Amendment. We can certainly assume that these founders were smart enough to avoid doing that if that had been what they intended by writing the First Amendment.**

**However, the historical record shows that these same founders, who wrote and affirmed the First Amendment, regularly and purposefully included references to God in the documents they later wrote, as well as the things they said in the carrying out of their official governmental duties.**

**Why would they do that if it were their goal in writing the First Amendment to forbid such actions and make them unconstitutional?**

**There are, in fact, pages of declarations and proclamations written by our Presidents and other statesmen of our nation which specifically included God. Without doubt, if they were used today as they had been then, those documents would be considered inappropriate and unconstitutional, based on the current, “modern day” view and interpretation of our nation’s constitution regarding the appropriate separation of Church and state.**

**Moreover, if the purpose of the First Amendment was to completely separate Church and state, it seems to me that putting “*In God We Trust*” on all of our coins and currency and on our courtroom walls, would surely have been seen as**

**unconstitutional by these astute men. Prayer by Presidents and other government officials would clearly have been seen as a violation of the First Amendment. Yet, somehow, it was never interpreted that way, which says quite a bit about the original intent of those who wrote the First Amendment and those who lived under it in the following years. It also says quite a bit about the lack of integrity in the historical revisionists of today who try to rewrite how things really played out and who do everything they can to force their “modern day” interpretation of the First Amendment on us today.**

**Following are some of the many examples of what I’m talking about. If you would like to see more you can go to a website where such examples are constantly researched and shared for all to see. [WWW.Presidentialprayerteam.net](http://WWW.Presidentialprayerteam.net)**

*“Those people who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants.” William Penn*

*“Before any man can be considered a member of civil society, he must be considered a subject of the Governor of the Universe. And to the same Divine Author of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17) we are indebted for all those privileges and advantages . . . which are so richly enjoyed in this favored land.”  
President James Madison*

*“{We} have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion . . . Our constitution was made*

*only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” John Adams*

*“The Bible . . . is the one supreme source of revelation of the meaning of life, the nature of God and spiritual nature and needs of men. It is the only guide of life that really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation. America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.” President Woodrow Wilson*

*“Providence has given our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as privilege and interest, of a Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.” John Jay, First U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice*

**Below is a copy of President George Washington’s Thanksgiving Proclamation, which began the holiday of Thanksgiving in our nation. It is filled with references to God. He in fact, was declaring a holiday based clearly on God and His Providence. It was written *just 8 days* after the First Amendment was sent to the states to be ratified. Being fully aware of and agreeing with what the First Amendment said, President Washington still wrote his proclamation, obviously never feeling it was a violation of the Constitution. I dare say that were any president to write a similar proclamation today, they would be accused of walking all over the First Amendment.**

***“Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor--and Whereas both houses of Congress have by their joint committee requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of publick thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially a form of government for their safety and happiness.***

***Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these states to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is or that will be--that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks--for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation--for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interposition of His providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war--for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed--for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one not lately instituted--for civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed and the means we have of acquiring and***



***diffusing useful knowledge, and in general for all the great and various favors which He hath been pleased to confer upon us.***

***And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions--to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually--to render our national Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a government of wise, just and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed--to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindnesses to us) and to bless them with good government, peace and concord. To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us--and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.***

***Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789."***

**Some years later in 1863, President Lincoln, wrote two proclamations. On March 30, 1863, he called for a national day of prayer, fasting, and humiliation on the part of all citizens of the country. In that same year, he wrote a proclamation calling**

**for Thanksgiving Day to be celebrated on the last Thursday of November of that year.**

**Again, were these proclamations coming from the pen of a sitting president of the United States today, it would cause a tremendous uproar of protest from those who see the First Amendment in a very different light than did Presidents Washington and Lincoln. As you will see, it seems clear that President Lincoln never felt he was violating the First Amendment by what he proclaimed in the following two documents. He wrote.**

*A Proclamation*

*Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.*

*And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.*

*And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments*

*and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!*

*It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.*

*Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the*

*humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.*

*All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.*

*In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.*

*Done at the City of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty- seventh.*

*A Proclamation.*

*The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved*

*with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.*

*No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.*

*I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.*

*And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.*

*In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.*

*Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth.*

**Notice how in the first proclamation, made during his official role as President of the United States, Lincoln declares that the Senate of the United States devoutly recognizes the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations. Wow, “in all the affairs of men and nations,” which I would assume includes running the government!**

**You have to wonder why a President would officially proclaim such a thing if it were really in violation of the First Amendment. What is the “modern day” revisionists’ answer for this kind of**

**thing? Are we to assume that men like Washington and Lincoln were just too stupid to tell the difference?**

**With all due respect, I would suggest that those who make a case for completely separating Church and state, and do so feeling they are keeping with the original intent of the framers of our nation's government, have not done their homework on this issue. Rather they have fallen for a revisionist position of history designed to support a "modern day interpretation" and agenda which was never shared by our founders. In my opinion, they might be compared to the folks who, in spite of all the evidence, still deny the Holocaust.**

**Those who hold "modern day" interpretations of The First Amendment would have much more integrity if they would simply fess up and admit that what the founders intended and wrote is different from what they would have liked to see for our country today. They should stop trying to make what the founders wrote agree with their "modern day" interpretation of the Constitution. They should come clean and be honest enough to say that they simply disagree with what the founders wrote, rather than trying to bend what the founders wrote to agree with them!**

**However, to do so means they must actually admit that their "modern day" agenda, as much as they have a right to espouse it, is very different from what the founders of our nation ever had envisioned while writing the Constitution. They**

**should simply admit that what they desire now, is in fact, in conflict with what the framers of the Constitution originally intended and go from there making their case for change.**

**You cannot have it both ways! If the founders were right, the “modern day” view is wrong. If the “modern day” view is correct, the founders were sadly mistaken and should in fact be corrected by the more enlightened citizens of today. If the “modern day” view is correct, then we should get rid of every reference to God, including His Name, in the U. S. Constitution itself and be done with it. We should declare that our founders were shortsighted and their obvious dependence on God in private life, as nice as that may have been for them, should never have been transferred to their public offices as doing so posed a serious threat to the government of the country itself.**

**As you may be aware, we have recently seen controversy in our nation over whether The Ten Commandants should be on public display in government buildings. Once again, doing one’s homework makes a lot of difference. Those who feel The Ten Commandants, should never be displayed on government property for instance, are in fact, dramatically out of step with the founders as the following information indicates.**

**The Ten Commandments are depicted in three locations on The Supreme Court Building itself. Inside there is also a big oak door that separates**



**the courtroom from the central hallway where The Ten Commandments are also depicted alone.**

**As you walk up the steps to the building that houses the U. S. Supreme Court, you can see a row of the world's lawgivers over the East Pediment of The Supreme Court, near the top of the building. Each one is facing a figure in the center, the only one with a full frontal view. That person is Moses and he is holding The Ten Commandments. Interestingly enough, the Chief Justice's offices are directly behind this portico.**

**As you sit inside the courtroom, you can also see on the wall, right above where the Supreme Court justices sit, a display of The Ten Commandments.**

**There are Bible verses etched in stone all over the federal buildings and Monuments in Washington, D.C.**

**Take a look at the fourth verse of "The Star Spangled Banner" which is still today the official national anthem of our nation. God and Heaven are mentioned a total of three times in the one verse. That certainly fails to fit with a "modern day" interpretation of the First Amendment.**

**Yet when Congress made it our official national anthem, they obviously were fine with it. Perhaps Congress should pass a bill deleting the fourth verse of our national anthem and proclaim to the people that it is unconstitutional.**

**James Madison said,** *“We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments.”*

**Patrick Henry said,**

*“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians, not on religions but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”*

**President Jimmy Carter said,**

*“You can’t divorce religious belief and public service. I’ve never detected any conflict between God’s will and my political duty. If you violate one you will violate the other.”*

**President Ronald Reagan said,**

*“Without God there is no virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience. . . . without God there is a coarsening of the society; without God democracy will not and cannot endure. . . . if we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”*

**Speaking of our nation John Adams said it was,**

*“grounded on reason, morality and the Christian religion.”*

**The claim that the First Amendment was originally written to assure that government and Church must never have anything to do with each other and that Christianity should never influence the ways of government is sheer foolishness. That claim fails miserably to stand up against the yardstick of the facts of history. Christians should be aware of this history and be able to lovingly and intelligently share this important history with anyone who otherwise would simply swallow the distorted facts fed to them by those who either never really did their homework on this subject, or are bent on rewriting history to fulfill their “modern day” agenda**

**If you’ve never seen the film *Monumental*, you really should take the time to watch it. You and your kids and grandkids will learn things about our nation’s history and heritage in that film, that you will likely never hear anywhere else, especially in our schools and universities today. You’ll even learn about how the U. S. Congress itself, actually once voted to support the printing of a particular version of The Bible, recommending it to the citizens of our country for their reading. That fact is something the historical revisionists of today try to scrub from the pages of our history.**

**May The Lord Bless us as a nation which chooses Him as our God.**

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **Low Tech Evangelism**

*. . . and tell everyone how much God has done for you. Luke 8:38*

**Over the past 100 years we have seen numerous inventions which have allowed us to better communicate with others. We've seen the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, records, movies, television, reel to reel tape recorders, 8 track tape players, cassette tape players, computers, CD's, DVD's, cellular phones, the Internet, MP3 players, Blue Tooth, digital everything, 3D and even 4D movies along with HD and now UHD and SUHD television and so on.**

**Churches across the nation and across the world have used, and are using these modes of communication to get The Gospel out to people. In a real way, The Gospel has gone high tech.**

**Yet at the birth of Christianity none of these things were available to Paul and Peter and the other disciples. Nonetheless, the Church grew by leaps and bounds. Acts 2:41 says,**

*“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”*

**Also in Acts 2:47 b and c we read the following account.**

*“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

**Some of the greatest revivals in history, including the first two great revivals and awakenings in our own country, all happened without any of those high tech tools being in place.**

**It makes you wonder how the Christian Church could have possibly experienced significant growth without such high technology. Yet it did and it did so regularly.**

**Let me suggest to you that even today, the best technology isn't always high technology, as good as that can be.**

**Sometimes the best technology to get the job done is low technology.**

**A number 2 lead pencil still gets the job done without batteries and without having to be connected to the Internet.**

**I've called this chapter “Low Tech Evangelism” and I've done that for a reason. Let me show you what I mean.**

**It's fair to say that most Christians reading this book would like to see their congregations grow in numbers over the next 2 or 3 years.**

**Yet at the same time, let me ask you what you are doing to make that happen, because without a doubt, The Bible clearly teaches in various places that the job and responsibility of making that**

happen belongs primarily to the people of that congregation.

Contrary to popular opinion, it's not just the pastor's job to make sure growth happens in a congregation. It's also not just the job of the elders, deacons or the staff. Many of us have drifted off course in this area and have convinced ourselves that sharing Christ with others and creating an environment for growth in a congregation is something only a select few are supposed to do.

Actually, it's everybody's job to ensure that growth happens in a congregation and Jesus has given every single Christian two specific things that are supposed to be used to make that happen.

*One: The Biblical mandate from Jesus to share Him with others.*

*Two: A specific, simple and low tech method to do just that.*

I call it "Low Tech Evangelism." Jesus speaks about it in Luke 8:38-39. As we look at it, see if you catch the "low tech" part of the story.

Before we move on though, let me be clear about high tech methods of evangelism. I'm all for using high technology to share and spread The Gospel. There are many ways to become better prepared to share our faith and to reach out to others with The Gospel using high technology, the Internet, social media platforms etc. We certainly

**should use those methods to share Christ with others.**

**You can take courses and seminars and watch videos on how to better share your faith with others, all of which are good things to do. However, they are not “Low Tech Evangelism.”**

**You can use all the various high tech methods and social media out there to share The Gospel and all these methods are great. They should be used because they do work, but again, they are not “Low Tech Evangelism.”**

**It’s clear that different people have different gifts and abilities when it comes to sharing their faith with others, but there is one method that virtually *all* of us can use. That is what Jesus expects us to do and that’s what I’m calling “Low Tech Evangelism.” I submit to you that in Luke 8, Jesus explains this “low tech” method and tells us to use it. See if you catch it.**

**Jesus gets out of a boat on the shore in the country of the Gersaenes which was across from Galilee. As He does, a man from the city confronts him there. Scripture tells us that this man was filled with demons. In fact, he was literally possessed with multiple demons which had ruined his life. They had driven him to leave his house and his family in the city to live in great depravity in the wilderness.**

**He was a serious threat to anyone who got near him. So much so, that we are even told that people**

had tried to restrain him by chaining him up. Yet the power of the demons in him was so strong that he was able to break the chains they used to bind him. He was a real threat to anyone he met, except of course, Jesus.

To make a long story short, when this man confronted Jesus, Jesus commanded all the demons to come out of him and instead, He allowed them to possess a herd of pigs nearby. Jesus completely healed this man of his demonic possession and terrors. After he was healed, people saw the difference. We're told that after the demons had been driven out by Jesus, the man was seen sitting with Jesus, completely back to his normal self.

By the way, demons are real. They still do harass and in some cases possess people today. Many Christians lightly dismiss this kind of thing and in doing so can open themselves to all kinds of spiritual dangers. Many Christians are way off course on this subject. If you've never read or studied this subject, let me suggest two books to you that have made a great difference for me and thousands of others. The first book is *The Bondage Breaker* by Dr. Neil Anderson and the second is, *The Believer's Guide To Spiritual Warfare* by Tom White. Now back to the story.

We're then told that the man begged Jesus to let him follow Him and go with Him wherever He was going. Yet, Jesus refused that request and instead told him the following in Luke 8:39.



*“Go back home and tell everyone how much God has done for you.’ The man then went all over town, telling everything that Jesus had done for him.”*

**There you have it. That’s the simple command from Jesus. That’s “Low Tech Evangelism.” Simply tell others what Jesus has done for you. You don’t have to have a degree from a seminary or even a college to get that done. All you have to do is simply tell someone else what Jesus has done for you. That, in its simplest form, is “Low Tech Evangelism.”**

**In that one verse we see both the command from Jesus to the man he healed and the man’s response.**

**Jesus tells the man to go back home and tell everyone what God had done for him and that is exactly what he did. In fact, we’re told that he went all over town, simply telling what Jesus had done for him and how He healed him.**

**Now you might say,**

*“Hey, I never had Jesus do something that dramatic for me.”*

**Maybe so, but if you are a Christian and have accepted Christ as your Savior, He has saved your soul from Hell and that’s pretty important. He has blessed and loved you. Surely there are numerous things you could say about Jesus to someone else that would indicate to them that Jesus is someone worth investigating in their own life.**

**While preaching this message to a large congregation one day, I asked them to do me a favor. I simply asked people to stand up, if Jesus had ever blessed them or done something special in their life. As you might assume, scores of people stood up all over the congregation.**

**Then to test things further, I asked all those who were standing to stay standing if they regularly tell other people what Jesus means to them and regularly try to get Jesus into the conversation with people when it's appropriate.**

**As you might assume, lots of people sat back down. The ones who were left standing, the minority I might add, were the ones who were practicing "Low Tech Evangelism." That is, they regularly and simply tried to tell people about the wonderful things Jesus had done for them**

**Those who sat down were the folks in the congregation who for whatever reason are sitting on the sidelines when it comes to sharing their faith, even though Jesus has told us something to the contrary.**

**All those who initially stood up indicated that Jesus has done some wonderful things in their lives. All Jesus is asking us to do now is tell other folks about what those things are. It's really that simple.**

**Notice what Jesus never told the man. He never told to him to go to a Bible college or**

**seminary and get a theological degree and then start preaching and teaching God's Word.**

**He never told him to study The Bible for 25 years and then write a book about doctrine and theology.**

**He simply told the man to tell other people what God had done for him. That's it!**

**He asks the same of us. He simply calls us to tell others about the many things Jesus has done for us.**

**I guarantee that you can do this and if you do it, I guarantee that it will add numbers to your congregation just like it did to The Church in the days of Jesus.**

**The reason Jesus tells us to do this, is that when we tell others what Jesus has done for us, we will get their attention. They will hear about Jesus and may very well investigate Him further because of what we tell them He has done for us, and therefore could do for them.**

**Notice that Jesus never told the man to go and tell everyone what God had done for other people. Instead, he said**

*“declare how much God has done for you.”*

**When we tell people what Jesus has done for us, they will listen.**

**Statistics and studies indicate that most people are far more willing and ready to hear about Jesus than we Christians are to tell about Him.**

**Oh sure, some may refuse to hear us or to accept what we say. That's nothing new. Many rejected Jesus himself. Yet many will hear us and will be deeply touched by what we share with them regarding what Jesus has done for us.**

**I'm sure the people who heard the man tell his story of having been delivered from the demons, were impacted in some wonderful ways. That's why Jesus told him to tell his story and that's why He tells us to do the same.**

**Witnessing to others or telling them about what Jesus has done for you doesn't have to be complicated or difficult. You aren't being asked to teach a class on Christology. You are simply being asked to tell someone else what Jesus has done for you and what He means to you. It's your own story with Jesus and since it happened to you, you can tell it and God can use it.**

**Let's be honest. The biggest issue with Christians in the United States today with regard to sharing their faith isn't that they can't do it. It's that they choose not to do it and they choose not to do it for one reason above all others. Research shows what that one reason is and it stands out above all the rest. That reason is the fear of rejection.**

In various places around our country, I have been asked to teach on the topic of “How To Share Your Faith More Effectively.” In doing that, I’ve taken the time during class to take an anonymous poll. I ask everyone there, to simply write down the main reason they feel people today fail to share their faith more openly.

Every single time, by far, the number one answer is “fear of rejection.” That certainly makes sense. Many people fear that if they share their faith with someone else, they will be rejected and labeled in some negative way that could adversely affect their reputation, their family, their job, etc.

Unfortunately, we sometimes act as if our faith is something to be ashamed of and we are intimidated by others into keeping quiet about Jesus.

On the contrary, Paul specifically says in Romans 1:16 that he’s,

*“not ashamed”*

of The Gospel because he’s aware that The Good News about Jesus is what saves people and allows them to go to Heaven. Why in the world would we be ashamed to share that life changing, life saving news with anyone?

