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Journey

EMMAUS BIBLE COLLEGE • WINTER 2010



Doctrinal Confusion in the Church

The Shrewd Manager: Luke 16

One of the most perplexing parables Jesus told was of the business manager of a rich man who caught him squandering his possessions (Luke 16:1). The owner fired his manager and demanded an account. Repulsed by the thought of manual labor or begging, the manager thought shrewdly. He decided to remove the usurious interest charges from his master's debtors. The effect was two-fold. First, he earned favor with his clients so that he would be accepted into their homes. Second, he made his master appear righteous and law-abiding. In a surprising twist, the rich man praised his unrighteous manager because he was impressed with his shrewdness. Jesus' application to His disciples is even more shocking: He says we sons of light have something to learn from the sons of this age. We need to think ahead. We need to make friends for ourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, our friends will welcome us into eternal dwellings (Luke 16:9).

It is humbling to be reproved by the wisdom of unbelievers, especially because theirs is so self-serving. At least they think ahead. They act shrewdly. When it comes to the use of money, we sons of light have a lot to learn. We are too naïve. We do not understand how corrupting money can be. It can easily work its way into our hearts to the point that it becomes our master. We may cling to our belief that we still primarily serve God, but Jesus removes that option from us: "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13, NASB).

What are we to do then? We are to send it on ahead. We are to use our money to do good. We are to be rich in good works. We are to be generous and ready to share (1 Timothy 6:18).

We are to store up for ourselves treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20). We must demonstrate ourselves faithful in the little things, in order to be trusted for the greater things (Luke 16:10).

This economy has drilled these truths home to me with great relevance. Emmaus exists today because of the loyal, loving kindness of our great God. If we were dependent on our own wisdom, we would fail. We are raising up a new generation of faithful stewards who renounce the allure of riches and are willing to prove their faithfulness in the little things. Our graduates approach their careers not as a means to gain the comforts of life, but as the means to serve the Lord with all of their skills and abilities. Their professions become their ministries. They give back in all they do. They are investing their lives in spiritual transformation. They are sending it on ahead. They are looking for the praise of our Righteous Judge.

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Kenneth Alan Daughters
President,
Emmaus Bible College



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Travel Guides

Dug Down Deep: Unearthing What I Believe and Why It Matters

Joshua Harris
Multnomah, 2010

How does God speak? What's so significant about Jesus being both human and divine? Who is the Holy Spirit? Whether you're just exploring Christianity or a veteran believer, Harris will help you unearth the timeless truths of Scripture; discover that theology isn't just for scholars; and deepen your relationship with Christ.

Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith We Defend

Ravi Zacharias
Thomas Nelson, 2008

A leading Christian apologist offers this work as a way to equip Christians everywhere to simultaneously defend the faith and be transformed by it.

The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity

Lee Strobel
Zondervan, 2000

This eagerly anticipated sequel to Lee Strobel's best-selling *The Case for Christ* finds the author investigating the nettlesome issues and doubts of the heart that threaten faith. Eight major topics are addressed including doubt, the problem of pain, and the existence of evil.

Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives

Steve Wilkens, Mark L. Sanford
IVP Academic, 2009

Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford examine worldviews that Christians tend to be comfortable with, but which are antithetical to the faith. Topics include, *Individualism, Consumerism, Nationalism, Moral Relativism, Scientific Naturalism, New Age, Tribalism, and Psychological Therapy*. Challenging and engaging, Christians who read this book will come away strengthened in their faith, but also will need to jettison those ideas which appear Christian, but which are patently hostile to a mature faith.

True for You but Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith (Revised)

Paul Copan
Bethany House Publishers, 2009

Learn to respond to one of the most common objections about Christianity—that it claims to be the only faith. The message of relativism and religious plurality is very popular and its argument is commonly accepted. Here you will find clear explanations to counter those arguments, including: the absolute quality of relativism, the exclusivity of inclusivity, the uniqueness of Jesus, and, "What about the unsaved who have never heard?"

The Fundamentals for the 21st Century

Mal Couch
Kregel, 2000

Nearly a century after *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth* defended core fundamentalist doctrines against liberalism and apostasy, scholars now re-examine the issues and apply biblical principles to contemporary social and cultural concerns. John Walvoord, Tim LaHaye and others comment on topics such as abortion, Bible prophecy, feminism, pluralism, the Millennial Kingdom, and more.

Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications

D.A. Carson
Zondervan, 2005

The "emerging church" movement has generated a large amount of excitement and currently exerts an astonishingly broad influence within contemporary churches. Is it the wave of the future or a passing fancy? Who are the leaders and what are they saying? These questions signal that the time has come for a mature assessment by a respected Christian scholar. In *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, D.A. Carson gives both a perceptive introduction to the emerging church movement for those who may be unfamiliar with it, as well as a skillful assessment of its theological views. Carson addresses some troubling weaknesses of the movement frankly and thoughtfully, while at the same time, recognizing that it has important things to say to the rest of Christianity. Carson's treatment shows how we must not only interact with a fast-changing culture, but also how we must have our vision and practice of ministry shaped by biblical theology with Scripture as our norm.

The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism

D.A. Carson
Zondervan, 2002

Is Jesus the only way to God? This clear, critically-acclaimed, scholarly response to that question affirms the deep need for the gospel's exclusive message in today's increasingly pluralistic global community. *The Gaggling of God* offers an in-depth look at the big picture, shows how the many ramifications of pluralism are all parts of a whole, and then provides a systematic Christian response.