Paul says,

*“For I am not ashamed of this good news about Christ. It is God’s powerful method of bringing all who believe to heaven.”*

**Another version puts it this way.**

*“It’s news I’m proud to proclaim, this extraordinary message of God’s powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him. . . .”*

**The Good News of The Gospel is what gets people saved. If telling them about Jesus will get them to put their trust in Him we should certainly do that. He went to The Cross on their behalf to pay for their sins and release them from the penalty of spending eternity in Hell and paying for their sins themselves. If that is a fact, tell me why in the world we should keep so quiet about it and fail to lovingly share it with people who otherwise may be lost for all eternity.**

**Would we have preferred that people never share The Good News with us? Should those who told us about Jesus have kept quiet?**

**Let me ask you a question. If tomorrow you discovered a cure for a horrible disease, tell me what you would do with that information. Would you keep it quiet and never share it with anyone? Of course not.**

**You might speak to a few lawyers first to protect your interests, but then you would do everything you could to get the good news out to everyone about the cure.**

**How is it any different with Jesus? He has the cure for the most horrible disease of all time. The disease is sin and the ramification of it going**

**uncured, is that we'll have to pay for our sins ourselves in Hell for eternity. Jesus has the cure. We are totally aware of it, yet we keep it to ourselves. Again, we keep our mouths shut because we are afraid of being rejected for our views. We are afraid of being labeled as fools.**

**If you shared your cure for a terrible disease with the world, I doubt that many people would see that as being foolish. Yet, many do see talking about Jesus as being foolish and they label us as fools for doing it.**

**The Bible tells us that we will be called fools for having faith in Christ. The Apostle Paul was obviously called foolish by many for putting his faith in Christ and for talking about Jesus. In fact he addressed it in I Corinthians 4:10 when he said,**

*“Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools.”*

**The Greek word that is translated into English as “fool” is the word [μωρός](#) pronounced “mo-ros,” which is where we get the English word “moron” or fool. So in a very real sense, Paul is saying here that when we talk about Jesus and our dedication to Him and the fact that He has the cure for the worst disease ever seen by humankind, we will be looked upon by some as if we were absolute morons and incredible fools!**

**Guess what. That's the way it goes. We simply have to get over it and stop letting it prevent us from telling others what Jesus has done for us and what He can do for them. Many will listen if we tell**

**them. I certainly have had all those issues in my life. I too was afraid to share my faith. I was concerned about what people would say and feel about me. I was concerned about how they would label me. Yet the cure is important.**

**If you get to the point where you see that you are talking about a cure people must have, rather than a poison that would harm them, you can overcome the whole issue of being ashamed and concerned about telling others about Jesus.**

**Trust me. You can do it and I can prove it to you in the next simple sentence. If I were to tell you that if you put this book down and went out and told someone what Jesus has done for you in your life, I would transfer one million dollars into your savings account, my guess is that you would do it!**

**So the issue really isn't that we can't do it. It's that we choose not to do it and if we can choose not to do it for the wrong reasons, we can certainly choose to do it for all the right reasons.**

**It's incredibly ironic that in our own country we still have complete freedom to share Christ with others and yet we often still refuse to do so. Meanwhile, in other countries where it's against the law to share Christ with others, Christians do it all the time, risking far more than any of us would risk in the United States. You wonder how we got so far off course.**



**Now if any of this is making you feel guilty or a little distressed, that's good, because in II Corinthians, Paul also speaks about something he calls Godly distress or guilt. That distress or guilt is the kind of guilt God gives us to prod us to change what we're doing and to do something we have been avoiding. It's actually a positive kind of Godly guilt that produces good results if we pay attention to it. In II Cor. 7:10 Paul puts it this way.**

*"In fact, to be distressed in a godly way causes people to change. . . ."*

**So if this chapter is making you feel a little guilty for failing to share your faith, that uneasiness can be a bit of Godly guilt urging you forward to start doing the right thing by telling people what Jesus has done for you.**

**Let's be clear. I'm not saying that we should all become obnoxious, arrogant Christians who go around shoving our faith in everyone's face. On the contrary, we should simply look for opportunities to bring Christ and what He's done for us into the conversation in loving, yet credible ways that God can use to speak to others about His Son.**

**It might seem uncomfortable at first and that's alright. You just have to take the leap of faith and do it. You don't have to write a paper or preach a sermon. You just have to tell what Jesus has done for you.**

**Let me give you a few examples of how you can plant seeds and share your faith in some really simple ways.**

**Let's say you that are standing at the beach watching a nice sunset with some non-Christian friends and one of them looks out over the water and sees the beautiful sunset and says something like,**

*"Wow, look how beautiful that sky is."*

**You have some options. The first option is to just keep quiet. However, you could also say something in agreement like,**

*"Yes, it sure is beautiful."*

**Yet, consider a third option. It's the "Get God into the conversation" option. You could insert something simple into the conversation that sends a gentle but meaningful message. For instance you could say,**

*"Yes, God sure is a great artist and I'm glad He's there. He's sure has made a difference in my life."*

**Here's another scenario. You are at a party with some people. The conversation turns to evolution and the "Big Bang" theory. Folks are telling their viewpoints on evolution as if they were absolutely correct and you are listening to them respectfully. When there is a break in the conversation, here is something you can say that I've used, which will seriously get people's attention.**

**It's a slightly different version of what I told my friend on the plane back in Chapter Three. It goes something like this.**

*"It's interesting to hear you say that you feel the earth and all we see in the universe came into existence by accident and without any kind of plan or creator.*

*Let me ask you a question. Is there any way I could convince you that the building we are standing in right now (or you can point to a piano in the room, or a computer or anything else around you that clearly had to have a design and be made by someone) came into existence by accident without a plan, design and maker?"*

**People will inevitably always say "No" to that question. I've never had anyone say "Yes" to that question yet. So once they say "No" to your question, here's what to lovingly say next.**

*"If you say that there's no way that you could be convinced that this building came into existence by accident and without a designer or maker, then please tell me how it's an intelligent position to take, that something like creation and the universe and everything that's out there, which is clearly far more complex than this building, could come into existence by accident, without a plan and designer."*

**Then you can say something like,**

*“I used to be where you are, but I’ve found out that The God Who made the world loves me and sent His Son to save me and it’s completely changed my life.”*

**You might then go on to give a short example of how God has blessed you in a tangible and concrete way.**

**You don’t have to get dragged into all the scientific answers and questions they might throw at you. Just stick to your guns and ask again if necessary, how it’s an intelligent position to say that something as complicated as the universe and all of creation could have come into existence by accident.**

**That’s not to say that the person will right then and there ask you to lead them in a prayer to accept Jesus. Yet, they may be open to hearing more about Christ in the future from you or from others who are telling their story of what Jesus has done for them.**

**It can be tough in the middle of a party to get into a lot of specifics, but you can at least plow the ground a little and plant some seeds which God can later water and grow in their lives.**

**Lots of people feel that doing evangelism means they have to actually lead someone to Christ and pray with them to accept Him as their Lord and Savior. If the timing is right, sometimes that is exactly what happens.**

**However, most of the time, all God is telling us to do is witness to His greatness and tell people what Christ has done for us in our lives. That is evangelism.**

**As one of my friends put it, we can look at evangelism on a scale of zero to ten. Zero is when a person is a complete non-Christian. Ten is when someone actually prays to accept Christ. However, there are lots of times in between when we can have a part to play in getting them to that “ten” moment. He explained that sometimes we might have the privilege of bringing them from nine to ten, the moment in their lives when they get it and are actually ready to accept Christ. In that case we should pray with them to accept Christ and encourage them to get involved in a good congregation where they can grow in their new found faith.**

**Then again, maybe all we are supposed to do on a given day is simply tell them what Jesus has done for us. Doing that might just move them from four to five in their walk toward their “ten” moment. That too is doing evangelism. That is a vital part of the process.**

**Actually, sometimes a good way to witness to someone, especially if you have very little time to talk with them, is to simply tell them that Jesus has made a huge difference in your life and then point them to a book or a video to read or watch that would assist them further.**

**A couple of years ago I had the privilege of producing a new Christian video designed for that very purpose. We made it to be a tool that Christians can use to share Christ with others in an exciting and powerful way.**

**The video is called “*The Medal of Honor: Robert Maxwell’s Story.*” In this video I interviewed Robert Maxwell, who is our nation’s oldest living recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor. During World War II, Bob threw himself on a live German hand grenade in Southern France and absorbed the explosion, to save three of his fellow soldiers.**

**Bob is a solid Christian who loves to tell others about what Jesus has done for him. In the video he actually shares the fact that even though he has the Medal of Honor around his neck, *the most important thing he ever did in his life was to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior.***

**It’s one thing for someone like you or me to say that accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior is the most important thing we’ve ever done in our lives, but to hear it from the lips of a man wearing the Congressional Medal of Honor is something that can get the attention of even the skeptics who wouldn’t give us the time of day.**

**In the video Bob shares his life and his military story and what he went through after returning home from the war. He also shares his love for Jesus. In the video, there are lots of purposeful and down to earth illustrations of how God really**

**does exist and how people can have their lives changed by turning to Christ.**

**Viewers are offered the opportunity to accept Christ through prayer and offered a really nice pamphlet designed just for new Christians that they can download from the Internet for free.**

**This video is a ready-made tool for you to use. The Gospel is shared powerfully and lovingly in it. All you have to do is tell people it exists and where to get it on the Internet. I doubt if it gets much easier than that to share your faith. I've shared it with hundreds of people. As a friend of mine pointed out, sharing this video with others is a neat crossover and combination of using both "low tech" and "high tech" methods of evangelism.**

**It's something you can use to introduce people to Christ even if you say nothing more to them than,**

*"Hey, here's a card with an internet address on it for a video you might really enjoy watching."*

**Here's the online address. It will pop right up. [WWW.Vimeo.com/125098415](http://WWW.Vimeo.com/125098415) You can also tell them to just Google the words, *Robert Maxwell's Story* and the video will come up. You can also design your own business-sized card to hand out to people when appropriate. On it you can put a picture of the Medal of Honor, the title of the video and the online address where they can get it. I found a deal online at Vista Print and had 1,000 cards made up for just \$20.00.**

**My wife and I hand these cards out all the time. We leave them with a tip at a restaurant. I give them to shuttle drivers at the airport. I give them to people sitting next to me on a plane or bus or train. Sometimes I only have the time to explain quickly who Bob is and what he did and then tell them that they might enjoy watching his story as I hand them the card.**

**Sometimes I only have time to hand them the card and say**

*“Here’s a cool video you might enjoy watching.”*

**I also share the information with people over the phone at companies I do business with and who have assisted me. I’ve never had one rejected yet.**

**The video has now been seen all over the United States and in 25 different countries. It’s such a simple tool and it was designed to be a complete package that you can use to share your faith with someone else.**

**However, you have to determine that you are going to share it with others and pray that as you do, God will use it in their lives.**

**Another thing you can do is make up some witness cards. They are cards you can give to people in certain everyday situations that witness for Christ. Here’s how they work.**

**Let’s say that a clerk at the store gives you \$20.00 too much change for your purchase. Once**



**you tell her about it and give the money back, you could simply give her a readymade card that says the following on it.**

*“The reason I was honest with you today is because I’m a Christian and I try to do what I feel Jesus would have me do. I go to the First Presbyterian Church downtown and even though we are not perfect, it’s a great place to be. It’s like a family there. Our worship services are at 9 and 11 every Sunday. If you are not already involved in a congregation, let me invite you to come try ours. God bless you.”*

**Other situations that could be written on cards are,**

*“The reason I stopped to assist you today is.” or*

*“The reason I gave up my place in line to you today is,”*

**You can also design one to be left with your tip at a restaurant that says.**

*Thank you for serving us today. Serving people is important. Christ calls us all to be servants. I’m a member of First Baptist Church downtown. It’s a great congregation. We’re not perfect, but we love each other and welcome anyone who would like to come and worship with us. Our services are on Sundays at 9 and 11. If you are not already involved in a congregation, please come give us a try.”*

**One word of caution, if you leave this card with your tip, make sure you give a nice tip versus a cheap one.**

**We must use the tools and the examples of faith we have at our disposal to share what Jesus has done for us. If we are ashamed of Him, we are disobeying what He commanded us as His followers to do in this world, namely to share The Good News He came to bring.**

**In Luke 9:26, Jesus shares some sobering words with us. He says,**

*“If you are ashamed of me and my message, the son of man will be ashamed of you when he comes in his glory.”*

**Here is the bottom line. We all talk about the things we feel are worth something in this life. If asked to share something good about our kids, we do it. If asked to tell someone our favorite restaurant in town, we do it. If someone asks us what stock we might recommend for them to buy, we tell them. If we are asked to name our favorite sports team, we gladly talk about the team and what they mean to us.**

**So as Christians, how is it that we claim that Jesus is our Savior and Lord while keeping quiet about Him, as if to speak about Him were a bad thing and something of which to be ashamed?**

**At this point, we’ve discussed both why we keep quiet and why we should speak up. It’s really up to each one of us. I certainly had to change my ways to get comfortable with speaking about Jesus and He assisted me to make the changes necessary to get that done. I promise He will do**

**the same for you if you just commit to being serious about doing it.**

**Telling someone what Jesus has done for you isn't rocket science. It isn't something you have to go to seminary to learn.**

**The man Jesus healed of the demons went and told his whole town what Jesus had done for him. That's what Jesus asks of us.**

**There are a multitude of ways to get that across to people. We just have to take the first step and speak about Him. We have to look for the openings and insert Him in our conversations when it's appropriate. We can't just stand at the plate and watch a third called strike go by time and time again. We have to swing the bat. We won't hit a homerun every time, but one thing is for sure. We'll never hit a homerun if we never swing the bat.**

**A major league baseball player can make it to the Hall of Fame by having a career batting average of about .333. What that means is that although he will be in the Hall of Fame, he would have failed to hit the ball two thirds of the time over his career. Most of us would get fired if we failed at our job two thirds of the time. All Jesus desires is that we get in the game.**

**Just swing the bat and let Him do the rest. Plant the seeds and watch God give the growth.**

**Try it. It really does work and I'd love to hear about it when you do. So E-mail me and tell me**

**your story. My E-mail address is on the back of the book.**

**All we have to do is a little “Low Tech Evangelism” and people will respond.**

**Listen again to Jesus’ words to you and to me.**

*“declare how much God has done for you.”*

**God most likely isn’t asking you to spend three years in seminary to become a pastor or Bible teacher or an expert in doctrine and theology.**

**He’s just asking you to simply, yet purposefully, tell others in your life what Jesus has done for you and what He means to you.**

**When people in a congregation really begin to do that and along with the telling, offer an invitation to “come and see” what Jesus is doing in your congregation, people will respond and the congregation will grow as a result.**

**I can say that because God has promised it will happen.**

**In Matthew 28:18-20: Jesus gives us The Great Commission to go into all the world with The Good News of what Jesus has done for us.**

**As someone pointed out it is the “Great Commission” as opposed to the “Great Suggestion.” It’s a command from Jesus. It’s actually not up for a vote.**

**Jesus is calling us to do some good old fashioned, word of mouth, “Low Tech Evangelism,” because He is fully aware that it works and He promises to bless it and grow His Church through it.**

**People visit different congregations when they hear that things are happening and that God is blessing and changing lives there. One of the best places for others to get that wonderful information is directly from the people to whom it happening.**

**Folks, it’s our job to tell others about how much Jesus has done for us and to encourage them to check Him out themselves. Here are two things that are for sure.**

**First: If we choose to open our mouths and to tell others about what Jesus has done for us, He will honor that in various ways.**

**Second: If we choose to keep our mouths shut about the wonderful things Jesus has done for us, we shouldn’t complain one bit that our congregation isn’t growing.**

**So let me encourage you to get involved in some regular, good old fashioned “Low Tech Evangelism,” because when we do our job, God promises to do His and when that happens, lots of people are going to be saved and blessed.**

## Chapter Twelve

### Information Every Christian Should Have About Halloween

*When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. Deuteronomy 18:9.*

**As you can see, the title of this chapter is “Information Every Christian Should Have About Halloween.” Almost 40 years of ordained ministry has shown me that many Christians have never really taken the time to take an historical and Biblical look at the subject of Halloween. Perhaps you are one of them.**

**I was one of those Christians for years. Until I had been a pastor for a number of years, I simply never took the time to look into Halloween. Yet once I did, I was amazed at what I found. If you are a Christian who has never really looked into this subject from a Biblical perspective, fasten your seatbelt. You are about to read and learn in this and the next chapter, some things that may even seem unreal to you. However, they are very real and every Christian should be aware of this information.**

**Many of the facts and Biblical perspectives I’ll be sharing may be new to you and that’s fine. In fact, you may even find some of them challenging,**

**but please remain open and feel free to follow up with me on anything you might like clarified. My E-Mail address is on the back cover of this book. I trust that you will learn a number of things in this chapter that will assist you in your walk as a Christian.**

**Now let me invite you to take a serious and detailed look with me at the literal history of Halloween and what The Bible has to say concerning many of the things that are normally connected to Halloween in our society today.**

**So let's get started and let's first look at the history of Halloween, what it once was and how it came to be what it is today in the United States.**

**Undoubtedly, Halloween is huge in the United States and is also celebrated in various other countries around the world. Interesting enough though, many countries have never had anything to do with the celebration of Halloween. Yet, in the United States, Halloween is second only to Christmas in the amount of money that is spent to celebrate it.**

**Halloween has its original roots in the celebration of an ancient pagan Celtic religious festival called "Samhain." Samhain literally means "Summer's end" or "the end of the warm season."**

**Samhain was a Celtic religious festival led by Druid priests, dating centuries before Christ, that**

was celebrated each year on October 31<sup>st</sup>. It was one of four seasonal Celtic festivals celebrated throughout their calendar year. October 31<sup>st</sup> was the day in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and parts of northern France that was traditionally seen as the day Summer was over.

Even though Summer actually ends somewhere around September 21<sup>st</sup>, October 31<sup>st</sup> was the day traditionally chosen to celebrate the end of Summer. By that time, the harvest was in and people were preparing for the changes that would come as they moved toward the cold Winter months.

So on October 31<sup>st</sup> the fires in all the people's homes were put out and the people came together in a specified outdoor area where the Druid priests conducted a huge sacrificial bonfire for everybody to attend. The sacrifices were most likely crops and some animals. They were called bonfires because of the animal sacrifices which included bones. The fat and other things in bones made the fire brighter and burn hotter. Some people claim that humans were sacrificed at these festivals as well, but the historical proof for that is so sketchy and so limited, that it's generally considered more myth than fact. Interestingly enough, our word bonfire today has its roots in that word bonfire.

Even though bonfires are still popular today for various occasions, back in the days we're talking about, they were more than something to keep you



warm at an outside pep rally before the big game. They had a real spiritual meaning and a religious basis which affected the entire community.

You see, October 31<sup>st</sup> was also considered by the Celtic religion to be the very day when the veil between the afterworld and the present world was said to be at its thinnest. It was said that on that day, spirits from the afterworld could actually cross over to the present world and that scared a lot of people.

People felt that those spirits might harm them or their animals or their homes unless they were appeased with a sacrifice. So this bonfire was a sacrificial bonfire to appease the spirits who might come across the veil from the afterworld to the present world to harass people and to do them harm.

People who came to the bonfire would actually dress up in scary costumes and masks to avoid being identified by the bad spirits. Then, after the sacrifices were made, some of the actual fire from the bonfire was given to each person who attended. They would then restart their own fires in their homes with the actual flames from the sacrificial bonfire.

It was felt that the fire from the sacrificial bonfire would protect them and their homes from any evil until Spring returned the following year. So dressing up in scary masks and costumes on

**October 31<sup>st</sup>.** actually goes as far back as the Celts and the Druids.

About 800 years later, the Roman Catholic Church felt this pagan celebration of Samhain should be challenged. Therefore, Pope Gregory III ordered that November 1<sup>st</sup> would be something called “All Saints Day” in The Roman Catholic Church.

All Saints Day was a holy day which lifted up and celebrated the lives of people who had lived a wonderful Christian life. Instead of trying to appease spirits of the departed with sacrifices, All Saints Day was a day that would focus on celebrating the lives of those who had led a faithful Christian life. Therefore the day before November 1<sup>st</sup>, namely October 31<sup>st</sup>, would be seen as a time of preparation for the celebration of All Saints Day. It also would be a holy time and became “*All Hallows’ Eve*” or “*Holy Eve*” which was later contracted into “*Halloween*.” All Saints Day is still celebrated today in both Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches around the world.

One of the customs that sprang up on “*All Hallows Eve*” in Britain and other places was something called “*souling*.” Souling was when young children from very poor families would go around to homes and basically beg for something to eat in exchange for singing a song or offering a prayer for the family who lived there.

However, down through the years, what the Roman Catholic Church started as All Saints Day faded away and various other less holy traditions began to again take over on October 31<sup>st</sup>. In Ireland the tradition of a day of mischief began. On that day boys would blow a horn to warn people that they were in the neighborhood and that mischief was about to come to them unless some small tasty breads were given to them to keep them from doing their tricks or pranks. Various other traditions grew up in Europe around that particular day and immigrants to our country brought these traditions with them to our shores.

Later, the customs of mischief that had come to the United States got so out of hand, that communities feared what would happen to them on Halloween. So they started the tradition of giving out candy in exchange for the boys leaving them alone. If some candy was given to the mischievous boys, they in turn would refrain from playing nasty tricks on the home owner. Out of this came the term "*trick or treat.*" The term "trick or treat" was actually only first mentioned in print in the United States about 1939.

The Roman Catholic Church had called for "All Hallows Eve" or Halloween, to be a time of spiritual preparation for the celebration of All Saints Day. Yet, as you read further, what we now have for Halloween in America today is anything but holy. It's a time which focuses our attention and the attention of our kids, on evil and negative spiritual

**things, all of which stand over and against Christ and His Gospel.**

**It has become a day for dressing up like witches and the devil, and focusing on fear and terror, rather than on love and faith. It has become a day associated with the darker side of things, rather than anything connected to The Light of Christ.**

**Let's take a look at the focus of Halloween today and how we as Christians should respond. The main focus of Halloween today is certainly on anything but Christ. In fact, the focus is on things which are clearly anti-Christ and anti-Christian.**

**Even if you look hard, you will never find Jesus Christ or His Gospel associated in any way with the celebration of Halloween today. The focus of Halloween today is on things like the occult, the devil, evil spirits and various other evil things.**

**The point is that as Christians, we have to look at Halloween and what it lifts up, what it glorifies and especially what it presents to our children. We should then study what Scripture and our faith have to say about such things. Interestingly enough, The Bible speaks specifically about a number of things that are associated with Halloween today.**

**One day I was teaching what's in this chapter to a group of about 25 people. I asked if any of them**

were familiar with the fact that The Bible addresses a number of the specific things that are closely associated with Halloween. Only two people raised their hands to say yes.