What Christians Believe

A.P. Gibbs
Moody, 1951

Are you a new believer? Are you exploring Christian faith? Do you long to understand God's word? Then this book is an invaluable tool for you. It offers a foundation for you to build upon. All of the subjects covered in this book are significant to growing faith, so take time to read this classic study of the Bible. Discover the answers to the questions you've been asking. But most importantly, take another step in your journey of growth and maturity as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Mere Christianity

C.S. Lewis
HarperOne, 2001

Arguably the 20th century's most influential Christian writer, C.S. Lewis sought to explain and defend the beliefs that nearly all Christians at all times hold in common. His simple yet deeply profound classic, originally delivered as a series of radio broadcasts, is a book to be thoroughly digested by believers and generously shared with skeptics.

Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth

Charles C. Ryrie
Moody, 1999

Over the years Charles Ryrie's name has become synonymous with dispensational theology. With his clear understanding of the Scriptures and unpretentious writing style, Ryrie has written *Basic Theology* for every student of God's Word, from the devotional student to the seminary student. Featuring charts, definitions, and Scripture and subject indices, *Basic Theology* will give you a clear and comprehensive picture of Ryrie's approach to systematic theology. Its 94 chapters are arranged in outline style for easy reference. Considerable emphasis is given to explaining the dispensational view of the end times.

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TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY Nº9

It would be difficult to understand the true nature of biblical worship by listening to God's people talk about it! Often our concept of worship is limited to an activity that takes place at a specific time and place, generally on Sunday morning in the context of a local church. Even more troubling, at times the word *worship* appears to be used as a synonym for singing. Singing and other forms of musical expression can certainly be employed to worship God, but the act of singing is not always worship; and the worship of God can and should encompass much more than mere singing.

If you are a regular reader of *Journey*, you may be wondering how this article relates to the usual content of this series, the use of music in the church. In my view, it is absolutely essential to have a biblical perspective on worship as a foundation for the planning of effective and God-honoring music ministry in the church. Part 2 of this article, in the next issue of *Journey*, will address more practical issues related to the use of music for worship.

The Scriptures reveal two clear emphases of biblical worship. The first emphasizes the worshiper's position (*proskuneo*, to bow down; bend low; complete submission; deep respect). The second emphasizes the worshiper's actions (*latreuo*, to serve; to render religious service). Neither focuses specifically on the act of singing. In both cases, the concept of *worship* is most often a verb, rather than a noun.

Worship can be defined as "the act of paying divine honors to a deity; religious reverence and homage" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*). Many writers have sought to capture the emphases of biblical worship in more nuanced definitions:

- To ascribe worth.
- The redeemed heart, in communion with the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit, discussing the wonders of the Lord Jesus Christ (Anonymous).
- Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose. And all this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of human expressions of which we are capable (William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury).

**IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO
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NATURE OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP
BY LISTENING TO GOD'S
PEOPLE TALK ABOUT IT!**

While helpful in capturing elements of true worship, all fall somewhat short of the incredible breadth and depth of the concept as revealed in the Bible. It would be presumptuous to think that such a topic could be adequately addressed in a single article, but following are a few reflections on the nature of biblical worship:

God commands our worship. In Deuteronomy 6:13-15, God makes it clear that He alone is to be worshiped: "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the

peoples who surround you, for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God" (NASB). God created human beings as worshipers. The reality is that we all worship something; if not the true God, then other gods, such as wealth, power, prestige or other contemporary idols. God's commandment requires that we worship Him and Him only. During his temptation in the wilderness, Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain and promises Him all the wealth and glory offered by the world, if only He will fall down and worship Satan. In His response, Jesus affirms that we are to worship God exclusively: "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and serve Him only'" (Mt. 4:10).

Worship is about God, not about us. Ephesians 1 tells us that the ultimate purpose of God's work of salvation is "to the praise of His glory." Our reason for being is to glorify Him for who He is and what He has done. Too often, our focus is the vehicle rather than the object of our worship. In Psalm 27:4, David reminds us of the surpassing wonder of focusing on Him: "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to meditate in His temple."

True worship requires that we have an accurate view of God and of ourselves. In Isaiah 6, the prophet is confronted with a vision of the Lord on His throne. Isaiah hears the seraphim call out to one another: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." This vision of God's glory compels Isaiah to see himself as he truly is, a sinful man: "Woe is me, for I am ruined because I am a man of



**MUSIC
AND WORSHIP**
Part 1
by Lisa Beatty

unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” Isaiah recognizes his own unworthiness to stand before a Holy God. Worship requires that we recognize the vast chasm between God’s holiness and our own sin. In spite of this chasm, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6). “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24). Understanding of the vast difference between the Holy God and sinful man compels us to worship Him for who He is and what He has done for us.

God expects personal holiness of His worshipers. Psalm 24:3-4 articulates God’s expectations of His worshipers: “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.” A righteous standing before God is not the result of our works, rather it is the result of His work of salvation, which clothes us in the righteousness of Christ. However, God does expect us to examine ourselves and confess sin, so that we might not “eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in

an unworthy manner” (1Cor. 11:27).

Worship should be a priority of the New Testament church. Acts 2:42 tells us that the earliest believers in the church were “continually devoting themselves to...the breaking of bread and to prayer” in obedience to the Lord’s command at the institution of the Lord’s Supper in the Gospels. Jesus said: “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Lk. 22:19). The breaking of bread focuses our attention on the person and work of Christ. We honor Him, not just for His work in our salvation, but because of His character, His beauty, and His glory. Time for such reflection should be a priority of the New Testament church.

God’s people should worship Him individually and corporately. The Scriptures provide pictures of both individual and corporate worship. In John 12, we see a beautiful picture of individual worship in the anointing of the feet of Jesus by Mary, the sister of Lazarus. Mary’s faith was stretched by the death of her brother, but Jesus

demonstrated His power over death as He raised Lazarus from the dead. In recognition of Jesus as Messiah, Mary poured out her most valuable possession and humbled herself to honor Him. God also calls us to worship Him together: “Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Ps. 95:6-7). Hebrews 10:24-25 affirms this for the New Testament church: “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, *not forsaking our own assembling together*, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

Our worship is directed to God first. Our fellow worshipers are only “listening in” as we worship Him. God is the primary audience for our worship. Psalm 68:4 exhorts us to

“sing to God, sing praises to His name.” Colossians 3:16 supports this idea: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*” Notice that the audience for teaching and admonishing is “one another.” The audience for singing with thankfulness in our hearts is God Himself.

God seeks worshipers who worship Him “in spirit and in truth.” In His conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4, Jesus reveals to her that the hour has come “when true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers” (Jn. 4:23-24). In other words, we are to worship God, not simply with our lips or our actions, but with our innermost being. Because God is a spiritual being, we must respond to Him spiritually. In addition, we are to honor Him based on the truth of who He is, as

revealed to us in His word. **God considers both the actions and the attitudes of His worshipers.** In Genesis 4, Cain and Abel bring offerings to the Lord. Each brings a sacrifice from the work of his own hands; Cain, the fruit of the ground and Abel, the firstlings of his flock. God accepts Abel’s offering but rejects Cain’s. Why? Was it

the nature of the sacrifice that pleased or displeased God?

It is not sufficient to do the right things; God cares about the heart attitudes of His worshipers.

The text provides some insight into this question: “The Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard” (vv.4-5). It appears that God was concerned with more than just the offering; He was concerned with the man. Cain brought an appropriate offering, but his unbelief made it impossible for him to please God. In Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus reinforces this idea: “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’” It is not sufficient to do the right things; God cares about the heart attitudes of His worshipers.

God calls us to a lifestyle of worship. Biblical worship is not simply honoring God in the context of a Sunday service. In Romans 12, Paul exhorts believers to worship the Lord through obedience and absolute commitment: “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Notice the language of worship: “present your bodies as a living and holy

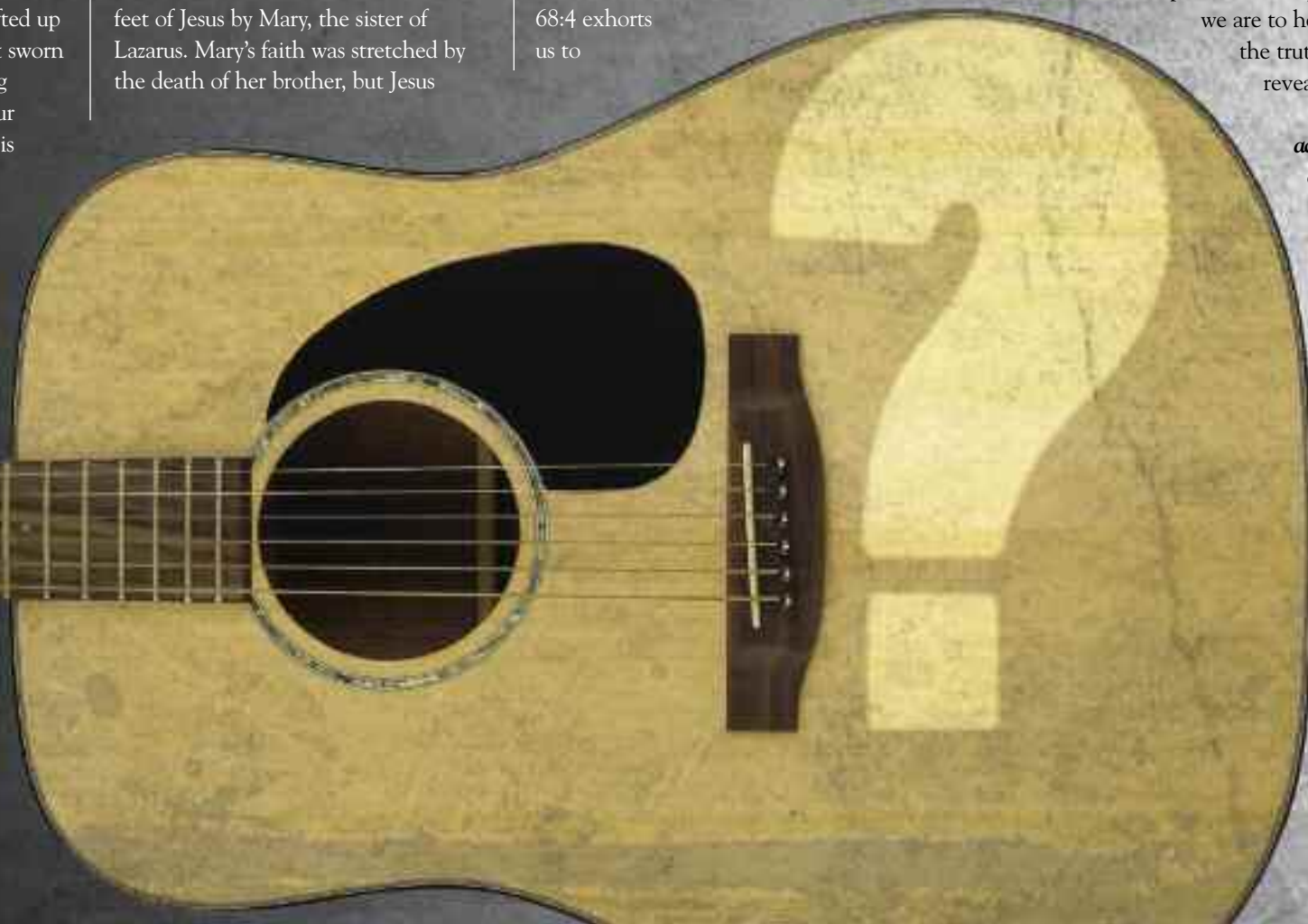
sacrifice” (vv. 1-2). The picture presented is one of a worshipful life, in which all that we do honors Him. Hebrews 13:15-16 reinforces this thought: “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Again notice the language of worship. The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to honor God with their voices and their actions. In other words, we are to live a worshipful life.