Actually, there are a number of Scriptures in The Bible which specifically address a number of the things that are directly associated with Halloween today. Deuteronomy and Leviticus have some of the most important Scriptures on the subject so let's take a look at them.

First, we have a passage from Deuteronomy 18:9- 14.

Listen to what God says.

*“When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, give heed to soothsayers and to diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so.”*

In Leviticus 20:6 we read these words.

***“I will be against anyone who goes to mediums and wizards for advice. Whoever does this is being unfaithful to me. So I will separate them from their people.”***

Then we have one more short verse which comes from Leviticus 19:26. The second half of the verse has God giving us the following command.

***“You shall not practice augury or witchcraft.”***

All the things listed in the verses above have two things in common. The first is that they are all forms of divination. Here is one definition of divination.

***“The practice of attempting to foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge by occult or supernatural means.”***

In short, divination is when someone tries to do what only God can do. As you can see, the root word of divination is “divine.” Therefore, people who practice different forms of divination are claiming to be able to do divine things which only God in His divinity can do, things like predicting the future or telling someone how they should live their life or what choices they should make. People who practice different forms of divination are in fact trying to usurp God’s power and claiming to do what only God has the power to do.

**That's why God gets so upset about these things and tells us that they are an abomination to Him, which is the second thing they all have in common. They are all abominations to God. An abomination is something that is detestable, that is disgusting. God is saying that these practices are disgusting and detestable to Him. He literally hates them and gets very angry at people who practice them, presenting themselves as capable of doing things only He can do.**

**It makes sense that God would get upset when a person goes to a medium, a wizard, or a witch for spiritual advice, instead of going to God's Holy Word and to His Holy Spirit. We parents get upset when our children go to the wrong people and sources to seek guidance for their lives. We warn them about the dangers of people and things that promise them good, but in the end, do them more harm than good. God feels the same way.**

**There are two main problems with people who practice any form of divination. First they are trying to do what only God is capable of doing and second, they are doing it not by or through His power, but by tapping into other spiritual powers, that are not from or of Him.**

**Make no mistake about it. Their powers are *real*, but those powers are coming from a *source other than God* and that's a very important distinction. We'll talk about that shortly. First let**

**me give you some basic definitions of some of the forms of divination that we saw listed in the Scriptures and which God tells us to avoid.**

**A soothsayer is a general term for any person who practices any form of divination.**

**An augur is a person who tries to predict the future based on the flight and vocal patterns of birds. People actually felt that if they listened to the vocal patterns of birds and watched the flight patterns of those birds, they could actually predict the future.**

**A sorcerer is one who uses magic powers and that would include all witches.**

**A charmer is basically a synonym for a sorcerer.**

**A medium is a person who claims to be able to contact and get information from the spirits of people who are now supposedly in the afterworld.**

**A wizard is one who is skilled in magic powers and who could be a sorcerer or a witch.**

**A witch is a person who practices witchcraft.**

**The Lord tells us to stay away from all these forms of divination and He does so for a reason. When you look at it, it makes sense. I mean you have to ask yourself a question.**



**Why are these things in The Bible in the first place if there's nothing wrong with them and they are totally powerless and harmless?**

**As parents we never take the time to tell our children to stay away from things that are harmless and safe. We only tell them to stay away from things that can actually do them harm. So again, we must ask ourselves why God would put them in The Bible if they are harmless and without any real power.**

**The answer is simple. They are in The Bible because they are real, they have real power and they are spiritually very dangerous. They are all part of the occult and Halloween is closely tied to the occult in various ways. Here is a definition of the occult which comes from the Latin word meaning clandestine, hidden or secret.**

***“Of or relating to magic, astrology, or any system claiming use or knowledge of secret or supernatural powers or agencies.”***

**Notice that those who practice these forms of divination claim to have supernatural powers and in fact they do. However, that power is never from God and that power is never good. I'll also discuss that in more detail shortly.**

**As I said before, these things are acts of divination which The Lord forbids and sees as**

**abominations. I'm going to lift out just two of them and give you some vital information regarding them. The first is astrology and the second is witchcraft.**

**Astrology of course, is the practice of predicting the future based on how the stars and planets align and act. It may surprise you to find that astrology is talked about in The Bible. My research shows that most people are unaware of the fact that God specifically addresses astrology in The Bible, but He does. It's in chapter 47 of Isaiah. While teaching that previously mentioned group of about 25 people, I also asked how many of them were aware that astrology was specifically mentioned in The Bible. No one raised their hand.**

**Yet astrology is mentioned in The Bible because God is trying to keep His people from putting their faith in things that are false and not from Him. Even in Biblical times people went to astrologers and asked them to chart the stars for them so they could see what was going to happen in the future.**

**God says we should come to Him for answers to plan our lives. Don't consult people who are basing their advice on how the stars look and move. Instead, go to The One Who made the stars and hung them in their place in the universe. He's already given us everything we have to have in His Word.**

**Look at what God has to say in Isaiah 47:12-15. You'll notice that in addition to astrology, some other things are mentioned in these verses as well, like charms and magic spells. They are also forms of divination and are also hated by God and something He warns us to stay away from in our lives.**

**Here's what God says to us through the Prophet Isaiah.**

***“Keep all your magic spells and charms; you have used them since you were young. Perhaps they will be of some help to you; perhaps you can frighten your enemies. You are powerless in spite of the advice you get. Let your astrologers come forward and save you - those people who study the stars, who map out the zones of the heavens and tell you from month to month what is going to happen to you. ‘They will be like bits of straw, and a fire will burn them up! They will not even be able to save themselves - the flames will be too hot for them, not a cozy fire to warm themselves by. That is all the good they will do you - those astrologers you've consulted all your life. They all will leave you and go their own way, and none will be left to save you.’”***

**When people look to the stars and the planets to predict what is going to happen in their lives, they are practicing a classic form of divination. They are worshipping the creation instead of The Creator. God sees that as an abomination,**

**something he detests and something that disgusts Him even to the point of incurring His anger. Yet, you would be surprised at how many Christians check their horoscope on a regular basis.**

**Now, let's take a look at witchcraft, which was introduced in Chapter Seven. Most Christians I've come in contact with over my nearly 40 years of ministry are very uneducated in the subject of witchcraft. Witchcraft is commonly called Wicca. Witches and witchcraft are closely tied with Halloween in various ways. Certainly, one of the most classic symbols and costumes of Halloween is that of a witch.**

**Witchcraft is a religion in which the members practice "magick" and the casting of spells which harness occult powers and are used to produce the desired effects in others and or themselves. When they spell the word magic they put a "k" on the end of the word so it is spelled "magick." They purposefully put that "k" on it because they feel that their magick has real power in it, as opposed to the magic that is due to a "sleight of hand" trick that can actually be fully explained and taught to someone.**

**Those who practice witchcraft or Wicca, worship a female Goddess along with her male consort, the horned god. Witches will claim that they do only good with their magick in casting their spells. They usually claim to have nothing to do with any kind of evil. That claim is totally false.**

**They will tell you that their powers come from God. Whenever a witch tells you that their power comes from God, you had better ask them which god they mean, because Wicca, or witchcraft, officially denies Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. As I said, they worship a female goddess and her consort, both of whom have nothing to do with Christianity and The God of The Bible.**

**Beware when witches claim they only do good magick which they refer to as white magick. Most witches never talk about the very dark side of witchcraft, like the black magic and evil spells which witches do practice and which are very dangerous and very detrimental to people.**

**According to The Bible, witches do tap into different kinds of spiritual power, but the problem is that their power never comes from our God. That's why we're told to stay away from it.**

**All real witches and Wicca in general, openly deny The God of Israel and Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. So if they are getting power from some place, *and in fact they are*, that power is never coming from our God.**

**Certainly, if their power were coming from Him, God would acknowledge it. However, God never acknowledges that witchcraft has His power in it. Instead, He tells us to stay away from it. So again, we have to conclude that if the power in witchcraft**

**and other forms of divination never comes from God, it can only come from one other source, a source of power outside of God. According to Scripture there are only two sources of spiritual power. There's the power of God and then there's the power of Satan.**

**Therefore, the powers witches have and use, come from the only other source of spiritual power that there is and that's the devil himself. In one way or another the devil is making that power available to them through various means. Since the devil is a master deceiver, they themselves are often unaware of the fact that they have tapped into the power of the devil, but they have done so nonetheless. Many witches will tell you that their powers are real and they are right about that. On that point The Bible agrees with them. Their powers are real, but despite what they may say, the source of their powers is never God. That's why The Bible tells us to stay away from it.**

**As you'll see in the next chapter, those who practice witchcraft aren't servants of God trying to assist others. They are self serving people who use the real powers of witchcraft which come from Satan, to control, manipulate and even harm others. As I said before, God never takes the time in His Word to purposefully tell us to stay away from something that's harmless.**

**Please turn over to the next chapter and get ready to hear some things you may never have heard before.**

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **The Bible Says Witches And Demons Are Real. What Do You Say?**

*I will be against anyone who goes to mediums and wizards for advice. Whoever does this is being unfaithful to me. So I will separate them from their people. Lev. 20:6*

*You shall not practice augury or witchcraft. Lev. 9:26*

*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. I John 3:8*

**In the previous chapter, we looked at the history of Halloween and concluded the chapter looking at the basic theology of witchcraft, which of course is closely associated with Halloween on a number of levels.**

**As Christians we have to ask ourselves why we would have anything to do with celebrating a holiday that is tied so closely to things like witchcraft which God tells us in His Word He hates.**

**As I said, many good Christians are very uninformed when it comes to things like witchcraft and other forms of divination, which God tells us to avoid. I was one of those uninformed Christians for years, so don't feel bad if you never heard what**



**I'm about to share with you. I was way off course in this area.**

**Let me encourage you to take the time to read this chapter closely because, if you do, you'll learn some important things about Halloween that you should have in your "Christian Toolbox." As it was for me, it may now be your time to get educated about these things to protect yourself and those you love from the spiritual dangers they pose.**

**Since I've already shared the basic theology of witchcraft, I'm now going to share some personal experiences from my own ministry regarding witchcraft. I'll then follow that with a similar look at Satanism, since it too is tied closely to Halloween.**

**As we saw in the chapters devoted to forgiveness, it's one thing to study what something means and another thing to see how it works in real life. The same applies to the occult. It's one thing to study it, but quite another to be aware of how it is practiced and how to deal with it in ways that protect Christians from the harm it can bring to them and to their families.**

**We'll do witchcraft first. I realize that some of the things I'll share may be hard to swallow and may even sound a bit bizarre, but trust me, they are all accurate and they all really happened.**

**I have had the privilege of ministering to, teaching and training pastors and future Christian**

**leaders in many different places, including Russia and numerous Latin American countries.**

**As you read in the chapter on forgiveness, on one trip to Central America I traveled from Costa Rica down to the Panamanian jungle where we were leading a Christian conference for indigenous Panamanian Indian tribes. You may recall that many of those Indians were fairly recent converts to Christianity.**

**One of the first things we did at the conference was to have a worship service. At the beginning of the worship service one of the Indian elders in the tribe got up and gave a call to worship. Here's what he said as I recall it.**

*“Lord we come to worship you today because you are a wonderful God, a great God, a powerful God, more powerful than all the witches in this area.”*

**It's probably safe to say that you'd probably never hear a call to worship like that in any congregation the United States. Yet in the United States witchcraft is practiced in numerous places, in big cities and small towns alike. Some of the largest areas for the practice of witchcraft in this country are Atlanta, Georgia and Asheville, North Carolina and Denver, Colorado.**

**These Panamanian Indians were also living in a place where witchcraft was active. Yet, in Christ they were willing to proactively stand against it.**

**When they became Christians, they studied The Bible and they saw what God said about witchcraft and how to stay away from it. They also learned and openly affirmed that our God is more powerful than all the witches in their area and they trusted God for His protection from those witches and their evil practices.**

**In another instance, I was in Costa Rica with a former student of mine who had become a pastor in the capital city of San Jose where he lived. He had gone out into his neighborhood to evangelize by sharing The Gospel with people and to invite them to worship with his congregation. However, there was a witch who lived in that neighborhood. She was very upset by the fact that this pastor was going around her neighborhood trying to get people to put their faith in Jesus Christ.**

**To retaliate against him she used her powers of witchcraft to cast a spell over a certain man. As a result, that man did something that was incredible. At her command, and under the influence of the evil she practiced, the man went to my friend's house and knocked on his door. When my friend opened the door the man grabbed him by the throat and tried to murder him.**

**Because a witch had cast a spell over this man and commanded him to do such a thing, my friend found himself in a struggle for his life. Thankfully, my friend was able to prevail and his life was spared. I realize this story may sound crazy to**

**some people, but witches do have access to that kind of power. They do use it, but that kind of destructive power isn't from our God. It's from the enemy of our soul!**

**Let me give you another example. Perhaps you have heard of Dr. Francis McNutt. He's written a number of books on the subject of healing. He was a Roman Catholic priest who left the Catholic Church to join a Protestant denomination. He married and he and his wife founded ministries that focused on both physical and spiritual healing.**

**One day he was flying on a plane in the U. S. It was back in the days when you were still offered a fairly substantial meal on an airplane. As the flight attendants were bringing the meals around to give to the passengers, the man in the seat next to Dr. McNutt politely refused the meal.**

**After some time had passed, Dr. McNutt spoke to the man and said something like,**

*"I noticed that you refused your meal and I was wondering if you were alright."*

**The man assured him that he was fine but that he was just fasting. Dr. McNutt felt that was a wonderful thing, since fasting is a Biblical practice and discipline. He felt he must be sitting next to a committed Christian.**

**Then the man said something incredible. He told Dr. McNutt that the reason he was fasting was because he was a warlock, which is a male witch, and he said that he,**

*“ . . . was fasting and praying to Satan for the breakup of pastoral marriages in the United States.”*

**This warlock/witch was praying to and calling on the powers of Satan to work on pastors to destroy their marriages. At that point, I may have requested a seat change.**

**Interestingly enough the religion of witchcraft commonly called Wicca, is protected by the Constitution of the United States as a legitimate religion. It is also protected in England and other countries as well.**

**You may be unaware of it, but every Halloween, hundreds of witches gather in Salem, Massachusetts to take part in various “celebrations” to do what witches do.**

**A few years ago, a group of witches there openly tried to “neutralize” Tim Tebow before an upcoming playoff game against the New England Patriots.**

**Here’s the actual article from the website of CBS in Boston.**

*“A group of them formed a circle Friday the 13th at high noon to ‘neutralize’ Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow and, in their words, ‘heighten Tom Brady’s amazing energy and positive ‘mojo’ for Saturday’s Patriots-Broncos playoff game in Foxboro.*

*‘Tebow is praying to the Gods, and we, the Witches of Salem will pray for the entire New England Patriots Team and raise the energy in their honor to maximize an outstanding performance, Salem Witch Lorelei said.*

*Lorelei owns the [Crow Haven Corner Witch Shop](#) in town.*

*She has been a psychic reader and Salem Witch for 30 years.*

*According to her website, she specializes in Tarot cards, clairvoyance, palmistry, mediumship, and spell castings, if you need one.”*

**Another religion that is also protected under our Constitution and about which most Christians are uneducated is Satanism. Here is one definition of Satanism.**

*“The worship of Satan, typically involves a travesty of Christian symbols and practices, such as placing a cross upside down.”*

**Satanism is a religion where people actually come together for the purpose of worshipping**

**Satan. As they gather, Satan worshipers actually worship and call upon the powers of Satan to be used in their lives in various ways.**

**In case you're wondering if I have left the subject of Halloween and gone on to other things, stay with me, because witchcraft, the devil and his demons etc. are directly associated with the celebration of Halloween today. I'm sure you are aware of the fact that two of the most all time classic costumes and symbols of Halloween are witches and the devil.**

**According to Scripture, Satan is the enemy of our soul. As one person has written,**

*“God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”*

**The other side of that is that Satan hates you and has a terrible plan for your life. God's Word takes Satan very seriously. In God's Word we see that Jesus also took him very seriously. He expects us to do the same.**

**Many Christians today however, fail to take the devil seriously at all. In fact, lots of Christians dress up their kids like the devil for Halloween. Does it make sense that a committed Christian would dress their little kids up to resemble the enemy of their soul?**

**Today lots of Christians doubt that Satan is even real. I've heard Christians say things like,**

*"I love Jesus but this whole thing about the devil is kind of creepy. Maybe it's just an allegory in Scripture that is supposed to be some kind of symbol for evil, but as far as the devil actually being real is concerned, that seems to me to be a bit of a stretch."*

**Whenever I hear a Christian say that they have doubts as to whether the devil is actually real I ask them a simple question. I ask them whether they feel that Jesus Christ is real. They usually say something like,**

*"Of course He's real. He's my Lord. He's my Savior."*

**Then I say to them,**

*"If you feel that Jesus Christ is real, you better agree that the devil is real too, because the Jesus Christ you say is real also says Satan is real."*

**Scripture tells us clearly in Matthew 4 among other places, that Jesus took the devil very seriously and dealt with him face to face.**

**We're told that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness being harassed and tempted by the devil himself. The Bible never says this encounter was some kind of a vision or dream. It's not a parable or an allegory. This was the devil himself**



**trying to tempt Jesus to sin, thereby stopping Him from doing what He'd come to do to save our souls and make it possible for us to go to Heaven.**

**He was trying to tempt Jesus to sin so that Jesus would be imperfect, because if He were imperfect like the rest of us, He would lose His status as The Perfect Lamb of God. Then He would be unable to give the Perfect Sacrifice of His Perfect Life for our sins.**

**That was the devil's goal and that's exactly what he tried to get Jesus to do. The Bible teaches us clearly that God originally made Satan as one of his wonderful angels. Then Satan determined to use his free will to go against God. He plotted to overthrow God and as a result he was cast out of Heaven.**

**The Apostle Peter refers to that situation in II Peter 2:4 when he tells us that the other angels who joined with Satan were also condemned and thrown out of Heaven for their rebellion and attempt to overthrow Almighty God.**

**We read in Luke 10:18 that Jesus says,**

*“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*

**We are unsure how many angels were with him, but the assumption over the years has been that it was probably tens of thousands and from that**

**moment on, Satan made it his goal to destroy everything that God had made so very good.**

**He went to Adam and Eve in The Garden of Eden and he tempted them to sin against God and disobey what God had told them. When they sinned, they ruined and poisoned their relationship with God. He tempted them with the age old sin of trying to be like and equal to God. He told them that if they ate the fruit of that tree nothing would happen to them. He told them that God was just afraid that if they ate the fruit, they would become as smart and powerful as Him. To them, that seemed like something they would like and they fell for that temptation, selfishly disobeying God.**

**That was the first human sin, the selfish desire to be equal to God, to try to be as powerful and as mighty as God. That was Satan's sin too. He tried to overpower God, to be greater than Him and he was thrown out of Heaven for it. By eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve tried to do the same thing. As a result, God threw them out of The Garden.**

**At that moment human beings became sinful fallen creatures. As a result, they would now have to have a Savior. The devil is a fallen angel and all of the angels who tried to overthrow Heaven with him are also fallen angels, otherwise called demons. They are in the world, under Satan's control and are doing all they can to destroy everything they can.**

**These fallen angels or demons can harass people from the outside and if given the chance, can even possess people from the inside, destroying their lives.**

**I'm not saying that every problem we have is because the devil or a demon is inside us or that we're being harassed by a demonic spirit from the outside. Yet when people mess around with, dabble in or experiment with things of the occult, they either willingly or unwittingly open doors into their lives through which the powers of witchcraft, Satanism and other occult practices of divination may enter. The devil and his demons can gain access through those open doors, to do those folks some real harm.**

**Lots of people, including Christians, dabble in and mess around with negative spiritual things, especially around Halloween as the focus on these kinds of things is ramped up significantly.**

**However, it's important to see that the devil is limited. He's unable to be everywhere at all times. He's not like God. He's not omnipresent, so he can only be in one place at one time. If he's inside someone possessing them, that's the only person on the planet who is possessed by the devil at that time. The same goes for each of his demons.**

**Again, some Christians say they have their doubts about this whole demon thing and whether**

**the devil and demons are real. If you are one of those people, you should be aware of the fact that you are in direct conflict with what Jesus says and has shown us in His Word. Demons were dealt with by Jesus in Scripture numerous times. Let me share a few of those Scriptures with you which clearly show Jesus dealing with actual demons. They are recorded in Scripture for us to see and learn from in our Christian walk. They record real situations with Jesus dealing with real people and real demons. Jesus confronted demons on numerous occasions.**

**A dumb man was healed by Jesus of a demon in Matthew 9:33**

**A little girl was healed of a demon in Matthew 15:21-28**

**In Luke 8:26-39 Jesus healed a man filled with many demons.**

**A little boy dealt with a demon in Matthew 17:18-19**

**In Luke chapter 4:31-37, a man in the synagogue was possessed by a demon.**

**As Christians, we should be aware of the fact that demons do exist and that they can harass and even possess people if people give them open doors to get into their lives.**

**Now some Christians say,**

*“Well I'm a Christian and therefore demons can never harass me because I have the Holy Spirit living in me.”*

**That again is out of line with what Scripture teaches because Scripture teaches in I Peter 5:8 that the devil is like a roaring lion prowling around looking for somebody to devour.**

**In his letter, Peter was warning people about the devil and in this case the people he was warning were Christians. He was writing his letters to the Christian Church. These weren't letters written to non-believers. These were letters written to born-again Christians. So he's clearly telling us that the devil and his demons can harass Christians given the chance.**

**Jesus says, in Revelation 3:20,**

*“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anybody hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him. . . .”*

**The devil is never like that. He doesn't knock and wait for you to open the door. All you have to do is open the door a crack and he'll shove his way in. People unintentionally open the door to him all the time when they mess around and dabble with things of the occult, especially around Halloween. What they are doing may seem innocent enough,**

**but the devil never respects what may be their innocent intentions. His intentions are evil and he will do all he can to get inside a person's life, especially if that person is fooling around with the very things that open the door for him and his demons to come in.**

**People often mistakenly feel that these things are harmless or that they will never cause any real problems in their lives, but they will. The Bible has told us that they will. That is why God clearly tells us to stay away from them.**

**Unless they're taught otherwise, even Christians can mess around with things that have evil spiritual powers connected to them without even being aware of it. Unless they have been taught what the Scriptures say about these things, they can innocently get involved with them. However, there is nothing innocent about the occult and when you open a door for the devil he will come in.**

**There are Christians who go to mediums. There are Christians who mess around with witchcraft and astrology. There are Christians who take full part in the celebration of Halloween which glorifies and lifts up evil things. These things are open doors to the power of evil. It's sort of like the gun that everybody said was unloaded, yet it still went off.**

**It's like the guy who was severely injured while replacing the circuit box in his house. He was sure that the power was off, but in fact the power was still on. That power was invisible to him. He was unaware of its presence, but nonetheless it was still dangerous and it still greatly impacted and affected him. The occult works the same way. It may be invisible. You may be unaware of it, but when you mess with it, even unintentionally, its power can come into you in ways that can be very harmful.**

**As I said before, I would never blame everything bad that happens in a person's life on the devil or harassment by or possession of demons. Many times people just make bad choices that create bad circumstances all by themselves.**

**However, people who open doors to demonic powers can find themselves in deep spiritual trouble. Ouija boards, for example, are a perfect example of “innocently” messing around with occult powers. Many of us played with Ouija boards when we were kids. I suggest that you prayerfully renounce before God in prayer whatever you may have done with a Ouija board in the past, even as a child and ask God to cleanse you of any negative effects of having done so. If you feel I'm over reacting a bit by this suggestion, you might take the time to check out the following YouTube video and or read the book called *The Ouija Board: Doorway to the Occult* by Edmund Gruss. <https://youtu.be/41xJb4M5H2I>**

**Dr. Francis McNutt tells another story that happened in his ministry when he was a young priest. He tells about leading a retreat on Staten Island for people to come and be spiritually blessed. During the retreat, times were set aside when people were invited to come forward for prayer. When they came, a priest would gladly pray for them about anything that person shared with them.**

**At one point a man came up to Dr. McNutt and stood in front of him. Dr. McNutt gently placed his hands on the man's shoulders to pray for him. As he did, the man screamed in a loud voice, "*We hate you!*" and put his hands around Dr. McNutt's throat and tried to strangle him.**

**Fortunately, there were more experienced priests present who took over and as Jesus teaches, prayed that the demons be cast out of the man just as Jesus taught in Scripture. The demons left and Dr. McNutt's life was spared. I heard that story directly from Dr. McNutt himself at a conference I was attending in New England.**

**When he told the story he added the caveat that he was well aware that many people, even committed Christians, give very little credibility to the existence of the devil and demons. There were about 700 of us at that conference and I clearly recall him strongly getting the following point across to us.**



*“Look, I'm telling you this story because if one day you are praying for somebody and they start to scream ‘We hate you!’ and grab you by the throat, at least you will be aware of what to do.”*

**Again, these are not things that happen every single day, but they do happen. Demons are real and demons do what demons do. They are a part of the occult and occult practices like witchcraft, mediums practicing their craft, Satanism and other such practices, open the door in a person's life for demons to come in.**

**Mediums will normally say that they do good work and that they get their powers from God. For instance, there are actual examples of mediums telling police where to find a lost child and the police actually find that child where they were told to look.**

**Mediums can in fact be in touch with a spirit all right, but that spirit is anything but Godly. It is an evil spirit, a demon. The Bible says that the devil can disguise himself as an angel of light, so these demons can actually be in contact with people and even give them good information, like where to find a lost child. So you might wonder why they would do such a good thing and save the life of a little child.**

**The reason is simple. It's to win people's trust through that medium. Once they succeed, that**

person is putting their trust in something other than God. Then one day, when they least expect it, that trust will be abused and the so called “wisdom” given will have horrible results.

Guess what. Demons are alive. Demons are smart. Demons can see things. Demons can communicate things to people and they do. The medium may be unaware that they are being communicated to by a demon, but that is what is happening. They mistakenly feel that they're in touch with the spirit of some departed nice person, or even in touch with God who's giving them the information but that's not the case. Demons are smart and part and parcel of what they do is to deceive people.

Any good thing a demon might do is just to build up an innocent person's trust. The demons can set that person up for disaster when they least expect it. If the person has come to trust the medium and what the demon is saying through him or her, they will do what the demon suggests.

I also find it interesting and shameful that schools in the United States allow the devil to be in them, while purposefully keeping Jesus out.

Here's what I mean. If you go into certain schools in our country, you can see pictures and images of the devil all over the place. Yet if a picture of Jesus were to be put up in that same school hallway, it would be taken down under

**threat of a First Amendment lawsuit against the school. You might wonder what kinds of schools have pictures and images of the devil all over them. Yet, many of them do. Here's why.**

**Unfortunately, there are many middle schools and high schools across the country that have chosen the devil as their mascot. Many of these schools call themselves the "Blue Devils."**

**In those schools, pictures and images of the devil are all over the place. They are on the walls, on sports equipment like football helmets, jerseys, baseball caps and school jackets, etc. Yet if you tried to hang a picture of Jesus in that same school, it would be deemed illegal and the school would remove it. So much for equality under the law.**

**So in fact, the picture of the leader of one religion protected under the U. S. Constitution, that is Satanism, can have his face all over our schools, but it's forbidden to have the picture of another religious leader in our schools, namely Jesus.**

**When I was serving as a pastor on Long Island, the high school in the town I lived in had the devil as its mascot and they too called themselves the Blue Devils. I hated it. My son attended that high school and every time I went into the building I had to deal with various images of the devil all over the place.**

**When you walked through the main doors of the school, you were confronted by a giant floor mat in the doorway. In the center of that mat was a huge picture of the devil. There he was staring at you every time you walked through the door. I guess the only thing that was good about it was that you could wipe your feet on him.**

**Schools that have the devil as their mascot do put his face or his image on their school jackets, which was the case with this particular school as well. It became a problem in our congregation because kids would sit in the pews wearing their school jackets with a large picture of the devil emblazoned on the back. If one of those kids were sitting in front of you, you'd find yourself sitting in a pew trying to worship God with a big picture of the devil staring you in the face.**

**I actually had a member of the congregation tell me that he was having a difficult time trying to concentrate on worshipping The Lord when he had to sit there and have Beelzebub staring him in the face. He had a valid point and to deal with the problem, we actually had to ask the kids to take their jackets off.**

**On the other hand, let me tell you what happened at my son's high school graduation. It was like a gift from God. My wife and I were seated in the bleachers on the football field waiting for the graduates to walk across the field to a stage where they would be seated in front of us and the rest of**

**the parents and guests. As they came across the field there was a color guard in front of them with numerous flags. One of the flags was the school flag which of course, had emblazoned upon it, a huge image of the devil himself.**

**As that flag came across the field it kept sliding down its pole. It was amazing. The color guard repeatedly tried to keep it up, but it just kept falling down. On the stage, stands had been set up for the American flag and other flags to be placed in during the graduation ceremony. As the color guard reached the stage, they securely placed each flag in its stand. They all looked fine, except the one with the devil on it which kept sliding down its pole and hitting the ground.**

**They propped it up a number of times, but it just kept falling until they just left it there on the floor. I was blessed to be at a graduation where the devil's flag was on the floor for the entire ceremony, right where it belongs.**

**By now, you should have concluded that the Halloween of today and “All Hallows Eve” which was started in conjunction with All Saints Day, are two very different events that have absolutely nothing to do with each other. Halloween as we have it today is centered and focused on things that are scary, evil, demonic and actually dangerous. Police departments across the country will tell you how they hate Halloween. There is a**

**significant spike in crime and some of the crimes are unique to Halloween itself.**

**In 1 John 3:8, we read some very important words. It is there that we are told that the reason Jesus came into this world was to destroy the works of the devil.**

**It says,**

*“The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.”*

**Therefore, if Jesus’ purpose is about destroying the works of the devil and if the Christian Church is about destroying the works of the devil and if individual Christians are supposed to be about the business of destroying the works of the devil, please tell me why Christians would celebrate and lift up the very things on Halloween which represent the devil’s work. The incongruity of that is simply astounding!**

**Uneducated and well meaning Christians say things like**

*“It’s all just good clean fun.”*

**Yet these things are anything but good clean fun. In fact, they lift up and glorify evil, the devil himself and all that Jesus came to destroy. In Ephesians 5:11 God says to,**

*“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”*

**As I said before, even Christians feel that on Halloween it's cute to dress their little girls like little witches and their little boys like the devil. Nothing could be spiritually and Biblically further off course.**

**Let me assure you there is nothing cute about dressing our kids up like that and God hates it! When He sees people, especially Christians, dressing their children like the enemy of the souls He came to save, He is repulsed and angered by it.**

**Until a person really comes to see what God says regarding these things associated with Halloween, he or she will remain spiritually blind in various ways.**

**For instance, they will be unable to see just how incredibly ridiculous it is for Christians to decorate their homes and their property with the symbols of evil, horror, and terror. It is amazing that Christians, people who are supposed to be for Christ and against the devil, actually take the time and spend good hard earned money that could instead be given to missions, decorating their homes and their property on Halloween with all the various symbols of the devil, evil and the occult. If you feel Jesus is alright with that, or really never considers it a big deal, you are completely wrong. He absolutely hates it.**

**To be even more hypocritical, less than one month later those same Christians take the time to decorate their homes for Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ, The Light of The World, Whom the devil hates.**

**Somehow, they fail to see that Halloween and Christmas are actually polar opposites! Halloween is actually Satan's Christmas and Christians should have absolutely nothing to do with taking part in celebrating such a dark and evil day. In II Corinthians 6:14 Paul poses the right question.**

*“For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”*

**If Jesus were here today and you could talk to Him and said to Him,**

*“Lord I am considering dressing up my children like witches and the devil to celebrate Halloween and I'm going to decorate my entire house and property with symbols of the evil which You came to destroy,”*

**Tell me what you feel He would say back to you.**

**I seriously doubt that He would be happy with Christians or anybody else for that matter, taking the time to decorate their homes, their properties, and their children, with the very symbols of Hell that He went to The Cross to defeat. Tell me why anyone who claims Jesus as their Savior and Lord**



**and The Shepherd of their soul, should do things which honor and lift up the very enemy of their soul.**

**God has told us to stay away from the occult, to stay away from divination and to stay away from all the other things that are tied to the satanic powers which Halloween lifts up disguised as good clean fun. He has told us that these things are an abomination to Him. He literally HATES them as they represent everything that He sent His Son to destroy.**

**If you're looking for a great way to get God angry at you, celebrating Halloween is a good way to do it. Jesus goes to The Cross to save us from the devil and Hell and we take the time to decorate our houses and dress up our kids with the very symbols of the devil and Hell itself. However, the good news is that this can all be fixed between us and God and I'll share some suggestions of how you can make that happen shortly.**

**The Bible has warned us to have nothing to do with any of the things that represent Halloween today. If we disobey God on that warning, we can open ourselves and our children to the very real evil that can do us and our families great spiritual harm.**

**Two things are important never to forget. First, the powers that are available to the occult are real. The Bible specifically says so in numerous places.**

**Again, a father never warns his children to stay away from things that are harmless and just good clean fun.**

**Second, we should never forget that God says that those powers never come from Him. If He said they were from Him it would be alright, but He tells us specifically to stay away from them. That's because they are spiritually dangerous powers that come from a source other than Him. As I said previously, there are only two kinds of spiritual power, the power of God which is good and the power of Satan, which is always bad and always evil.**

**If it's not coming from God, it has to be coming from the second source. Jesus said the following in Matthew 12:30.**

*“He who is not with me is against me, . . . .”*

**Witches and other people of the occult, all of whom deny Jesus as Lord and Savior, are in fact not with Him. By default that makes them against Him and everything He stands for in this world.**

**I will never forget a preaching and teaching trip that I took to Pennsylvania. A congregation in the suburbs of Pittsburgh had invited me to come and do some teaching and preaching over a weekend. It was near the end of October so it was close to Halloween. I was there to teach and preach on a**

**number of Christian subjects. Yet while I was there I found myself in a rather challenging situation.**

**A couple from the congregation invited me and a number of their friends to their home for a meal. As I walked in the front door of the house I was literally shocked at what I saw! I'd never seen anything like it before and I have never seen anything close to it since. Virtually every square inch I looked at was filled with some kind of Halloween decoration representing witches, the devil, the occult, evil and terror. You name it and it seemed to be in that house.**

**Perhaps you've seen a person who at Christmas time decorates virtually every square inch of their house with some kind of Christmas symbol or decoration. This was the same kind of thing. The house was jam packed and decorated with scores and scores of symbols of Halloween, symbols that represented evil and all kinds of spiritually negative things.**

**There was even an electric merry-go-round on a table, spinning with all kinds of evil looking ghoulish figures on it. I had never seen so many representations of evil in one place in my life.**

**It was as if I had just walked into the foyer of Hell! Without a doubt it was spiritually oppressive. Thankfully, in addition to tables in the house, there were some tables out on a deck where people could sit down and eat. I chose to eat out on that**

**deck and spend as much time as I possibly could outside of that house.**

**Yet I can tell you for sure, that within a month that house was probably completely lit up with the things that represent The Light of The World Who came to destroy the very evil and darkness that was represented by the decorations they had up at Halloween.**

**This kind of thing even creeps into Church buildings. I was in a Church one day and it was near Halloween and I saw one of the staff members, a woman, wearing a little witch pin on her blouse.**

**On another occasion I was in a Church office and saw an empty mug sitting on the counter. It was a Scripture mug, meaning it was a mug that actually had Scripture printed on the outside. Yet on the inside was a pencil topped with a figurine of a witch. I even once saw a pastor in a Christian school use his clerical robe to dress up like a witch for a school play! Say what you like, but that is totally nuts!**

**Crazy as it seems, many of us have done similar things in our lives. Many of us have let our kids go out and trick or treat on Halloween. Why? Because we were never taught any better in our Churches or if we were, we ignored what we were taught.**

**Churches really have been pretty poor at teaching this kind of thing and when they do try to teach it, they can often get pushback from Biblically illiterate Christians who look at this kind of teaching as being an overzealous, unnecessary campaign against something that is just a harmless part of American culture.**

**As I pointed out in a previous chapter, we hear similar things from Christians who defend the Harry Potter series of books and films. Many Christians have read these books and have encouraged their children to read these books. They claim these are just wonderful books that teach children right from wrong and that set good examples for our children to follow.**

**Yet as I shared in that previous chapter, these books are filled with witchcraft and actual things of the occult. Giving them to your kids is like giving them poison wrapped in candy.**

**The Harry Potter books clearly lift up witchcraft as fascinating and they encourage children to dabble in it. As I said earlier, when you dabble with things that are spiritually dangerous, even though you may be unaware that they are dangerous, they can still do you great harm.**

**As I said earlier in the book, if you would like to do some more serious reading on the issue of demons and oppression and such things, get hold of a book called *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil**

**Anderson. I recommend it as one of the best books on the subject. It's interesting that in his counseling, Dr. Anderson has found numerous people who have gone to other counselors for years without any productive results. The reason is that those counselors never checked to see if the issues were spiritual, instead of just purely psychological. Sometimes after only about a thirty minute session with Dr. Anderson, concluding with appropriate prayer, the demons that had been ruining that person's life for years were gone and they were set free in Christ.**

**Perhaps you are wondering what you are supposed to do with all this information. I mean after all, many of us have been involved in these things as kids, or with our own kids, or both.**

**First of all, in my opinion, Christian congregations should stay away from the celebration of Halloween altogether. They should come up with alternative celebrations that the neighborhood kids can be invited to which would have nothing to do with the normal themes of Halloween. It could be done at the same time as Halloween, but it could have a harvest theme or an overall theme of Thanksgiving. Scary costumes should be discouraged.**

**At some point in the celebration, it would be important for a pastor or someone in the leadership of the congregation to give a short children's message about Jesus and His love for them and how they can accept Christ if they've not done so**

**previously. It would also be good to have a packet of information available about the congregation with some witnessing materials for both kids and parents and an invitation to come worship with the congregation.**

**Chances are that before you read these chapters, you may have been unaware of much of what I've shared in them with regard to Halloween. As I said at the outset, that was me a number of years ago. However, now you've been educated with the facts.**

**So please take the time to consider these things seriously, because they can be so vital to your walk as a Christian. Opening doors to evil in our lives, even in so called innocent ways, by celebrating Halloween and the things that go with it, can bring serious damage into our lives and the lives of our children.**

**If you've taken part in celebrating Halloween, and most of us have, all you have to do is pray to The Lord and ask His forgiveness, telling Him you were foolish or unaware of how much it offended Him. Just renounce it. Tell Him you'll stop doing it as of right now and then relax in His Grace and forgiveness. The following is a sample prayer you can use.**

*"Lord I've now learned what Your Word has to say about Halloween and the many things connected with it. I never meant to take part in things that offended*

*You so much. I'm sorry for that and I repent of it and renounce it all. From now on, I'm going to teach my children the right things and I will have nothing further to do with anything that celebrates Halloween. I ask your forgiveness and I confess and renounce anything I've done to be involved with this unbiblical celebration. Please cleanse me of anything that might be in me or my family as a result of what I've done in the past and lead me on the right path concerning these things from now on. I thank You Lord and I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen."*

**Thankfully, our God is a merciful God and promises to forgive us for even innocently getting involved in Halloween, the occult and celebrating what it represents. Going forward, if you continue to celebrate Halloween and chose to ignore what Scripture clearly says about the things connected to it, don't expect God to just look the other way and give you a pass, while you continue to willfully disobey Him.**

**There's something else I should cover. Maybe you are a young parent and have taken your kids out for trick or treat in your neighborhood and are wondering what to do now as a Christian after you renounce all this Halloween stuff. My wife and I found ourselves in that same position. Let me make a few suggestions. First of all be honest with your kids. Tell them that you recently learned that Halloween is actually a bad holiday and that it makes Jesus unhappy and therefore as a Christian family you are going to stop celebrating it.**



**Of course that will likely bring up the whole issue of trick or treat which your kids may be somewhat unwilling to give up. So one suggestion would be to do something else on Halloween as a family. You could talk with your kids about what the day used to mean and how it honored people who had lived a good and faithful life for Christ. You could also mention how blessed you are to have food and a place to live along with family and friends. Make it a theme of being thankful.**

**Then if you like, take the kids to the local grocery store and in thanks to God, let them each pick out some food to be given to a local food pantry for hungry families and children. Then let your kids pick out a bag of their favorite candy for themselves. You just have to restructure things on Halloween in a way that honors God.**