Harold Best, former dean of Wheaton Conservatory, defines worship as “the continuous act of showing what we consider to be most worthy, that which, by consequence, masters and shapes us.” All facets of life should be “to the praise of His glory.” The biblical picture of worship encompasses far more than just singing; it compels us to evidence the worthiness of God in all that we are and do.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of His wondrous works. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD! (Psalm 105:1-3, NKJV) †



Lisa Beatty is the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Emmaus Bible College and has been a faculty member in the Music Ministry department since 1992. Lisa and her husband, Kevin have two daughters.



Do Not Be Carried Away by All Kinds of Strange Teachings

Hebrews 13:9

In this current issue of *Journey* and in the one to follow, the theme will reflect the ministry of Iron Sharpens Iron '09 — Truth Under Fire. Messages from the plenary speakers will include: Dr. Norman Geisler, prolific author and debater; Alexander Strauch, noted churchman; and Emmaus faculty member, Mark Stevenson. Seminar sessions address current threats to orthodox theology and practice. Subjects?

- The Challenge of Religious Pluralism
- Recovering the Majesty of God

- The Nature of the Atonement
 - Christianity and Islam
 - Proclaiming the Truth
 - Replacement Theology
 - The Sanctity of Human Life
 - The Gospel According to Jesus
- The need to defend the truth was prophesied in Holy Scriptures.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-con-

trol, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”. 2 Timothy 3:1-7

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires,

because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Jude, the half brother of Jesus, also confronts the issue of strange doctrines in his short epistle. It was to have been a leisurely dissertation on the doctrine of the common salvation, but the urgency of the moment required an attack on heresy and the exhortation to “fight for the faith.”

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Jude 3

From the beginning of the Church Age to the conclusion of it, threats to the purity of doctrine will exist. Therefore, we must be on guard. As Paul exhorted the elders of the apostolic church of Ephesus:

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:28-30

We must be constantly aware of “being carried away by strange and various doctrines.”

May I suggest another way of defending the truth and securing purity of doctrine within the local church? I quote from an article I authored for *The Emmaus Journal* in 1992.

The Benefits of the Worship Meeting: What It Does

Beyond the personal and practical benefits of the remembrance meeting there is great theological benefit.

On one occasion, during my seminary days, I was engaged in an off-campus discussion with a fellow student that degenerated into an attack upon the Brethren movement. For a while I was silent, but finally, enough was enough. I responded with some questions:

- Do any of your churches deny the deity of Christ?
- Do any question the inspiration of the Bible?
- Do any deny the substitutionary death of Christ?
- Do any doubt the miraculous?

Being an honest representative of a mainline denomination, the debater answered yes to each question. My final response was that I had never seen an Assembly that tolerated false teaching. The discussion ended, but my thoughts did not. Why is it true that our doctrine has remained pure and orthodox? Is it better teaching? More individual study? Perhaps so in the past, but hardly in the present!

Over the years I have concluded that the best theology we teach is not from the pulpit, but from the Breaking of Bread. There we learn about the Godhead and the attributes of deity. There we learn about the person and work of Christ. There we learn about the sinfulness of man. There we learn about our great salvation. There we learn about the coming of Christ. There we learn the vocabulary of the Bible: grace, mercy, redemption, propitiation, reconciliation, atonement, etc. There we learn the typology of the sacrifices. There we hear the psalms. There we worship!

The theology lessons are not theoretical; they are in the mode of worship. The participants are not profes-

sionals trained for worship. They are workmen, teachers, mechanics, salesmen; they are young men and fathers; they are newly saved and old in the faith; they are nervous and confident. They are ordinary Christians who through participation in the worship meeting have come to understand and love the cardinal doctrines of the Bible. Regular participation in the Lord's Supper develops an instinct for correct theology. The Breaking of Bread, properly practiced, produces theologians. The remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ in an open, participative meeting is a safeguard against doctrinal error.

If this presupposition is correct—that is, the Breaking of Bread is a safeguard against doctrinal error—then it becomes imperative to maintain the Breaking of Bread as the central purpose of church life. However, the trend in Assembly life seems to be in the opposite direction.

- Time scheduled for Breaking of Bread being shortened.
- Attendance at Breaking of Bread in decline.
- Generational decline in commitment to the functional priesthood and giftedness of all believers in church life.

Is our primary safeguard of orthodoxy slipping away? The future will answer that question! †



Dave Glock
Dave is a graduate of Emmaus, Philadelphia College of Bible, and Dallas Theological Seminary. He has taught at Emmaus since 1968 and has served as Dean of Education for most of that period. He serves as an elder emeritus at Asbury Community Chapel. Dave has four children, all of whom serve in Assembly ministries, and fourteen grandchildren.

Editor's Note: *This article is an edited transcription of a message delivered by Norm Geisler at the 2009 Iron Sharpens Iron conference held on the campus of Emmaus Bible College. Video lecture available at emmaus.edu/online*

As we defend the Christian faith, one of the greatest three problems in the world today is relativism. I was speaking in a church in California a number of years ago and asked the pastor what he wanted me to preach on, and he said, "Well, you know I should tell you to give us an exposition on some passage of Scripture. But, to tell you the truth, our people don't even believe in truth. Could you talk about truth?"

Now, it makes no sense to get up and say to people what Jesus said, "Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17, NASB) if you believe in a relative view of truth. It makes no sense to tell them, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (8:32), unless truth is absolute. It makes no sense to say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (14:6), if Jesus is not the absolute truth, because people go away thinking, well, that's true for you, and that's wonderful for you, but that's not necessarily true for everyone.

Truth is under fire today. I want to talk about three things in this session: (1) What is truth? (2) Can truth be known? and (3) Is truth absolute?

WHAT IS TRUTH?

THE CORRESPONDENCE VIEW OF TRUTH

Pilate asked the right question: "What is truth?" (18:38). He was sneering, and he was cynical, but nonetheless, it was the

right question. Ironically, The Truth was standing before Him. But what is truth? Truth is what tells it like it is. If I say that I have a Bible in my right hand, it's true because I'm telling it like it is; there is a Bible in my right hand. Truth is what corresponds to the facts. If I say, "This is a bottle of water," it's true because, in fact, this is a bottle of water. Truth corresponds to the facts. Or, to express it in another way, truth matches its object. If I say this is a table here with a black cloth on it, it's true because there is an object here called a table with a black cloth. So what I am saying is not tricky. Truth is simply telling what is the case. "This object is a table" is a true statement because it points to a table and, therefore, is a correct statement.

Now, what is false? That which is false is what does not tell it like it is, does not correspond to the facts, and does not match its object. The opposite of true is false. You say, "Well, this is very simple; it is Philosophy 101." Unfortunately, this is where we have to start today because people don't know what truth is, and they've been exposed to so many different views of truth they don't realize that truth is found in correspondence to reality. Here's the truth about truth: Truth is what corresponds to reality. There is a real world out there, and if you make a statement that is correct about it, you're making a true statement because it corresponds to the object.

The "Correspondence View of Truth" cannot be denied without using it. Try to deny that truth is what corresponds to reality. Those who deny it assume their view is corresponding to reality. So you can't deny the correspondence view of truth without using the correspondence view of truth, and that's literally undeniable. And everyone holds to a correspondence view of truth—

EVERYONE HOLDS TO A CORRESPONDENCE VIEW OF TRUTH—EVERYONE, WHETHER THEY KNOW IT OR NOT, OR KNOW THE TERM—EVERYONE HOLDS TO IT. AND THAT'S THE VIEW OF TRUTH THAT WE MUST DEFEND TODAY.

TRUTH UNDER FIRE

DR. NORMAN L. GEISLER

everyone, whether they know it or not, or know the term—everyone holds to it. And that’s the view of truth that we must defend today. Those who deny it in theory use it in practice. Let me illustrate. Suppose someone says, “I can’t speak a word in English.” You would respond, “Isn’t what you just said in English?” That’s what we call a self-defeating statement. The statement, “I can’t speak a word in English” is spoken in English, so it destroys itself because it practices exactly the opposite of what it’s preaching.

What if someone says, “Truth is not telling it like it is. I don’t accept your view of truth”? Just ask him, “Are you claiming to tell it like it is?” If he’s claiming to tell it like it is, then truth is telling it like it is, and he can’t deny that truth is telling it like it is without making the statement that he claims is telling it like it is.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE CORRESPONDENCE VIEW OF TRUTH FROM THE BIBLE

- It is implied in the ninth commandment, “You shall not bear false witness” (Ex. 20:16). Don’t tell anything that misrepresents the facts. That implies the correspondence view of truth.
- It’s also entailed in Acts 24, in Luke’s account of Paul’s appearance before Felix, when Paul tells the governor that he can learn the truth by verifying the facts. “If you want to know what’s true, go and verify the facts” (vv. 11-21). That’s a correspondence view of truth.
- It is manifested in Genesis 42:16 when Joseph demanded that his

brothers bring to him Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob’s children, “that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you.” How does one know if something is true? Look at the facts, and you will see.

- It was employed in the test of a prophet whose prophecy was considered false if the word did not come to pass or come true (Dt. 18:20-22). If the prophecy didn’t come true as the supposed prophet claimed it would, then he was not telling the truth.



HERE’S THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH: TRUTH IS WHAT CORRESPONDS TO REALITY. THERE IS A REAL WORLD OUT THERE, AND IF YOU MAKE A STATEMENT THAT IS CORRECT ABOUT IT, YOU’RE MAKING A TRUE STATEMENT BECAUSE IT CORRESPONDS TO THE OBJECT.