**Moreover, when kids come to your house for trick or treat, give them something nice, but also give them something else. Online or in Christian book stores, you can buy some very nicely done Christian Halloween Tracts that are designed for kids and that share The Gospel with them. You can throw one of them in each kid's bag. Letting your own kids do that can be meaningful to them as you explain to them that you are all now using Halloween to tell people about Jesus.**

**The last thing I would suggest is that if you have any decorations or images or other kinds of**

**things that represent Halloween, you should gather them up and get rid of them. Destroy them, and throw them in the trash. They are a disgrace to Christ and to your faith. Let's never forget that all of these things are an abomination to God. He literally hates and detests them. They represent everything that is contrary to His Love.**

**God gives us a clear warning in Isaiah 5:20 where He says,**

*“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness. . . .”*

**The reason He warns us is because He loves us. When we pay attention to His loving warnings, we will see the blessings which come as a result.**

**As always, if you have any questions now or if you come up with any later, I'd be glad to address them. My E-Mail address is on the back cover of the book.**

## Chapter Fourteen

### Christians and Bad Language

*Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29*

**I could be wrong and I've done nothing to scientifically research what I'm about to say. Yet, based on what I hear and see every day, it's clear to me that more Christians these days, including pastors, seem to be regularly using bad language in their conversations. It's as if what used to be unacceptable language is now somehow acceptable both to them and to God.**

**Maybe I missed the memo that said swearing and foul language are now all right with God. Yet, the last time I checked, Scripture still maintained that the use of bad language is still sinful and something we Christians should do our best to avoid.**

**Now, in case someone feels I'm being too judgmental or legalistic, let me share something about myself. I used to use bad language as much or more than most people and I used the worst words available. In fact, cleaning up my language was something I resisted doing for quite some time, even after becoming a Christian. I sort of filed it under the following category.**

*“We’re all sinners and none of us is perfect. I’m working on the big sins, so God isn’t going to get too upset with me if my language is messed up from time to time. I doubt it’s a big deal to Him. After all, we all get angry and have to have some sort of outlet.”*

**That is actually called “cop out” theology. We ignore the sins we feel are small, assuming that in God’s Love He gives us all a pass on that kind of sin as long as we are staying away from the big ones. However, a lot of small holes in your boat can sink it just as fast as one big hole. Be assured that “little sins” can add up fast to destroy your faith and witness to others.**

**After I took the time to study Scripture on this subject, I learned that God took the time to specifically address it in various places in His Word. As I studied, I was both convinced and convicted that using bad language is a big deal to God or He would have never mentioned it in Scripture. I saw clearly and for various reasons, that using bad language is wrong and that I should stop using it. Later in this next chapter I’ll share with you how The Holy Spirit worked to clean up my mouth as a Christian.**

**As you’ve seen, I always try to write simply and clearly. My goal is to always practically apply and use what The Bible teaches. However, the scholastic and Biblical homework that is the foundation of those seemingly simple**

**presentations of Scripture are things I always have to do first.**

**I usually avoid getting into too much scholastic detail in my books. Yet, in this chapter I will be presenting a bit more of those Biblical scholastic details than usual, but that is necessary to make a number of valid points before I move into the practical application of those details which will follow. So please bear with me. In the next chapter I'll be getting into the practical application of what we discover in this chapter.**

**First, it's important to be clear about what Scripture says regarding bad language and how it is defined. The Bible includes a variety of different types of bad language which we'll take a look at first. So let's get started.**

**For those whose first language is English, we tend to group all bad language under the broad title of profanity. However, Scripture is more specific than that. Scripture takes the time to specify different types of bad language and uses different Greek words to define and deal with each type. Scripture does speak of profane language which, may or may not include bad or swear words. Interestingly enough, according to Scripture, you can take part in profanity without even using any swear words at all. Then there is also what The Bible calls evil or unwholesome talk, followed by a different and third category called foul or obscene language.**

**As I said, it seems that more and more Christians are using bad language these days in various ways. Moreover, even if they don't use bad language themselves that much, they support it and pass it on through the movies they pay to see and recommend to others, which are often laced with the worst language out there. They also support it in many of the videos they recommend and or pass on through their social media accounts.**

**There are even Christians who claim that under certain circumstances, using profane or even foul and obscene language may be exactly what God would like us to do to more effectively witness to certain people. They make the claim that whether using bad language is sinful or not depends on the circumstances and on what those hearing it perceive bad language to be. We'll look at those claims a little bit later in the chapter.**

**There are certainly numerous opinions out there about what bad language is or isn't and when it may or may not be used. However, for Christians, the yardstick by which we should be measuring our behavior is Scripture. So let's see what The Bible actually says about these various types of bad language.**

**Let's start with the issue of profanity. In II Timothy 2:16 we read these words.**

*“Keep away from profane and foolish discussions, which only drive people farther away from God.”*

**If you look up the word “profane” in English, you get something like this definition from *Dictionary.com* where the primary definition is the following.**

*“characterized by irreverence or contempt for God or sacred principles or things”*

**Profane also has a secondary meaning which is hardly ever used in the United States. This secondary definition for profane simply differentiates between religious and secular things such as art and music. *The Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English* gives this secondary definition.**

*“related to ordinary life, not religion, or holy things.”*

**However as we’ll see, this is not the meaning of the Greek word used in II Timothy 2:16. The Greek word used in II Timothy 2:16 which is translated in English Bibles as “profane” is the word βεβήλους, pronounced bebēlous, which is a word made up of two different root words. The first root word is βαίνω, pronounced bainō which means “go, step or move on foot.” The second root word is βήλος, pronounced bēlos, which means “threshold.” So literally the word βεβήλους means to go, walk or step across a**

**threshold. In the context of Scripture it means to step over a threshold or to cross a line by using language which shows irreverence or contempt for God, hence becoming profane.**

**This definition includes swear words such as the “GD” curse, or taking The Lord’s Name in vain in some other way. Yet it could also just be normal language which disrespects or shows irreverence for God. So as I said previously, one can be involved in using profanity without using any recognized swear words at all. One could be using perfectly good English words in a way designed to show irreverence or contempt for God which would thereby Biblically qualify as having crossed the threshold into a profane discussion. Timothy tells us to stay away from such discussions as they only tend to lead people further away from God rather than closer to Him. If you are interested you can go to <http://biblesuite.com/greek/952.htm> for a more in-depth look at the Greek.**

**When we speak of profanity in English, we usually expand our definition of profane to include any words our culture deems to be swear words. However, according to II Timothy one could make the case that a word may be a swear word and may even be obscene, but unless it directly shows disrespect or irreverence for God, it isn’t profane. Others would counter and say that by their very nature, all swear and obscene words show**



**irreverence and contempt for God and His ways and thereby also qualify as profane.**

**Whatever the case, The Bible does differentiate between different kinds of bad language. So if we are going to be faithful to what Scripture teaches, we have to take those differences into account along with their context in the original languages of The Bible. As we've already seen, II Timothy speaks about profane words and discussions. Yet in other places we see speech which is called evil, unwholesome and obscene and the Greek words used are different words from those used in II Timothy to define what is profane.**

**In Ephesians 4:29 we read,**

*"Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*

**The Greek word which gets translated in English as "evil" is the word σαπρός, pronounced sapos, which means "evil, bad or unwholesome." Although technically, "evil, bad, or unwholesome" language could be used to show contempt and irreverence for God and therefore could also be considered profane, what is clearly being talked about here are words we speak not to or about God, but to and about each other. We are told that**

**in addressing each other it's wrong to use "evil, bad or unwholesome" language. Instead we're told to choose language that has us building people up rather than tearing them down.**

**In this case the language being talked about certainly covers swear words and obscenities, but it could also include regular English words if used in a bad or evil way to sinfully disgrace or to put someone down. Most of us are aware that words can be weapons used to tear people down. God clearly forbids doing that kind of damage to others. Doing so clearly falls under the category of disobeying God and sinning against Him and others.**

**As we move on to Colossians 3:8 we see still another Greek word pertaining to bad language. There we read the following.**

*"But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth."*

**The Greek word that gets translated as "foul talk" is the word αἰσχρολογία, pronounced aischrología, which means foul, obscene, vile and filthy words. This would include all obscene words which convey filthy images and are disrespectful of people and or God. Included in this category would be the worst and most vile of swear words. We're told that this language is so bad it should never cross our lips. The F-bomb among others would be included in this definition.**

**So to sum up, we can see that Biblically speaking, profanity is any language, swear words or not, that shows contempt and irreverence for God. Taking His Name in vain would certainly be considered profanity. In addition, bad, evil, unwholesome and obscene, vile and filthy words are also listed as words God commands us to refrain from using.**

**It's important to note that God didn't provide exceptions. He didn't say to refrain from using bad language except in cases where we deem it's alright to do so. Therefore, I would conclude that according to Scripture, using words that show irreverence or contempt for God, or words that are deemed as bad, evil, unwholesome, or obscene in one's society is always a sinful thing to do. Included in that list would of course be the words that a society has deemed to be its swear words.**

**However, as I noted previously, there are Christians who disagree with that conclusion, although they would agree that the use of bad language is normally not a good thing for Christians to engage in. Yet, they would argue that there are occasions where the use of swear words and even obscenities within one's culture, are appropriate and actually would be God's will in certain circumstances. Therefore using such words could actually bring God glory. That may sound strange, so let me give you an example.**

**Some say that if you are witnessing to a sub-cultural group in our society which uses the F-bomb as a normal part of their speech, it's all right for a Christian who is trying to gain their trust and respect to also use the F-bomb to better fit in with and relate to them. These Christians say that words are just words. Therefore, if a particular group doesn't perceive a word to be an obscene word, then for them it isn't obscene. So for Christians to use such language among certain people to better fit in with them isn't sinful. In fact they see it as a tool to reach these folks and gain their trust, resulting in a better opportunity to share Christ with them.**

**In other words, it's alright for a Christian to use language which in his or her overall society is deemed foul or obscene in order to reach those in the society who don't consider such language sinful.**

**If this argument is valid, one must ask how far it goes. Where does it stop? Would those same Christians also argue that it would be all right for Christians to lie to better relate to those who view lying as acceptable behavior? Would stealing be alright to gain the trust of thieves? Should Christian missionaries in Muslim countries take more than one wife to better fit in with and relate to that culture? I'm assuming that the answer to these questions is "*No.*"**

**So, if the answer is “no” to those other sinful behaviors, it seems a little spiritually schizophrenic, to arbitrarily single out another sinful behavior, such as bad language and declare that sometimes it isn’t sinful at all. Please note that what we’re dealing with here are New Testament passages. They aren’t Old Testament dietary laws that were superseded in the New Testament. They are clear instructions for Christian behavior in all situations. As you’ll see below, there is absolutely nothing in the text to indicate that these instructions are based on circumstantial situations where we get to determine whether we should obey or disobey them.**

**I realize that if we are going to reach out to non-Christians we have to go into their world and effectively witness to them. Yet, Scripture teaches us we are to be in the world, but not of it. Taking part for instance, in anti-social behavior in order to reach anti-social people, isn’t a sound evangelical tactic and isn’t something one finds a basis for in Scripture. If God says something is wrong it’s wrong for a reason. It doesn’t stop being wrong simply because someone or some group declares that they don’t perceive it to be wrong.**

**Of course words do vary from society to society. For instance, the same English word that is a swear word in the U. S. may not be a swear word in England or Australia and vice versa. Yet whatever a culture has deemed as it’s swear words and bad language, doesn’t change within**

**that society simply because someone or some group sees it differently.**

**If the best way for you to gain acceptance with a sub-cultural group is to adopt some of their profane and or obscene language, perhaps you should take a little more time learning how to witness to people. Jesus hung out with some of the worst people of His society, yet we never hear of His compromising any part of God's Word to reach them, even if they didn't have a problem with His doing so.**

**Another approach some Christians use to justify using bad language to witness to certain groups is to make the claim that it follows the example of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 9:22 where he said,**

*"To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."*

**Certainly the phrase "by all means" does not mean that "anything goes" in order to reach others, gain their trust and therefore better witness to them. In fact in I Corinthians 9:22, Paul makes it clear that "by all means" has its limits. It isn't a carte blanche which gives us the freedom to use any means we feel like using in the name of reaching others.**

**On the contrary, Paul clearly says that he is still under Christ's law in everything. Therefore going against God's law in Christ to witness to someone isn't an option. The English Standard Version translates 1 Corinthians 9:21 in the following way.**

*"To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law."*

**Commenting on this verse, Matthew Henry put it well when he said,**

*"Though he would transgress no laws of Christ, to please any man, yet he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some."*

**I agree. It seems to me that to use language that one's overall society deems profane, evil or obscene language is to transgress God's law and the law of Christ. Trying to justify it by claiming it fits within the "by all means" statement of Paul simply isn't faithful to the text and what Paul was teaching in 1 Cor. 9:21. Like the physical laws of the universe, God's Word doesn't change just because someone firmly holds a different position or takes a passage out of context to justify their position. Resetting our Scriptural compass to accommodate circumstantial situations will always lead us off course.**

**There is a story about a science teacher who asked one of his students to take part in a little**

**experiment. He had her stand up. When she did the teacher spun her around a few times and then asked her to point in the direction she was sure was due North. She did. However, in reality she was 90 degrees off and was pointing due East. In spite of the fact that she was positive she was facing North, she was still facing East and guess what. North never moved to accommodate her.**

**As Christians, we have to follow Paul's example who clearly followed Jesus' example. Our goal should certainly be to reach as many as we can with Christ's Love, but we cannot justify breaking God's Law in Christ to accomplish that goal. The bottom line is that God's Word is still God's Word for us, even if we're witnessing or ministering to non-believers who don't recognize or accept God's Word. In spite of what they might claim, "North is still North." As well intended as we may be, there is no caveat in God's Word that allows us to temporarily recalculate the spiritual compass of His Word in our efforts to reach others.**

**In fact, when Christians do things like swear in an effort to better relate to non-Christians, that kind of witness can and does backfire. Even though they're non-Christians, they're not stupid. In our society, most non-Christians are still very much aware of what Christian behavior is supposed to look like. When they see us breaking our own laws of Scripture, they recognize it as hypocritical and disingenuous. In fact it's non-Christians who are often among the**



**first to call Christians hypocrites for their non-Christian behavior.**

**Still other Christians say using bad language is sometimes alright to do claiming that there are actual examples of bad language used in Scripture. They say that the Apostle Paul used bad language, namely the “s” curse to make an important point about Jesus. They cite Philippians 3:8 as their example. Here are two translations of that verse.**

*“Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ”*

*“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,”*

**The word translated as “garbage” in the Good News Translation and “dung” in the King James Version comes from the Greek noun σκύβαλον, pronounced skubalon.**

**Since it can be translated as “dung” some Christians claim that σκύβαλον was also the Greek equivalent of the “s” curse in English and that Paul was using it that way. They go on to say that the only reason it doesn’t appear in English translations as the “s” curse is because**

**translators are trying to be nice and soften what it really means and what Paul really said. After all, having the “s” curse in The Bible would certainly raise issues for some folks.**

**However, to support that claim you’d have to prove, based on its history and etymology, that σκύβαλον was normally used as the “s” curse in Greek culture in Paul’s day. Nothing I have been able to find through my research even comes close to supporting that claim. In present day Greek, which is different from Biblical Greek and Paul’s time, some people do use the word skubalon as the equivalent of the “s” curse in their language. Yet, as you’ll see, that has evolved over the years and is quite different from its use in Paul’s day. It simply isn’t faithful to the text to claim that Paul used it that way. Here’s why.**

**Of the 30 different English versions of The Bible I looked at, σκύβαλον is translated as “garbage” or a synonym thereof 18 times and “dung” or a synonym thereof 8 times. The rest came in with normal English words like “worthless” and “nothing” and two versions had the word “filth.”**

**When you study its origin, it seems all too clear that the word primarily meant “garbage” or at worst “dung” which isn’t a swear word in either Greek or English.**

**First of all, as was the case with βεβήλους in II Timothy 2:16, σκύβαλον is a word made up of two**

other Greek root words. The first is κύων, pronounced kuon which means dog, specifically a stray or scavenging canine. The second is βάλλω, pronounced ballo, which comes from the verb to throw. So literally, the word actually represents things a person would throw to scavenging dogs to eat and in those days that would only be what people wouldn't eat themselves, namely scraps or garbage. Even today in many countries dogs never get people food. They get only the garbage scraps that are left which people refuse to eat. Paul is saying here that everything he had in life before he met Christ can be compared to the scraps or garbage that one throws out to a scavenging dog.

More evidence supporting the translation of "garbage" and not even "dung," let alone anything close to the "s" curse, comes from the fact that the form of the noun skubalon that he uses is in the plural. That clearly indicates that there was more than one thing being referred to by him, indicating the different scraps which go into making up the garbage one might throw to a dog. If it were Paul's intention to mean "dung" or any equivalent to our "s" curse today, he would have used the singular form of the noun. Using the plural form for that purpose simply doesn't work in Greek or English.

One more thing. It makes little sense that Paul would write Christians instructing them to refrain from profane and other bad language in one letter and use that same kind of language himself in another letter. Granted, the language he uses here

certainly paints a somewhat more graphic picture to get his point across, but it doesn't cross the threshold of being profane, bad, evil or obscene language. Trying to make a case here for Paul swearing and thereby freeing Christians to do the same when they feel it's appropriate, just isn't something the original text supports. To do so you'd have to be doing more eisegesis than exegesis.

Of course, this isn't the only time in Scripture that Paul uses some bold language to make his point. In Galatians 5:12, Paul is upset with people who still insist on keeping the Jewish Law of circumcision, even though they have become Christians. He says he wishes that they would cut and mutilate themselves when they do it.

The Greek word he uses is ἀποκόψονται, pronounced apokopsontai, which does mean to cut or mutilate. This is certainly a more graphic use of language and it shows Paul's anger at how people were refusing God's Grace in Christ. Yet the words he chooses are normal, acceptable words in Greek. They never cross the threshold into profane, evil or obscene language.

We do the same thing in English. If my son and I are walking the dog and the dog does his business and I ask my son to please pick up the dog dung with the plastic bag we brought along, that would not be swearing in our culture. However, if I used

the “s” curse it would be swearing because the “s” word is a recognized swear word in our society. “Dung” and the “s” curse are not the same. They are two different words, one of which crosses the line into the area of swear words while the other does not. So if I use the word “dung” instead of the “s” curse it would be wrong of someone to say that I really meant “s” when I clearly chose to use “dung.” If I wrote a letter to someone and used the word “dung” in it, for someone to read that letter to someone else and substitute the “s” curse would be inappropriate and unfaithful to the original word I chose.

There are numerous other examples of Scripture where language is rather honest and blunt, but doesn’t cross the line of being profane, evil or foul. One such example is II Kings 18:27 where people are spoken of as eating their own dung and drinking their own urine. Another case is in Ezekiel 23:30 where some specific sexual acts are being described.

Yet, as was the case with Paul and the Greek word σκόβαλον, you’ll see that the words used in these Old Testaments passages are normal Hebrew words versus swear words from that society. The words chosen do describe some rather graphic things, but they do not cross the threshold into obscene, profane or swear words in that culture. In the Hebrew the words are normal words as opposed to swear words. That’s the difference.

If you'd like to see the details of the Hebrew for the II Kings 18:27 passage you can go to

[http://biblesuite.com/hebrew/strongs\\_2755.htm](http://biblesuite.com/hebrew/strongs_2755.htm).

For the Ezekiel 23:20 passage you can go to

<http://biblesuite.com/hebrew/2231.htm> and  
<http://biblesuite.com/hebrew/1320.htm>.

So we see that from time to time the writers of Scripture used normal, acceptable words to describe some rather extreme case scenarios. Yet, I'd suggest that doing it that way takes more intelligence and mastery of the language than it does to default to the profane, evil or obscene to get the message across.

The Bible makes it clear that all swear words, in any language and society, carry a negative connotation. By their very nature they are designed to degrade and put people down. I feel one would be hard pressed to find anyone who would say they enjoy being the focus of bad or obscene language. Such words are designed to make people feel bad and are aimed at tearing them down. Scripture is clear in telling us to use language designed to build each other up.

Moreover, when it comes to relating to non-believers we can love them, respect them and

**communicate with them without the use of profane, evil or obscene language and still be respected by them. Missionaries have been doing this for centuries with great success. One doesn't have to engage in behavior God forbids in order to reach others for Christ. In fact, non-Christians actually expect us to act like Christians.**

**Please turn over to the next chapter so we can look together at how this all plays out on a daily basis in our lives as we try to live for Christ.**

## Chapter Fifteen

### Overcoming The Use Of Bad Language

*Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit.*  
Proverbs 15:4

In the previous chapter we looked at the various types of bad language God addresses in His Word. In this chapter I'm going to switch gears and focus on how you can actually avoid using bad language.