The correspondence view of truth is utilized in everyday conversation when we consider something false if it misrepresents the facts. For example, we say, “Check the facts,” and “Check it out for yourself,” and the like. This means that we believe exactly what the Bible implies here, that truth is what corresponds to reality.

The correspondence view of the truth is essential to a legal oath when one promises to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Nothing but a correspondence view of

truth would work in court. And nothing would be accepted in court except the correspondence view of truth.

Some have objected to this view of the truth.

Objection One

Jesus said, “I am the Truth,” not “I correspond to the facts” (cf. Jn. 14:6). Isn’t that contradictory? Isn’t Jesus’ use of truth in John 14:6 different than a correspondence view of truth?

No, Jesus’ lips and life perfectly corresponded to reality. “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (that is, “I am the perfect representation of the Father” [v. 9]). The Logos represents the *Theos*, that is, the Word represented God the Father while on earth. Indeed, the Logos was *Theos* (that is, the Word was Himself God). Jesus’ lips and life perfectly correspond to reality. Persons can express truth as well as propositions. It doesn’t have to be a proposition to be true; it can be a gesture. If you ask me, “Which way did he go?” and I point with my finger, I have told the truth. I expressed the truth by a gesture without a word.

Objection Two

God is truth according to the Bible, and He does not correspond to any reality beyond Himself. Does not this fact undermine the correspondence view of truth? Let me respond by saying God is the source of all truth, and His words and actions correspond to His nature. Thus, God is true to Himself. This is perfect correspondence. God is God, and everything He does corresponds to what He is. Everything He says corresponds to what He is. And He’s the source of all truth. So that doesn’t deny the corre-

spondence view of truth. The truth is what corresponds to reality.

CAN TRUTH BE KNOWN?

Let me answer some of the opponents of truth. The agnostic denies knowing any truth. The skeptic doubts all truth. The postmodernists affirm no truth. The relativists deny absolute truth. Let’s take a look at them one by one.

AGNOSTICISM

Agnostics affirm that truth about reality is unknowable. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was the one who held this. He wrote a 700-page book, *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which he said you just “Kan’t” know. Reality is unknowable. He said we cannot know truth about reality. We can only know appearance, not reality—just the phenomena [how something appears to us], not the *noumena* [what something is in itself].¹ We can’t know the thing in itself, only the thing as it appears to us. His book is one of the great classics of all time. And since his time it’s been very common in Western thought to accept this gulf that Kant built. We must remain agnostic about reality. What do we say to the statement, “No one knows the truth”? How do we know that statement (“No one knows the truth”) is true?

Years ago we were using the *Evangelism Explosion* technique at our church and we knocked on a door one night. I said, “Hello, my name is Norm, and my friend here is Ron. Would you mind if I asked you a serious spiritual question?” The gentleman at the door said, “No, go ahead.” I said, “If you were to die tonight and

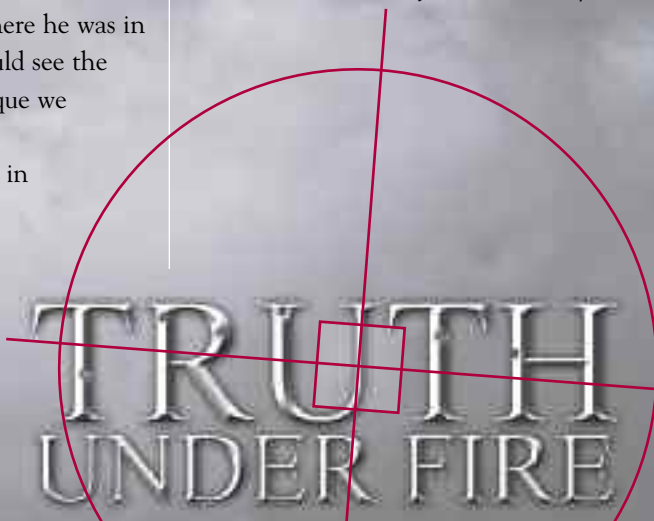
stand before God, and God would say, ‘Why should I let you into My heaven?’ what would you say?” And he said, “I would say to God, ‘Why shouldn’t You let me in?’” That answer is not in the *Evangelism Explosion* book; he threw me a curve! There are two answers that the authors of *Evangelism Explosion* say people will always give, and this gentleman’s answer was not one of them! We were standing there thinking, “What do we do now?” So I ushered up a quick prayer, mindful of the promise to Moses in Exodus 4:12, “Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.” So I prayed, and this is what God gave me to say to him (I wasn’t smart enough to think this up). I said, “Don, if we knocked on your door and you didn’t want to let us into your house, and I said to you, ‘Why shouldn’t you let me into your house?’ what would you say?” He said, “I would tell you where to go.” I said, “That’s exactly what God’s going to tell you.”

The gentleman suddenly got serious, and he said, “Well, to tell you the truth, I don’t believe in God.” Well, at least we then knew where he was in his thinking. And we could see the problem with the technique we were using. Our question assumed that he believed in God, in heaven, and in hell. With this man we needed to do pre-evangelism before we could do evangelism.

So I shifted gears and said, “Let me ask you this. Do you know absolutely for sure there

is no God?” He replied, “No, you can’t know anything with absolute certainty.” I said, “Then there might be a God, right?” He said, “Well, yeah, there might be.” I said, “Good, you’re not an atheist, you’re an agnostic, because the atheist says, ‘I know there is no God,’ and the agnostic says, ‘I don’t know if there is a God.’” He said, “Well, I’m an agnostic.” So, we were making progress. In just one question we went from atheism to agnosticism.