Let's face it. We are all tempted to let a few swear or obscene words fly from time to time, but God is already ahead of us on that point and is obviously aware of the fact that the world will tempt us in this area of our behavior.

We see that, by how God writes this command. He says in Ephesians, to let no foul talk,

*“come out of your mouths.”*

That shows that God is very aware that we are far from perfect and when we get upset or in a tight situation, bad words will come to us and we will indeed be tempted to speak them. However, He tells us to make sure they don't come out of our mouths. Yet how do we do that, especially when our whole society is becoming more and more desensitized to swearing, profanity, and obscenity all the time? There are actually some very practical ways to achieve victory over bad language in our



lives which I'll get to shortly. Before I do, let's take a look at just what we're up against these days and just how desensitized to bad language we've become in our society. "*Back in the day*" as they say, the "d" curse was seen as a major swear word. Today it's seen at most as the equivalent to a "white lie" as if a "white lie" is somehow also alright with God. When the "d" curse was first used in a movie it became breaking national news! People found it difficult to fathom that a swear word was actually being used in a public movie. The movie of course was *Gone With The Wind*. In fact, since the day that movie premiered, language in movies and on television and radio has become progressively worse. Formats where bad language was never used before, now commonly use all kinds of bad and foul language.

It really is amazing how desensitized we've become on this issue. For example, Greg Groeschel, pastor of the second largest congregation in The United States asked a friend if he'd seen any good movies lately. His friend recommended *The Hangover* as one of the funniest movies he'd ever seen. Pastor Groeschel then asked a few members of his staff if any of them had seen the movie and they said "yes" and it was a "*must see.*"

Yet before he took the whole family to see it, he felt he should check out a review of the movie on *Screenit.com*, which is a movie review website for families. He said what he found floored him. What

he found clearly shows just how desensitized we've become to bad language in our culture.

Here is the report on the movie.

It contains:

91 different variations of the F-bomb.

41 excretory words.

14 references to a person's rear end.

13 uses of the word Hell.

9 slang terms for male anatomy.

31 variations of taking God's Name in vain.

Pastor Groeschel then went back to his staff members who recommended the movie and told them that the movie has 91 F-bombs, which averages out to about one F-bomb a minute. Incredibly enough, the most common response from his staff was,

"Really? I didn't even notice."

to which he responded,

*"Really. You didn't notice one 'F' word each minute?"*

Christians today go to movies like this all the time. In essence, they claim to pretty much ignore the foul language and try to enjoy the funny or good parts of the movie in spite of it. They'll tell you that they spiritually compartmentalize the bad

**things similar to the way your computer quarantines a virus. What they are saying is that they can actually be immersed in that kind of language and come out unfazed. The problem is that this kind of language and obscenity does have an effect on people. It does assault our soul and spirit. That is what it was designed to do. We may say we won't let it bother us, but that is really spiritually naïve on our part.**

**Pastor Groeschel puts it plainly when he goes on to ask,**

**“Can you really endure an onslaught of ‘f bombs’ in a movie and not get wounded?”**

**Is sitting in that theater and turning off your spiritual radar really going to protect you from the damage of those incoming spiritual missiles that do keep coming, even when you've turned off your radar? In my opinion that is a classic example of a leap of foolishness disguised as a leap of faith.**

**It's sort of like standing outside a leaking nuclear power plant and expecting nothing bad to happen. It might be a sunny day with a beautiful blue sky and if asked you would say that you felt absolutely fine. Yet you are being bombarded by stuff that will build up inside you and harm you even though at the moment, you feel absolutely nothing.**

**The very fact that a committed Christian would sit through 91 F-bombs along with all the other foul and obscene language in that movie without getting up and leaving, clearly shows that an inappropriate level of tolerance for things God forbids has clearly taken root in that person's life. As Christians, do we really feel God is pleased with our purposefully sitting in a theater immersing ourselves in this kind of spiritual poison and supporting it with our dollars?**

**God never forbids or warns us about things for the fun of it. It's always because whatever He's telling us to stay away from is something that can do harm to us and to others.**

**We should realize again from Ephesians 4:29, that when we do swear and allow profane or foul talk to come out of our mouths, or support and encourage its proliferation by buying those movie tickets, it will injure and harm others. Far from building a person up, such language calls up images which at the least, are improper and at the worst are disgusting, degrading and damaging to others. In addition, its effects can also impact those nearby who hear it, especially children.**

**Beyoncé and others like her, are perfect examples of how we tolerate foul and obscene language these days. Things that used to be deemed inappropriate and obscene are now common place. She sang at a Presidential Inauguration four years ago, yet when she makes**

videos she engages in some of the most disgusting language and images out there today. In her single called *“Formation”* she says speaking of her boyfriend,

*“When he f--k me good, I take his a-s to Red Lobster,”*

This kind of obscene behavior really angers God. I’ve never looked into it, but my guess is that she probably gives some of her money to worthy causes. That probably makes her and others who support her feel that God is actually happy with her. They will rationalize, that when God considers her eternal status, He will overlook what she’s *really* like and let her into Heaven anyway.

However, according to everything I’ve ever read in Scripture that isn’t how it works. The Bible is clear that people who constantly flaunt and go against God’s Word, are definitely not going to Heaven unless something changes in their lives in a major way. People like Bill Maher and others for instance, who constantly bad mouth God and Christianity are without doubt on their way to eternity in Hell unless they change, repent and begin to honestly follow Christ. By the way, that’s not a judgmental statement. It’s being honest and factual according to what God has told us. That’s why it’s our job to share the Good News of Christ with people like them.

**Who gets into Heaven, is certainly God's call to make, but if Beyoncé and Bill Maher can get into Heaven doing what they do, it's clear that everything Christianity has taught for the past 20 centuries is pretty much meaningless and we've completely missed the boat.**

**Interestingly enough President Obama's two daughters recently attended a Beyoncé concert. To me that is incredibly bad parenting and a terrible example to set for the youth of our nation. By the way, I'm not picking on President Obama. I'd say the same about any President or parent who felt it was alright to send their kids to hear this disgusting kind of performance.**

**Only about a week ago, as I was writing this book, Madonna went on a profanity laced rant about her dislike of the current political atmosphere, including speaking about her consideration of blowing up the White House. President Trump actually commented and said she was "*disgusting*" and that what she said was "*disgraceful to our country.*" Whatever you feel about President Trump, on this one he's right and it's about time people, especially Christians, wake up and lovingly and respectfully speak up when they hear these kinds of things.**

**Using bad language is in direct disobedience to what God says we should be doing. In short, when we use bad language we sin against God and against others. Speaking about the language we**

choose to use, in James 3:8-10 God puts it about as clear as it can get.

*“but no human being can tame the tongue --- a relentless evil, full of poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so.”*

If you would like to see how far we've drifted off the course Scripture sets for our society when it comes to foul language and its acceptability, this next example will do the job. It took place right after the terrible bombings at The Boston Marathon.

David Ortiz, of the Boston Red Sox is seen by many as one of the best baseball players of all time and a future Hall of Famer. At their first home game after the bombings, The Red Sox held a special pre-game ceremony to pause and to take time to reflect on all that was happening in their city. Mr. Ortiz was given the microphone and walked out onto the field in front of a capacity crowd in Fenway Park to make some extemporaneous comments about the city of Boston and its people and how they should remain strong. After some words of thanks to the Mayor of Boston and the Governor of Massachusetts and the Boston Police Department for the great work they had done in the aftermath of the terrorist attack, he said these words in front of a packed stadium and

millions watching around the country and the world.

*“This is our f---ing city and nobody gonna dictate our freedom.”*

People say Mr. Ortiz was just caught up in the moment. Maybe so. Therefore, let’s give him all the benefit of the doubt and by all means let’s forgive him. Yet, also let’s hold him accountable so he refrains from doing this kind of thing in the future.

However, in my opinion, dropping the F-bomb, especially in front of millions of kids across the country who were watching and who later saw the video, was a terrible thing to do.

I could be wrong, but as far as I have been able to find out, he was never officially reprimanded or fined, by the Red Sox. In fact, this past year of 2016, as he prepared to leave baseball, the Red Sox ordered the making of a bobble head doll in his honor to be given out to fans. Instead of holding a bat, this doll had him holding a microphone to specifically recall that F-bomb moment. The doll was supposed to be given out at a Red Sox game, but issues not connected to the F-bomb came up which forced the doll to be cancelled. Thank God.

Contrast that with NASCAR where drivers get hit with significant fines for swearing on the air.



**Yet David Ortiz is made out to be a hero for dropping the F-bomb.**

**It gets worse. Speaking of his words that day, ESPN on their website said that what he said that day was his “Finest Moment” as a Red Sox player. This is a man with a Hall of Fame career. He has hit over 500 homeruns, led his team to incredible comebacks and World Championships and yet, dropping the F-bomb was his finest moment.**

**No, it wasn't and anybody who feels it was, has lost touch with decency and what's right in the sight of God.**

**To make matters worse and to indicate further how far off course we've gotten as a society his words were heard and responded to by the Chairman of The Federal Communications Commission or FCC, Julius Genachowski. He said that what David Ortiz said was,**

***“brilliant”***

**and He went on to say,**

***“To censor that would be like censoring the world's greatest writer. He nailed it. It never should've become an FCC question, and I was happy to just put that to bed and follow Big Papi's leadership.”***

**WOW! Censoring his F-bomb would have been like censoring “the world’s greatest writer.” That has to be one of the dumbest and most off course statements I’ve ever heard anyone make.**

**Then came the icing on the cake as the President of The United States at the time said that what Ortiz said was a,**

***“Proud Moment,”***

**and probably,**

***“the only time America didn’t have a problem with cursing on live T. V.”***

**Actually that was wrong too, because people from all over the country took the time to contact the FCC to register their objections. Here are just a few that were recorded by the FCC. Grammatical errors have been corrected.**

***“My complaint is in reference to the FCC’s ‘non-action’ regarding the F-word used by David Ortiz during his speech regarding the Boston tragedy. The fact that Julius Genachowski tweeted his acceptance of this language is unacceptable. Rules should be for ALL and there should be no ‘exceptions’ Very disappointed!”***

***“My 9 year old and I were watching what should have been a historic moment, instead he and I were treated to this foul language. I was appalled to see***

***that your chairman approved the language. Maybe he can explain to my son that he approves the use of the word? What time would he like to call us to explain”?***

***“David Ortiz used the “F” word and it was determined that due to the emotion of the situation it was ok and he would not be fined. Nonsense. Children were watching. He couldn’t use another word to express his emotion? This is not acceptable language. Shame on the FCC!***

**One man wrote to the FCC and told them that he and his grandson were at the game and that his grandson asked him what the word meant, which had to be a tough situation for Grandpa.**

***“There is NO occasion where children should have to be subjected to that. . . .***

**One person wrote the following online as a response to an article about the moment.**

***“What he wanted to convey would have been much more powerful if he had left out the obscene language. . . . If everyone were honest, when vulgar language is used it lowers your opinion of the person. Just saying...his message lost its power.”***

**This person has it spot on. All David Ortiz had to do was choose one of perhaps 10,000 other words and he would have made that moment truly**

historic for the right reasons. However, he didn't and what's worse people in responsible positions praised and applauded him for it.

Let me be honest here. I'm sure that someone could read this chapter and say that I am being too judgmental and legalistic. They might say I was showing too little grace and sounding a bit self-righteous in this whole matter of Christians using bad language. I can hear people who might say

*“Pastor John. Relax! You are making too much out of this whole thing.” David Ortiz isn't a committed Christian anyway. What do you expect?”*

I realize David Ortiz isn't seen as a committed Christian, but the point is that many who do consider themselves as committed Christians have drifted way off course on the issue of language. They are using bad language all the time and somehow justifying it. Moreover, when they hear and see something like what David Ortiz did, they simply walk away and say nothing.

I'm not the one who set up the rules. That was God and He's taken the time in His Word to call us out on this subject. I'm just the messenger and I do realize what sometimes happens to the messenger. However, lest someone feels I'm on my high horse here, let me conclude this chapter by sharing my own personal struggle with this subject and how God gave me victory over it.

**As I said previously, I personally struggled with this issue of bad language for some time, even after becoming a Christian. Although I was a Christian, I still used bad language and rationalized it as something God didn't see as that big a deal, even though in His Word He took the time to say it was.**

**I was wrong and one day God gave me a picture, an analogy to get my attention. He showed me that when we boldly and purposefully sin, it's just like picking up a hammer and purposefully driving the nails into Jesus' Hand all over again and acting like it's nothing!**

**After that, I came to see my flagrant and arrogant use of bad language in this way. Each time I used bad language, it was as if I had chosen to pick up a hammer and just drive another nail into Jesus' Hands.**

**So I committed to "*not allowing any foul language to come out of my mouth.*" I depended on God's Holy Spirit for the strength and ability to make that happen and it has indeed worked. This may sound like boasting, but it's really just boasting about what God can do through a sinner like me. My children are now 37, 35, and 31 years of age and none of them has ever heard a single swear word come out of my mouth, and trust me, especially in their teenage years, they gave me plenty of reason to let a few bad words fly. I'm not bragging. I'm just telling you what God can do if you give Him a chance. By His Grace, my tongue**

has been kept under control and it has made a real difference in our home, our lives and our witness to others for Christ.

I'll never forget teaching on this subject in an adult class at a congregation in The Dalles, Oregon. Later that day, a man shared with me that he too was struggling with the issue of swearing and foul language. He certainly was a Christian, but he'd been brought up in a tough lifestyle. He had been a Marine and was currently working in construction where using foul language is pretty much a way of life. Yet, after hearing the teaching and what was in God's Word, he felt convicted by The Holy Spirit that what Scripture said about this subject was correct. He told me he felt he had to do something about it.

He told me after the teaching that he felt he had to come up with a word to use when he became upset, a word he would substitute for his swearing. With joy in his eyes he told me that he had already come up with the word. He said he was impressed with the way God had shown me that when I used bad language it was like driving more nails into Jesus. He said therefore, that from now on, whenever he felt he was about to swear, he'd say the word "NAILS" instead of a bad word. He was also aware that people might find his saying "NAILS" a bit strange and they might ask him why he said that. He said he planned to use the opportunity to witness to them about God and His Power in his life. That is a blessing.

**I feel it's fair to say that based on what Scripture teaches us on this subject, using profanity or any bad or obscene language in one's society is inconsistent with and damaging to a good Christian witness. The opposite is also true. When we stop using bad language or don't use it in the first place, it gets noticed by others around us. It is in and of itself a witness to what we are trying to do to obey God.**

**However, we must realize that we can never do this by ourselves. We must ask The Holy Spirit to give us the ability to keep those bad words from exiting our mouths. It really does work, especially when we admit to God that what He says about bad language is correct.**

**In Galatians 5:22-23 we see the nine Fruits of The Holy Spirit listed for us. Self-control is one of The Fruits mentioned there and if we ask The Holy Spirit to take control of this area of our lives, we will see big changes.**

**As was the case for me, perhaps you use swear words and bad language at times and have pretty much justified and rationalized it as something that really isn't that big a deal to God or anyone else. Let me suggest that this is a very common place to be these days, but again, "North is still North." Sin is still sin and God isn't happy with Christians who try to reset the moral compass of His Word.**

I was recently having a meal with some Christians, most of whom I'd never met before. A number of them were planning to go on a short term mission trip to a poor country in Central America. One woman there was a small group Bible study leader. She used the "s" curse twice in her normal conversation with those of us there as if it was perfectly fine to do so. I was amazed at how off course she was spiritually. I'm not saying she isn't a Christian, but I am saying she's an uninformed Christian, who is somehow rationalizing non-Christian behavior as normal and acceptable to others and to God. It's not! If I were her pastor and heard her using that kind of language, I'd have to sit down with her and lovingly share with her the appropriate Biblical teaching on this subject. If after that, she was unwilling to abide by what Scripture teaches on this subject, I would have to insist that she step down as a Bible Study leader.

I've encountered a few strange things in this area. For instance, on more than one occasion, after teaching what's in this chapter to groups of people, I've had people come up to me to ask questions and discuss the teaching. Amazingly, in their discussion with me, they actually used a swear word without even noticing it. It was as if they had heard nothing I had said for the entire teaching! That to me belies where we are in our culture regarding this subject.



**I even heard a woman who was very involved in Christian ministry, use a swear word in the Sanctuary, while addressing a group of people she was trying to get gathered together for a picture.**

**Well, I trust this chapter has given you some things to chew on. I can tell you one thing. If you look at this subject honestly and Biblically, you will see that the issue of Christians using bad language is still important to God today because His Word hasn't changed. If you are using bad language and have somehow rationalized it, it might be time for you to become more concerned with seeking to obey His Word on this subject, rather than morphing it to accommodate your errant rationalizations.**

**God has taken the time in His Word to instruct us in this particular important topic for a reason. I can promise you that as we take seriously what He says about our use of bad language, we can be sure He will be faithful, He will encourage us and will empower us to keep our tongues under the control of His Spirit in ways that will bring Him glory and will witness more credibly to those we are trying to reach for Him.**

## **Chapter Sixteen**

### **Crossing The Line From Tolerance To Coercion**

*A gentle answer quiets anger, but a harsh one stirs it up. Proverbs 15:1*

**Let me suggest that there is a solution to the current debate in our nation over religious rights and freedom. My proposed solution really has nothing to do with being Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American, African American, Latin, Asian, White, straight, gay or any other such thing. Rather, it has to do with everyone being willing to respect and tolerate the faith of others, even if we disagree with them, provided that what they do in the name of their religion doesn't amount to intimidation, bullying and or violence against others.**

**Let's say I go into a restaurant owned by a faithful Muslim family which offers only "halal" meats on the menu. As you may be aware, halal meats are meats which are approved of and allowed by Islamic law and which have to be prepared in a certain way. Halal meats are the Islamic equivalent of kosher meats for the Jewish community. For Muslims, halal meats include things like lamb, turkey, chicken and others, but never pork.**

**Should I picket the restaurant for discriminating against me because they don't have pork on the menu when I would like pork? Should I call for a**

**boycott of their business, claiming that they discriminated against me because their religious law forbids them to eat or offer meats that are not approved by Islamic law in their restaurant? Of course not.**

**Now, if the owner of the restaurant said I wasn't allowed to set foot inside his public business because I was a Christian and Christians are inferior human beings, that would be another matter. Yet, the law in this country now forbids that kind of discrimination in a public business, although once it didn't.**

**So let's get one thing straight from the start. This current debate about religious freedom under our Constitution isn't about people trying to pass laws that would allow a regression and return to the days of Jim Crow in our country. The average person who refuses to video a gay wedding based on their religious convictions, isn't likely to put on sheets and burn a cross at the wedding. If they do they'll be arrested and put in jail where they belong.**

**Let's be clear. If you own a business that serves the public, you do have to allow access to your business to everyone and that's the way it should be. Yet, that doesn't mean you have to give everyone everything they ask for, especially if what they ask for specifically goes against your religious convictions. In this country, Muslims have the freedom and religious liberty under the Constitution to serve *only* halal meats in their**

**establishment and you and I have the right to go somewhere else for a pulled pork sandwich.**

**As an American Christian, I would never raise a fuss about a Muslim restaurant owner who didn't have pork on the menu. I'd enjoy what he had on the menu that I did like and if I desired pork, I'd get it somewhere else. If it is his religious conviction that handling and serving pork is unclean and unholy, even though I may disagree with him, I will respect and tolerate his opinion and count it part of his religious freedom in this nation to practice and carry out those convictions. Were the government to force him by law to serve pork, or to intimidate or bully him to do so, the government would be taking away his religious freedom and forcing him to comply with the government's views on the subject. That isn't tolerance and it isn't American.**

**Interestingly enough though, due to what has been called a "*strong demand*" from the Muslim community in Great Britain and Ireland, there are more than 200 Subway stores which now serve ONLY halal meats and have given up their freedom to serve pork to those who might like it.**

**Prior to this, Subway had taken the initiative to provide the *option* of "halal" meats to their Muslim customers, while still giving the option of pork to their customers who ordered it. Some in the Muslim community however, bullied them into selling ONLY "halal" meats and they conceded. That shouldn't happen. That isn't tolerance. It's coercion.**

**Fox News contributor Tammy Bruce, who is an openly gay woman, put it this way.**

***“We saw this with Chick-Fil-A, everybody came to Chick-Fil-A's defense when they were under attack by fascists, by bullies--the gay liberals have turned into bullies.”***