I said, “Now, what kind of agnostic are you?” He said, “Well, how many kinds are there?” I said, “There are two. There’s the ordinary kind that says, ‘I don’t know if there’s a God.’ And then there’s the ornery kind that says, ‘You can’t know if there’s a God.’” Sure enough he was the ornery kind. I said, “Well, let me ask you this. Do you know for sure that you can’t know anything for sure?” He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well, if you know for sure that you can’t know anything for sure, then you know something for sure. And if you know something for sure, you’re not an ornery agnostic. You’re just an ordinary



garden-variety agnostic that doesn't know." He said, "Well, I guess you're right. I'm just an ordinary agnostic." So we had gone from atheism, to hard agnosticism, to soft agnosticism.

And then I said to him, "Do you want to know? Would you like to look at some evidence?" I gave him a book by Frank Morrison. Frank Morrison, who was an agnostic, wrote a book, *Who Moved the Stone?* He was converted in the process of writing it. The first chapter is entitled, "The Book that Refused to Be Written." We returned to his home several days later, and I asked, "What did you think of Morrison's book?" He said, "Very, very convincing." We then had a chance to lead him to Christ. Today he's a deacon at a Baptist Church in Festus, Missouri, and guess what he does? He drives a Sunday school bus and picks up little kids just like my little church picked me up when I was 9 years old. I was from an unsaved family, and after going to Sunday School hundreds of times, I committed my life to Christ.

You just can't say no one knows the truth, or you wouldn't know that was true. A response to agnosticism: it fails because it's self-defeating by claiming to know the truth about reality, namely, that we can't know any truth about reality. Well, if you claim to know that truth about reality, that is, that you cannot know any truth about reality, then truth can be known about reality!

SKEPTICISM

David Hume (1711-1776) said we should doubt all truth. We should doubt everything about reality. We can know only our sense data. We

should suspend judgment on all truth claims about reality. What do you say to David Hume?

Well, first of all, skepticism fails because it is self-defeating by claiming we should be skeptical about everything. Why not be skeptical about skepticism? Why not doubt your doubts? So, either it's self-defeating, or else it begs the question by claiming that doubt is the only thing that should not be doubted. You see, the problem with an agnostic is that he is not agnostic enough. He's not agnostic about agnosticism. The problem with the skeptic is he isn't skeptical enough. He's not skeptical about skepticism. Skepticism fails because it's either self-defeating, or else it begs the question by claiming that doubt should not be doubted.

René Descartes (1596-1650) was the father of modern philosophy. He said, "I doubt, therefore I think. I think, therefore I am." Now, he had it mixed up because you have to exist before you can think or doubt. So he really got "Descartes before Dehose" [i.e., the cart before the horse]. Nonetheless, he did have a good argument here, namely, that doubt leads to certainty. Descartes argued, "The more I doubt, the more I'm sure that I'm doubting. And the more I'm sure that I'm doubting, the more I'm certain that I exist." Just try to doubt yourself out of existence. The more you doubt, the more you'll be sure you're doubting. The more you're sure you're doubting, the more you're sure that you exist. Hence, doubt leads to certainty. St. Augustine found this in his own life. Descartes was a methodological doubter. But Augustine was an actual doubter, and he wrote a book

telling how he came out of this, *Against the Academics*.



THE PROBLEM WITH AN AGNOSTIC IS THAT HE IS NOT AGNOSTIC ENOUGH. HE'S NOT AGNOSTIC ABOUT AGNOSTICISM. THE PROBLEM WITH THE SKEPTIC IS HE ISN'T SKEPTICAL ENOUGH. HE'S NOT SKEPTICAL ABOUT SKEPTICISM.



POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism (propounded by Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and others) makes no truth claims. They say we must deconstruct all truth claims. If anybody makes a truth claim, just deconstruct it. We can reconstruct as many views as possible. Just reconstruct your own view after you deconstruct that view. No reconstruction is objectively true; it's merely new. So you just keep reconstructing. And this is the world in which we live today—postmodernism.

How do we respond? Postmodernism fails because, either it claims to be true, and is thereby self-defeating (either it claims postmodernism is true, and you should believe it, which is self-defeating, because you can't know the truth, even including that truth), or else it makes no truth claim, and it's not even in the ball game! If you go to the New Age section of a library or bookstore, you'll usually find some books by Alan Watts. Alan

Watts was converted from a kind of nominal form of Christianity to Zen Buddhism. And according to Zen Buddhism you can't know the ultimate reality called the "Tao."ⁱⁱ You can't know it because it goes beyond thought, beyond right or wrong, and beyond true or false. It's not subject to such categories. Someone once said to Watts, "Isn't that self-defeating? Aren't you saying, 'I know a truth about the Tao, namely, that no truth can be known about the Tao?'" Watts answered, "No, I'm not making any truth claim." And then his questioner asked, "Then why do you write books?" And Watts answered, "Birds fly, and authors write."

That was his answer: "Birds fly, and authors write." In effect, he was saying, "I'm not making any truth claim; I'm just writing." Well, if he had only told us on the front page, "There is no truth in this book, and you won't get any truth from reading it, we would never have bought it and read it, right? The fact that he wrote the book and was sharing his ideas of how he went from a false view (Christianity) to a true view (Zen Buddhism), tells us that he really did believe in truth. But if such writers want to insist they aren't making any truth claim, then they're not even in the ball game. They're not even in the park. They're not even in the place where they can play the game of truth.