**She feels that many gay liberals are turning to fascist like tactics to force their beliefs on others and to keep others from having a right to the beliefs to which they are entitled under our Constitution. In my opinion they are crossing the line from tolerance to coercion.**

**That isn't to imply that gay liberals are fascists themselves, but when they, or others, resort to fascist tactics they should be held accountable.**

**A perfect example of that would be calling up and threatening the life of a pizza shop owner in Indiana who had said that due to her Christian faith, she wouldn't be able to cater a gay wedding. I was talking recently with a friend who was born and raised in Germany. She told me that her grandfather voted for Hitler the first time, but the second time he had changed his position and felt Hitler was wrong. He had actually spoken against Hitler in his community. One day the Schutzstaffe, commonly called the “SS” arrived and her grandfather disappeared. Thankfully, through some community connections her grandfather was later freed by the Nazis.**

**Like my friend's grandfather, all the pizza shop owner did was speak her opinion, a constitutional right we often take for granted in this country. Most of us would agree that threatening someone's life because they hold a position opposite of ours based on their faith, is the antithesis of what religious rights and freedom in this nation are all about. That certainly is a fascist tactic.**

**Yet, there are some in the gay community who feel that the only way to handle those who disagree with their values, is to intimidate them and force them by law to accept and abide by their values.**

**When someone calls a place of business and threatens the owner's life because they politely declined to cater a same-sex wedding based on their religious convictions, that person has left American values behind in favor of the values and tactics of Russia, North Korea, Cuba, and Nazi Germany, not The United States. They have betrayed the values of the United States that are at the very core of our nation's DNA.**

**The bottom line is that in a privately owned business, the freedom for someone to opt out of providing something that goes against their religion isn't discrimination. It's exercising their constitutional right to respectfully opt out of doing certain things which violate their religion based on the constitutional rights given them by the First Amendment.**

**The Muslim restaurant owner isn't discriminating against me because he doesn't**

**serve pork. In the carrying out of his business, he's practicing his freedom of religion in this country to refrain from engaging in things which violate his religion. I respect and will tolerate that, even if I disagree with his position.**

**The same applies to Christians, Jews and any other religion. Let's say a Christian owns a retail photography and video business. In his store, he sells various products like regular and video cameras, along with equipment and accessories that go with those products. He also offers the service of doing videography for weddings and other social events.**

**If a gay couple comes into his store, the law says that they should be welcomed and treated like any other customer and afforded the respect given anyone else. They should be able to buy any camera or accessory they desire.**

**Yet, if in his religious conviction, the owner takes the position that their practice of a same-sex relationship violates what The Bible teaches and videotaping their wedding goes against that genuinely held religious position, politely refusing their request is his First Amendment right. By the way it isn't just Christians who take this stand on same-sex relationships. Based on their faith, many Jews and Muslims would do the same thing.**

**Therefore, when anyone, especially the government, forces him, by threat of legal action and sanction, to take part in and provide services which go against his genuine religious convictions**

**and rights as an American, the line of his religious freedom had been crossed.**

**If you'd like to stop coming in his store because of his religious convictions, you certainly have that right, but you don't have the right to force him to do what you want him to do for you, if what you are demanding genuinely goes against his religious convictions. If you choose to punish him by withdrawing your business, you have that right, as well as the right to talk to others about it and try to convince them to do the same thing by boycotting his business. Yet, you do not have the right to threaten or intimidate him, nor he you.**

**However, if the government, through codified law, punishes him for not doing something that genuinely violates his religious convictions, the government has crossed the line from protecting his freedom of religion to trampling all over it.**

**By the way, it's not just about same-sex weddings. If two straight men asked a Christian videographer to come video and document a bachelor party they were throwing where there would be topless women, the Christian could claim the same religious objection, even though he might gladly video other types of events for those same men which do not violate his religious convictions.**

**Clearly, the issue isn't about being gay or straight or Muslim or Jewish or Christian or any other such thing. It's about people, all people, not being forced by law to do what violates their**



**religious values in the operation of their privately owned public business.**

**The only exception, as I said before, is when someone's refusal to provide a certain service based on their genuine religious freedom, is followed up by bullying, intimidation, disrespectful behavior or physical violence toward the persons seeking the service. If the owners resort to that kind of behavior, they should be arrested and prosecuted under the existing laws because they have chosen to use force to violate the constitutional rights of others.**

**If a gay couple is treated kindly in a photography studio and are politely and respectfully refused the service of videoing their wedding based on the owner's religious convictions, the gay couple should respect that choice, tolerate it and go somewhere else where they can get the services they desire.**

**Religious freedom is a cornerstone of our national identity. It must be preserved for all, or it will deteriorate for all, becoming dictated by the state. We've all seen how that's worked out in the past.**

**Actually, it would be better if we all got back to the old definition of tolerance, because in case you missed it, the definition of tolerance has been slowly and quietly changed over the last few decades. Let me explain.**

Here's the definition of the word "tolerate" from *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus* in 1996.

*Tolerate: "to respect (others' beliefs, practices, etc.) without sharing them."*

Now take a look at the definition of the word "tolerate" from the *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* in 2014.

*Tolerate: "to accept behavior and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them."*

You probably noticed the change. The word "respect" in the old definition has now been changed to "accept" in the new definition.

If you look up the word "accept" in the dictionary you find the following definitions.

*"receive with approval or favor:"*

*"to regard as true or sound"*

*"to agree or consent to;"*

On the other hand, here are two definitions of the word "respect" which are germane to this discussion.

*"to show regard or consideration for:  
to respect someone's rights."*

*"to refrain from intruding upon or interfering with:  
to respect a person's privacy."*

**It's not rocket science to see that there is a mega difference between "respect" and "accept." When the word "accept" is inserted into the definition of the word tolerate, we are now being told that *real* tolerance means we "accept" and "consent to" someone else's view, even if we disagree with it.**

**In fact, the new definition of tolerance is incredibly flawed. How in the world can one be expected to accept and receive with approval or favor, something with which they basically disagree in the first place? By definition, one can only tolerate something with which they disagree. They can't accept it. If they accept it, tolerance would be unnecessary.**

**Therefore, the new definition of tolerance clearly sets up a situation where if we don't declare and act as though the other person's point of view is just as valid as ours, we're going to be labeled as intolerant, mean spirited or haters.**

**That makes very little sense. For instance, if I were to disagree with the President on a policy he was proposing to Congress, I could do so with respect for him and his office, without accepting his policy as valid. I can certainly respect my President's viewpoint, without accepting it. Doing so isn't an act of intolerance, but rather fits the correct meaning of what it means to practice tolerance. Also disagreeing with his policy doesn't mean I hate him. I simply respectfully disagree with him, but am nonetheless willing to tolerate his**

**position. The bottom line is that “respect” and “accept” are not synonyms.**

**The fact that I disagree with someone clearly doesn't mean I hate them or even dislike them. Most husbands and wives disagree with each other at times, but that doesn't mean they are intolerant of and hate each other.**

**The fascist types in the gay community, or any community, simply have to dial it back. They have to stop the hypocrisy. For instance, my guess is that if a straight, Roman Catholic priest who was clearly against same-sex marriage based on his religious convictions, applied for the job of president of Marriage Equality U. S. A., which is a national pro same-sex organization, he would be denied that post based on his religious position. Marriage Equality U. S. A. has every right under our Constitution to deny that priest the job of president of their private pro same-sex organization and doing so shouldn't become national news.**

**However, when a Roman Catholic high school refuses to hire an openly gay man as a teacher, Marriage Equality U. S. A. and the entire gay community, should support the school's right to take that position, instead of attacking them as a bunch of ignorant, intolerant haters and making a national news story out of it.**

**It's ironic that many who champion free speech and religious freedom are now turning to tactics designed to shut down those rights. Recently at the University of California, Berkeley, protesters**

turned violent in an attempt to stop an invited guest from speaking on the campus. I can recall my college days when people would go to hear people speak with whom they completely disagreed without protesting or violence. These speakers were afforded their First Amendment rights of free speech and religious freedom even if what they said was in complete opposition to what the university may have stood for. It was called tolerance.

Now, people are actually saying that others DO NOT have the right to share their opinion if they feel the opinion is intolerant of their own and they will even resort to violence to shut down a person's right to speak. What's amazing is that large numbers of these people claim that those with whom they disagree are Nazi types. Then, in what is an incredible act of inconsistency and hypocrisy, they employ the same Nazi type tactics to shut their opponents down. They completely miss the meaning and application of what the Founders intended in the First Amendment regarding free speech.

In my opinion, it's time for all of us to return to the real meaning of tolerance, which allows for respectful disagreement and dialogue among people without resorting to intimidation, lawsuits and Nazi tactics in an effort to force others to give up their religious and other rights in favor of those with whom they disagree. If people would do that, things would work a lot more smoothly in our great country.

**One thing is for sure. If the Supreme Court of the United States ever rules to allow situations where people are forced to do things against their valid religious convictions and which do not involve bullying, intolerance or violence, our nation's First Amendment will be all but worthless. At that moment we will join a long list of governments, both from the past and in the present, which we have stood against and which time and again as Americans, we have said we would never become. At that moment we will have violated and made void our religious freedom and free speech, two of the most precious and foundational rights upon which our nation was built and has stood these past 241 years!**

## Chapter Seventeen

### By The Way, Committed Christians Should. . .

*And whatever you do, in **word or deed**, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17*

**This chapter is sort of a catch all chapter. In it I'll touch on a number of topics we Christians should be concerned about in our daily walk with Christ. Instead of devoting an entire chapter to each topic, I'll simply cover each one in a few pages, enough to start the conversation and to encourage you to delve into each topic further on your own. Here we go.**

#### **Consider Doing a Better Job At Keeping The Sabbath.**

**Many Christians today have lost a Biblical sense of what it means to obey the Fourth Commandment which tells us to rest and keep The Sabbath holy. According to The Bible, we're not supposed to work on that day. We're supposed to purposefully set aside time to worship The Lord, spend more time with family and friends and refrain from doing what we normally do to make a living.**

**When The Bible says we should not work on that day, it doesn't mean that we can't play tennis for fun, or play some baseball or cut the lawn. It means that we should refrain from what we normally do to make a living. We should take a**

**break from our livelihood because God has designed us to run our engines at work for a maximum of six days. Working seven days a week without taking a vacation for years is something I've seen some folks take pride in, but it goes directly against what God has ordered for our own good. Race cars have something called a tachometer which is an instrument that simply shows the number of RPM's at which the engine is currently running. If the needle goes into the red zone a driver is aware that it can't stay there too long without serious damage to the engine. You can run it in the red zone for awhile, but it's the RED zone for a reason. It's a warning. Ask any NASCAR driver and they will tell you that you can only run the engine in the red zone for so long before things start coming apart.**

**God gave us The Fourth Commandment for a reason and that reason is to maximize our ability to work and be productive for Him and our families. If we violate that warning, there will be consequences. I am convinced that perhaps more damage has been done to the family in our nation by Christians and others ignoring the Fourth Commandment than a whole lot of other things. Once working on Sundays became common place the potential for great damage to the family came to the fore.**

**People can say things like,**

*"If I take on that extra shift each week, or part time job on Sundays, we'll be able to afford a little bigger*



*house, or a new car or a boat or whatever we deem appropriate.*

**People have given up their rest time, their worship time and their family time in pursuit of those misguided goals.**

**Please don't get me wrong here. I'm not calling for the closing of fire and police stations on Sundays. Yet, I am saying that working in jobs that are not essential to the overall good and safety of the community, goes against God's Word and comes with serious consequences. People get burned out, families and children are ignored and Christians drift from what God has called us to do.**

**I realize that some people will say I'm being too legalistic here and that in a modern day society like we have, refraining from work on Sunday just isn't realistic. However, it is realistic and it has been accomplished by many in our day.**

**For instance, take the example of Chick-fil-A. In observation of the Fourth Commandment the leadership of this national company closes their stores on Sunday. That is something that the world would tell you is crazy. Sunday is perhaps the single most revenue producing day of the week for a fast food chain. However, even though they close on Sunday, they are flourishing and growing and seeing God bless their company. In fact, Chick-fil-A has an unparalleled record of 40 consecutive years of sales increases, with its core free-standing restaurants achieving higher sales**

**per unit in six days (with shorter operating hours) than most major chains in the industry.**

**That is directly due to their obedience to His Word. Moreover, they are not the only company that does this. Hobby Lobby does the same as do numerous other medium sized and small businesses across the country**

**Take a look at what David Green, the CEO of Hobby Lobby has to say.**

**“We’re Christians, and we run our business on Christian principles. I’ve always said that the first two goals of our business are (1) to run our business in harmony with God’s laws, and (2) to focus on people more than money. And that’s what we’ve tried to do. We close early so our employees can see their families at night. We keep our stores closed on Sundays, one of the week’s biggest shopping days, so that our workers and their families can enjoy a day of rest. We believe that it is by God’s grace that Hobby Lobby has endured, and he has blessed us and our employees. We’ve not only added jobs in a weak economy, we’ve raised wages for the past four years in a row. Our full-time employees start at 80% above minimum wage.”**

**Note: The “past four years” mentioned in this quotation were the extremely difficult financial years of 2008-2012.**

**My wife and I avoid buying anything on Sundays. We’ve been doing this for decades and**

**find that with a little planning it can be accomplished rather easily. Spending time with your kids after worship, rather than chasing down bargains at Costco, can pay huge benefits in the long run.**

**Businesses being closed on Sundays used to be the norm in America. Now it's the exception and for my money, it has cost us dearly. However, there are still places today where people purpose to keep the Sabbath holy. Bergen County in New Jersey is one of those places. One of the top ten zip codes for retail sales in the country, 07652, is located in Bergen County. Included in that zip code is the huge upscale Westfield Garden State Plaza mall. In it you can get everything from pizza and pretzels to an \$80,000 Tesla Model S. Yet, by law, that mall and many other stores in the zip code are closed on Sundays. So closing stores on Sundays can be done.**

**When a long time Bergen Country politician was asked why these laws still exist today in such a modern and metropolitan area of the country, here's what he said.**

*"It's a family day."*

**He explained that it was the one day of the week that most people can be sure of the company they care about and when the options for activity are more social than commercial. He was then asked if what these laws stood for was actually a resistance to consumerism, as if that would really be an issue**

in one of the top ten zip codes for retail sales in the country. He replied,

*“Well, we use a different word for it. We call it ‘quality of life.’”*

It’s also interesting to note that The Boston Marathon is still run on a Monday due to the fact that congregations around the city have lobbied to keep it that way to avoid disrupting services on Sunday.

Perhaps the way you keep the Sabbath could use a few course corrections. I encourage you to seek God about it and see what He tells you.

**Consider Watching More Closely What We Support With Our Money.**

It’s fair to say that when possible, Christians shouldn’t be supporting companies and businesses that are doing things in direct opposition to The Gospel. Now I realize that it can be very difficult to vet and investigate every company we do business with on a daily basis. Moreover, even if we find some objectionable things being supported by a company we purchase things from, we may have very little choice.

For instance, Delta Airlines and AT&T are both companies that support and advance the gay agenda in our nation and support numerous things which are in direct opposition to what The Bible teaches. However, they also provide a product that

millions of us have to have, unless, of course, we have the luxury of owning our own jet or phone company. Some grocery store companies may have questionable investments in their portfolios from a Christian perspective, but unless you can produce and grow your own food, you pretty much have to use your local grocery store.

However, when it's possible, I feel Christians should refrain from supporting companies that are doing things that are detrimental to The Gospel and which spread the wrong message to our kids and families.

One of those companies is Disney. For nearly two decades Disney owed Miramax Films which produced numerous films with sexually explicit content and language. In addition to that much of what Disney produces is laced with the things of wizards and occult type characters. A Google search of Disney and their connections may very well surprise you.

Virtually every cable company in the nation offers hard core pornography to their customers, pornography which is destroying marriages, lives and families on a daily basis. Why should Christians support companies like that? My wife and I cut the cable, as they say, a long time ago in our house for that very reason. Now, with new technology that is available, we can see any movie, sporting event etc. right on our television for free. That includes new movies while they are still in the theatres. However, for years we simply gave up

numerous shows we both liked rather than support a cable company that was poisoning our nation's families with the pornography they provide.

Lots of Christians respond to this kind of criticism by saying that they only buy the basic package which doesn't have any porn in it. That makes sense to a degree, but here's how I see it. Let's say you went to your favorite restaurant one day and noticed at the bottom of the menu a special box you'd never seen before. In that box were the words, "*Special Desserts After Your Meal.*" Upon asking what that meant, you were told that the restaurant had recently opened a back room area where you could go if you liked, to view and purchase X-rated materials along with adult sex toys.

My guess is that as a Christian you might stop going there with your family and you would do so for all the right reasons. Well, the cable companies all have a back room where they offer these kinds of destructive products and I feel that they should lose my business as a result.

On the other hand, the good news is that there are companies that have taken steps to correct these bad trends, such as numerous hotel chains which have determined to end offering porn in their hotel rooms. Perhaps more important is the fact that a number of them are doing it and they aren't even Christian companies. Here's a report on one firm that has done so.

*“InterContinental, which owns such well-known brands as Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza, has thereby allied itself with a trend among large hotel chains to clean up their act, especially in the face of public pressure from anti-pornography activists. With 727,000 rooms in 100 countries, InterContinental is the world’s biggest hotel company, . . . .”*

*In an email to the media, an IHG spokesperson said that the new policy dovetails with the company’s commitment to ‘a range of initiatives designed to safeguard human dignity—from supply chain protocols and human rights to sexual exploitation.’*

*Dawn Hawkins, Executive Director of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), applauded IHG for pledging to “reinforce its existing brand standard that prioritizes the dignity and safety of its guests. . . .”*

**Hyatt and Hilton Hotels have taken similar steps.**

**Therefore, Christians should perhaps give more attention to which companies they support with their money and should avoid whenever possible supporting companies which are doing and producing things that are anti-Christian.**

***Consider Standing Strong And Lovingly Against Pre-Marital Sexual Relations and Living Together Before Marriage.***

**It's interesting to note that many Christians have come to feel that pre-marital sex and living together is somehow now approved by God. It's not. God still considers it sinful and against His Word and His Will for His people. So many times I've heard Christians say things like,**

*"Come on pastor. Show a little grace here. Jesus is about grace. They love each other and are going to get married. What's the difference? They are committed to each other. Let's just let things be. Why create a fuss?"*

**God has reasons why He said living together as if you were married, before you actually are married, is wrong and shouldn't be done. Here are just a few and they are as valid today as they ever were.**

**If a couple is sexually active they have already given to each other the most precious gift they have to give within the confines of their love. However, God says that the precious gift of a sexual relationship is to be given only within the context of a committed marriage. It's far too special to be given away to anyone who isn't committed to you for life and here's why.**

**Once sexual activity starts, the possibility of having children enters into the equation and if a couple becomes pregnant before they are married, especially if the pregnancy is unplanned, lots of**



**things can happen and the relationship can go off the rails. One or the other person can walk away from the relationship altogether for various reasons that would not be permitted if they were legally married.**

**If that happens, it can often introduce the possibility of abortion, which can greatly complicate things for years to come. Even if the mother has the baby, that baby is still born out of wedlock and will therefore not be afforded the many blessings which come from having two parents and a stable marriage.**

**Now I admit that just because a couple gets married, never guarantees that the marriage will last and that children will be brought up in a good loving home and environment. However, even today, children born out of wedlock are still considered illegitimate children and face various negative social issues and bullying as a result.**

**Some people also argue that a marriage license is just a piece of paper and that people can be meaningfully committed to each other without it. That's a cop out. It might work if you were on a deserted island and were the only two people there and you each said vows of marriage to each other and before God.**

**However, in our society a public document which tells the whole world that you have made**

**this commitment and holds you accountable to it, is something tangible in our society for the betterment of the marriage and children that may come of it. In our society, the normal, legal process for marriage is when a couple goes through a specific ceremony of marriage and has the paper to prove it.**

**Otherwise, either person can walk away at any time without penalty. So that piece of paper is more than a piece of paper. It's actual proof that two people have in fact, publically committed to each other for life and as a result of that paper, if they ever choose to part, that paper makes sure they will have to do so legally and with all due respect to each other and their family.**

**Recent studies have also shown that even though about 50% of all married couples in the U. S. wind up getting a divorce, the rate of divorce is even higher for those who lived together before getting married. I'm unsure why that is, but the facts seem to confirm that what God says always works best.**

***Consider Checking For Residual Racism.***

**Racism is a terrible thing. Here's a definition of it.**

*“prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.”*

**Of course not everybody would agree that racism is wrong. In fact Christians for centuries misused Scripture to justify racism and some still do. In Luke 6:31 we read some all encompassing words from Jesus.**

*“Treat others just as you want to be treated.”*

**If you and I are really going to obey that command, racism has to go. Yet many of us have been raised in communities and families where racism was prevalent. We were told it was alright and that we could be good Christians and still harbor prejudice against those whom we saw as inferior to us for whatever reason.**

**They called it the “Tuskegee Experiment.” It was made up of African Americans who were eager to serve and defend their country during World War II. It began when pressure was put on President Roosevelt to allow African Americans to be trained as fighter pilots. It was called an experiment because it was felt that Blacks were inferior and lacked the skills and leadership abilities to fly airplanes.**

**The excerpts below, from a study from the Army War College dated less than 20 years prior, said this about African American soldiers.**

*“It is generally recognized that the pure blood American negro is inferior to our white population in mental capacity.*

*All officers without exception, agree that the Negro lacks initiative, displays little or no leadership, that these defects are greater in the Southern Negro.*

*An opinion held in common by practically all officers is that the negro is a rank coward in the dark.”*

**Virtually everyone said the Tuskegee Experiment was doomed to failure, except those brave African Americans who signed up and went to be trained in Tuskegee, Alabama. As it turned out, these men became one of the most successful and highly decorated fighter groups of the war. White bomber pilots actually requested that they be assigned to escort them on their missions.**

**They were awarded 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 1 Silver Star, 14 Bronze Stars, 744 Air Medals and only 8 Purple Hearts in all their flying. They flew over 1500 missions. They recorded the destruction of 112 enemy aircraft in the air, which included being the first to shoot down three German ME 262's, the world's first jet fighter plane. Another 150 enemy planes were destroyed on the ground.**

**Yet when these men came home, they were forbidden from eating in the same restaurants,**

**staying in the same hotels or drinking out of the same water fountains as the white people whose freedom they fought to preserve.**

**In one of the movies made to honor these men there is a scene where a group of men traveling by train to Tuskegee to be trained, were forced to give up their seats so German prisoners of war could sit down instead.**

**Like I said, racism is a terrible thing. When it's imbedded in you from a young age it is difficult to get rid of and in my opinion the only way that happens is for Christ to renew us and teach us that racism is fundamentally wrong. We must repent of it and live our lives as He commanded in Luke 6:31.**

**I'm very familiar with this subject because I used to be a full blown racist. I was brought up in a home where racism was normal and the use of the "N-word" was commonplace. I was taught to hate African Americans. I was taught that they were inferior and like most kids, I adopted what my parents modeled for me.**

**My grandfather on my mother's side, who served our country during World War I, was a major racist. He was a State Trooper after the war and told stories about going down to a Black area of the county we lived in and just having fun by cracking Black' men's skulls with his blackjack.**

**There is an historical building in the town where he lived that used to be a nail works. He once told me that he wished the town would turn it into an execution center to exterminate Blacks and he said he would like to be the one to run it. He told me that unless he executed 10,000 Blacks a day, he'd be ashamed to pick up his pay check.**

**That's a lot of hate and that's the kind of thing I had modeled for me. I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt that the ONLY thing that worked for me and that healed me of that kind of horrible hate, was Jesus' Love and His command for me to give that love to all others as He gave it to me. When I became a committed Christian, Christ healed me of my racism and allowed me to view every person on an equal level.**

**When I became a father, my grandfather used to spew his racism around our two boys before we had adopted our daughter Emily. I hated to sound disrespectful to him, but I told him straight out, that unless he was willing to give up seeing his great grandsons, he'd have to stop saying the hateful things he said around our boys. He actually relented and stopped, which I was happy to see happen.**

**However, I have found that many Christians, who feel they don't have a racist bone in their body, can still have what I call residual racism which pops up every now and then. I had to check**

**that in myself and correct it over the years because it can be pretty deceptive.**

**For instance, if you are telling a story and you are talking about a person and you describe them as African American or Black, instead of just calling them a person, you may have some residual racism. I suggest to you that unless you have a specific and legitimate reason to single them out as being Black, doing so means you are aware of their race at a level that might be unhealthy.**

**One couple once was describing to me how they had a flat tire on their way back from New York City to Long Island. They told me that a nice Black man stopped to give them some assistance. There was no reason to tell me he was Black and I'm positive that if he had been white they would have never said that a nice white man stopped to give them assistance. See what I mean?**

**I've also noticed numerous times, that when some people are telling a story and they mention that a Black person did this or did that, they actually lower their voice and almost whisper the word "Black." That indicates to me that something is askew and that there might be some residual racism lurking below the surface.**

**We've come so far in our nation when it comes to race relations. Yet we still have hard core racists who are preaching a hate that God Himself hates. I suggest to you that as committed**

**Christians, it is our responsibility to seek out and eliminate any lingering racism that may remain in us.**

**Christ can do that for sure. He did it for me and if it's necessary in your life, He can do it for you too.**

***Consider Having More Reverence For The Things Of God.***

**When I was young we were taught that we should be quiet in worship to show a proper attitude toward God. We were to reverence and respect Him which meant that we either behaved in worship or we could pay the price later.**

**Today when you go into some congregations, it's almost like you are walking into a concert put on by a production company. Don't get me wrong. I'm not in any way bashing contemporary worship or contemporary Christian music. I love and enjoy them both. I take part in them regularly. However, with a more casual attitude can come a lack of reverence. I would suggest that just because there is a more joyful and open worship time, doesn't mean it shouldn't come with the same deep respect and reverence God deserves in any situation.**

**Here is one definition of the word reverence.**

***“deep respect for someone or something.”***



**When I walk into the midst of a congregation on a Sunday morning, I feel that people should indeed be greeting one another, supporting one another and looking forward to a joyful time of praise and worship of The Lord.**

**However, once the music starts or a leader or pastor greets us, we should take on an attitude of respect and reverence for Whom we are about to worship and adore.**

**That means that trivial conversations should come to a close. We should put the phone away and turn it off or at least set it to vibrate so it's quiet, unless we are using it to access Scripture during the service at the appropriate time.**

**I've traveled all over our country as both a guest speaker and preacher, as well as simply a worshipper on a Sunday morning. I've been amazed to see the things I've seen in the past few years.**

**I've seen grown adults rudely continue to talk at a normal conversational level even after the service starts, as if they were the only people there. I've seen people on the Internet during the service accessing different sites instead of paying attention to the sermon. It just seems that many of us have drifted away from a sense of being in the presence of a Holy God Who loves us and gave His Only Begotten Son to save our soul.**

I've seen praise bands that are more into putting on a performance than they are into proclaiming The Gospel with their music. I've seen people toss their Bible on the floor and shove it under their seats. In my opinion this shows a lack of attention to reverence and respect for God. I realize that we don't worship The Bible, but it seems to me that we should at least respect The Bible enough not to put it on the floor. Even the American flag isn't supposed to touch the ground. It seems to me that we could afford the same respect to God's Word.

Once I saw a group of musicians rehearsing before worship and the leader was using The Communion Table for a place to hold his coffee as if he were at the counter in a diner. I saw a pastor do a similar thing.

Like I said in Chapter Two, so many of us have stopped paying attention to important details that God tells us matter, details that enhance or detract from our relationship with Him.

Yet, the one that tops them all happened in a large non-denominational congregation I visited last June in California. As I walked in I saw that the seating was set up in a movie theater arrangement. The seats were very comfortable and the sound system was great and it was in fact a nice place for worship.

**As I took my seat, there in front of me was a couple perhaps in their middle thirties or so. As I looked at them, I had to question what I was seeing because in all the places in the country and the world in which I'd worshipped The Lord, what I was seeing was a first.**

**The music had started and we were getting under way with the worship service and there they were, this young, supposedly Christian couple, making out! There they were, right there in front of me, kissing, looking lovingly into each other's eyes and completely shutting out everything around them including God Himself! It was utterly amazing that two people could be in a place of worship and be so absent self-absorbed and self centered.**

**So perhaps we should all do a "reverence check" once in a while to see how we're doing in that category. Reverence for God should and can be maintained in all forms of worship and in all settings. When we water that down, we set ourselves up for lots of other things which can compromise our faith and lead us off course.**

***Consider Witnessing With Our Words.***

**We've already seen in a previous chapter that the words we speak matter. It's important for us to consider how, as Christians, we can proactively witness to others with the words we choose. Let me give you an example. Your non-Christian**

**neighbor friends are leaving on a vacation. Here are two different things you could say to them.**

*“Good luck on your vacation. Have a great time. We’ll see you when you get back.”*

**or you could say,**

*“God Bless you on your trip. We’ll be praying for you. Have a great time and we’ll see you when you get back.”*

**See what I mean? As Christians, when we can, we should purposefully be witnessing with our words and language in ways that convey our faith and that encourage and bless others.**

**Instead of saying,**

*“It is what it is,”*

**We can say,**

*“I’ll be praying that God works for you in this situation.”*

**We should stay away from words that give credibility to New Age and Eastern religions.**

**Instead of saying,**

*“It’s our mantra,”*

**we can say,**

*“It’s our tradition or our practice.”*

**When possible, consider proactively using words that convey your faith to others.**

### **Consider A Daily Devotional Life**

**The Bible tells us in various places that God expects us to grow and mature in our Christian walk. If you’ve been a Christian for twenty five years and have never read The Bible from cover to cover something is wrong and you have missed tremendous opportunities to grow and to experience so much more of what God has for you and your family.**

**The Bible is the “Manual That Comes With The Product” and we are the product. Who tries to do anything of value in this world without studying whatever manual goes with that profession, sport or vocation? Yet Christians constantly go through life without consulting the very things which God has told us to download into our souls so that when the time comes, the right answers and Scriptures will come up on our spiritual screens.**

**One of the best ways to grow in Christ is to study and learn from His Word. A daily devotional is a tremendous aid toward that goal. Also, actually reading The Bible from cover to cover will**

amaze you and you'll learn so much about how God can make you a better Christian. There are "One Year Bibles" set up to have you read the entire Bible in one year, by taking a small portion each day. The one I prefer is the one that gives you a short reading each day from the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs. If you follow it, in just a year you'll have read the entire Bible.

Take the time as a family or as a couple or just by yourself, to spend some quiet time reading from a daily devotional and or Scripture itself. It's a doorway to so much that God has waiting for you. Having a short family devotional and prayer time after a meal each day can do wonders for your family. I realize teenagers will find it a very boring thing, but trust me, stuff is getting through even when it appears that it isn't.

The Bible tells us to teach our children God's ways and it's tough to do that if we have failed to learn it ourselves. So if you have yet to do so, let me encourage you to get in the daily habit of reading a devotional that you find works for you. Also take the time as a family or couple or by yourself, to pray to The Lord each day, confessing your sins to Him, thanking Him for all your blessings and bringing before Him anything that concerns you. Be assured that nothing is too big for Him to handle and nothing is too small to escape His concern.

**Another part of that daily devotional can be reviewing and praying for the missionaries your congregation supports. You'll be amazed at what can happen in you as you pray for, write letters to and find out more about the missionaries who are serving Christ and are supported by your congregation.**

*Consider If You Are Really Going To Heaven.*

**It may sound strange for me to bring this up, but you'd be surprised at how many people who say they are Christians, have all kinds of doubts and actually wonder if they really will be going to Heaven. I've run into so many people in the Church who have questions about what it really takes to be sure they are saved.**

**People tell me that they believe Jesus is real and they claim Him as their Savior and therefore, they are "pretty sure" they will be going to Heaven as a result. Maybe. Maybe not! It's amazing just how far off course people can get on this vital subject.**

**What I mean by that is that simply agreeing with God that Jesus is The Savior isn't enough. Even Satan agrees that Jesus is The Savior. In fact he's sure of it.**

**So there's more to it than that. We have to also agree with God about our sin and what we're going**

to do about it. To put it simply this is the way it breaks down.

1. We have to agree with God that we have all sinned and that our sin deserves to be punished.
2. Next, we also have to agree with God that the punishment for our sins against Him is for us to spend eternity in Hell, because sinning against The Holy God of the universe, isn't a spiritual misdemeanor. It's a capital crime.
3. That penalty of spending eternity in Hell must be paid by somebody.
4. Therein lies the critical part of being saved. We can either pay the price of spending eternity in Hell ourselves, or we can receive the gift of Jesus doing it for us on The Cross.
5. What so many people *miss* is the fact that while Jesus was on The Cross, God made His wrath and punishment for OUR sins, fall on His Son instead of us.

**Isaiah 53: 6** puts it clearly.

*"We all have wandered away like sheep. Each of us has gone his own way. But the Lord has put on him the punishment for all the evil we have done."*

**It's that simple. On that Cross, God made Jesus undergo and experience what it would be**



like for you and me to spend eternity in Hell. That's why we call it Good Friday! That's the penalty for our sins, nothing less, nothing more and nothing else. That penalty has to be paid.

Back in Jesus' day they of course never had computers or sophisticated methods of tracking criminals. When someone is released from prison today there is a long computer record that proves they paid for their crimes. Nothing like that existed in Jesus' day. Therefore, when a person finished serving their time in prison for whatever crime or crimes they committed and they were released, they were given a special parchment to carry with them.

On that parchment was listed whatever crime or crimes they had committed. Then written over top of the charges were three words. Those words were "*It Is Finished.*" The purpose of that parchment was so that if anyone ever questioned the person as to whether he should be out of prison, he could show them the official parchment with the words "*It Is Finished*" and that would assure anyone that the penalty for his crime or crimes had been paid in full.

Just before Jesus gave up His Spirit on The Cross He uttered those same words "*It Is Finished.*" In His case, those words meant that the penalty for our sins had now been fully paid by Him. God had put Him through what it would be like for us to spend eternity in Hell and because He paid that price, we can be saved from it and go to Heaven

instead. That is IF we agree with Him that we deserve Hell and agree that the ONLY way to escape paying for our sins in Hell forever is to repent of them and accept His offer to save us and to live in such a way that show we appreciate it.

One more time in case you somehow missed it. We CANNOT save ourselves. All the good works in the world cannot save you. Giving all your money to the poor will not save you. Living the best life you possibly can will not save you, because none of those things is the penalty for your sins against God. The penalty for your sins is spending eternity in Hell and that and only that will pay for your sins.

So either you pay it in Hell forever, or you accept Jesus' offer to pay it for you. Those are your only choices. Nothing else works. Again, if there was anything you could do to save yourself from Hell, then Jesus going to The Cross accomplished absolutely nothing!

One more thing. Three days later on that first Easter Day Jesus was resurrected by God The Father and that means something very special. It means that what He did on The Cross was enough. Some people feel that Easter kind of crosses out The Cross and all the bad things that happened on Good Friday. Nothing could be more wrong! Easter validates The Cross and proves that what Jesus did there was sufficient and that it fully paid the penalty for our sins. If what He went through there for you and me wasn't enough to save us, His sacrifice would have been rejected by God and He

would never have been raised to life again. Moreover, because He is alive again, He can now keep every promise to us He's ever made. Only a living Messiah can keep His promises to save His people.

6. So we have just two choices. We can either agree with God that we deserve that punishment for our sins and we can gladly accept Jesus' offer to pay it for us, or we can keep trying to rack up points and somehow be good enough to work our way into Heaven on our own merit. The problem with that is that God says that's impossible. We don't do good works to get into Heaven. We do them in response to being saved from Hell. We cannot work our way to Heaven. We can only get there through Jesus and accepting what He did to save and rescue us by paying our penalty for us.

Look at it this way. If getting into Heaven was possible by us following the law and doing good works and being righteous, what Jesus did on The Cross becomes worthless and unnecessary. You wouldn't have to have a Savior if you could save yourself.

Moreover, God would be a horrible God if He put His Son through the punishment of our Hell on The Cross if there was another way for us to be saved. Paul had it right when in Galatians 2:21 God gave him these vital words.

*“I refuse to reject the grace of God. But if a person is put right with God through the Law, it means that Christ died for nothing!”*

**Here’s the bottom line. The penalty of spending eternity in Hell for our sins can be satisfied just two ways. It can be paid by Jesus or it can be paid by us. We can either accept Jesus’ offer to save us by what He did by going through our punishment of Hell on The Cross, or we can reject that and pay it ourselves! Nothing else works. It’s our choice and if we choose Him we have to do so meaningfully and determine to live a life that reflects what He’s done to save us.**

**7. So, all we have to do is simply pray to Jesus and admit that we are sinners and that we have to be rescued from Hell, and then ask Him to save and rescue us. Jesus’ name means “rescuer.” He will apply what He did on The Cross to our account, thereby rescuing us from having to pay the penalty ourselves. Because He never sinned, He didn’t owe the penalty of spending eternity in Hell. Therefore He’s the only One Who can offer to take our place and pay the price of Hell for us and that’s what He did.**

**If you accept that wonderful Gift, you will be saved. You will go to Heaven. If you don’t, you won’t. It’s that simple.**

**If you have ANY doubt about where you’ll spend eternity, it’s because you have failed to grasp the**

**process I just outlined above. If so, you should clear that up right now while you can and accept Jesus' Love for you. Pray to Him, admit you are a sinner and that you have to have a Savior and ask Him to come into your life to be your Savior.**

**Listen. I grew up in the Church. I received awards for perfect attendance in Sunday School. I attended worship every Sunday and I was still not a Christian. I wasn't saved, because I had yet to accept the process I described above. Just because you are in Church doesn't mean you are a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.**

**Once you accept you are a sinner and can't save yourself and agree that only Christ can save you, you grow from there as a Christian. There are two things God desires of us with regard to His Love for us from that point.**

**He requires us to live it and to share it. We can't just give him lip service and then live any way we please as if we've purchased some kind of fire insurance against the flames of Hell. We have to accept Him as our Savior and then let Him change us and live through us, making us into new people for His glory.**

**If you say you've accepted Christ and nothing has changed in your life, my guess is that you haven't really accepted Him. That's why He asks**

**the disturbing question in Luke 6:46 where we hear Him say,**

*“Why do you keep on saying that I am your Lord, when you refuse to do what I say?”*

**That question clearly implies that there are tons of people who “call” Him Lord, but don’t do what He says, and the fact that they don’t do what He says, belies the fact that their claim of Him as their Savior was actually never sincere. They never fully grasped what I described above as the process to be saved. Therefore they are not saved and still face eternal punishment in Hell as a result. I can speak accurately about this situation because that was me for years.**

**Lots of people today are preaching a false gospel which says God is a God of Love and therefore wouldn’t possibly send anybody to Hell.**

**They totally downplay God’s judgment and only speak of His Grace and acceptance. That is pure foolishness and it’s eternally dangerous. He does offer us His Grace, but unless we accept it on His terms as described above, we will face His wrath instead. I’m grateful that He sought me out as a sinner and showed me that accepting and following Him was my only way to Heaven.**

**As one person once put it,**

***“God never sends anyone to Hell. Hell is a place people insist on going themselves by refusing to accept Jesus’ terms and offer to be their Savior.”***

**I’ll never forget preaching a sermon one Sunday in which I laid out the process I’ve described above. After the sermon I offered people the chance to come forward and accept Christ if they would like to. One of the people who came forward was a 93 year old man. In all the years he’d been in Church, he told me he’d never had it explained to him that way before and he was happy to come forward and accept Christ and be saved by Jesus and that’s what he did.**

**There might be someone in your life who you could share this with because maybe they never heard this way before either. If so, please share it with them. It can make an eternal difference.**

**In fact, I’ve put a special sermon on this very subject up on You Tube. Just go to Youtube.com and put the words “Beware of Entitled Christianity” in the search box and it will come up. You can send it to anyone you’d like anywhere in the country and around the world.**

**I trust you have found both encouragement and challenge in the pages of this book. If you have seen that you are off course in some area of your Christian walk, I encourage you to prayerfully make the proper corrections and ask God to lead and guide you back on course. Where you’ve found**

**yourself on course, be encouraged and keep up the good work. As I said in the first chapter, make sure you “Fly the plane.” Otherwise you are going to find yourself way off course and in deep trouble.**

**I am open to discussing anything in this book, so if you have any questions at all, feel free to contact me through my E-Mail which is [PastorJohn500@gmail.com](mailto:PastorJohn500@gmail.com) so I can get back to you.**

**May The Lord Bless You In His Grace As You Continue To Seek, Follow And Honor Him In Your Life.**

*“He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. . . .*

*“*

Matt. 28:6.