Ignoring the truth, however, does not make it go away. For instance, ignoring that the train's coming will not make the train go away. In fact, the truth express will run you over. What is truth is what corresponds to reality. Can truth be known? Yes, you can't escape it!

IS TRUTH ABSOLUTE?

THE NATURE OF RELATIVISM

This is the one-million-dollar question: "Is truth absolute?" Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), the father of modern process theology, son of an Anglican minister, said, "All truth is relative. Reality has no unchanging forms. All truth is in process and never fails to change," built upon the ancient Heraclitean view that "No man steps into the same river twice," which Heraclitus (540-470 B.C.) said. His disciple, Cratylus, went a step further to proclaim, "No one steps into the same river once because the river isn't there either; it's just moving constantly." Reality is constantly changing. All truth is changing and relative.

How do we respond to the relativism of our day? It does no good to simply say, "I believe in absolute truth," and it does no good to simply quote Jesus, "I am the truth" (Jn. 14:6). We've got to do pre-evangelism, and we've got to talk about the nature of truth, namely, that truth is what corresponds to reality, and that truth is absolute, before the gospel even makes sense to them. We must remember that we are proclaiming an absolute message in a relativistic day. We're proclaiming an exclusivistic message in a pluralistic day. Our listeners have learned to just filter truth claims through their filters, and everything comes out relativistic and pluralistic.

How do we respond? Relativism fails because it either affirms

that relativism is absolutely true, which is self-defeating, or it claims that it's just another relative statement and not binding on everyone. They have to back off their claim that relativism is true, or it destroys itself. Either relativism is only true for the relativist, and not true for everyone, or else it's true for everyone. But if it's true for everyone then it's not relativism.

Let me put it very simply: "There is no absolute truth," our skeptical professor says. And we answer, "Is that absolutely true?" Because if he's claiming there's no absolute truth, you want to know whether that's absolutely true. If it's not absolutely true, then there might be some absolute truth. And if it is absolutely true, there is absolute truth—that one, which he has just claimed, namely, his claim that it is an absolute truth that there is no absolute truth!

Someone else might say, "It's true for you, but not for me." Now if you haven't heard this one, you've got your proverbial ostrich head in the sand, and the world is going right by you. "It's true for you, but not for me." "Is that just true for you, or is that

TRUTH
UNDER FIRE

true for me, too?" You see, if someone makes the statement, "Nothing is true for everyone," then just ask them, "Is that statement true for everyone?" If they say, "Yes," then their view is self-defeating because if that statement is true for everyone, then something is true for everyone, and that's an absolute truth. So they cannot escape absolute truth. Learning these arguments is more fun than a Sunday school picnic. Once you figure out how to do this, you can line 'em up and knock 'em down! All of these rejections of truth are self-defeating.

Now, I want to prove to you in the next five minutes that we all assume, everybody assumes, the objectivity and knowability of truth. Everybody assumes that truth is absolute. For example, in the realm of:

- **Safety.** If your precious little baby is in the back seat, and the seat belt is buckled in solidly, and somebody pulls right in front of you, you slam on the brakes and the buckle breaks and the baby is injured or, God forbid, the baby dies, there's going to be a lawsuit. When, in court, the insurance company says, "Well, we feel, down in the depths of our heart, that our products are good and safe," you don't care how they feel, right? You want to know if it is absolutely true that the baby seat was a safe product. Did the buckle come unbuckled? Did you push the buckle in correctly? Did the strap rip? Which happened? You want to know the absolute truth when it comes to your baby in the back seat. No one would settle for relative truth.

- **Money.** Suppose you have \$500 in a bank account. One day you go into the bank, and the teller says, "You've got \$50 in your account." You say, "Well, it's true for her that I have \$50 in my account, so she must be right." No, you won't settle for relative truth when it comes to your money. And the more zeroes behind the dollar sign, the less you will be prone to settle for it.
- **Medicine.** I was dying in the hospital a couple of years ago. I had a kidney stone. They used lithotripsy on it to break it up, and it caused sepsis, a bacterial infection of the blood. About 50 percent of people with sepsis die of the illness on the spot. I went into a coma for three hours, all the organs of my body shut down, and I had a heart attack. I was dying in the hospital on the weekend with a variety of tubes attached to my body. And then the vultures (lab technicians) swept in at night to take blood samples. One stood to my right, and the other stood to my left. One of them asked, "What is your name?" I said, "You tell me. Before you take any more blood out of me or stick any more pills in my mouth, I want to make sure you know who I am." On my right wrist was a pink identification band that identified me as Mr. Gillespie. On my left wrist was a pink band that said "Geisler." I said, "You tell me, and I want to know, is Mr. Gillespie dying? Did he take my medicine? Is he dying? Am I living? Am I getting the wrong medicine?" And believe me, if they had mixed up the medicines, there would have

been a lawsuit, right? And we want to know the absolute truth. Is it Geisler that got Geisler's medicine, Gillespie that got it, or vice versa? Everybody believes in absolute truth when it comes to medicine.

- **Relationships.** A distraught husband says to a friend, "She's cheating on me." The friend answers, "Well, she doesn't think she is." It doesn't really matter what she thinks, does it? Or a weeping wife tells her sister, "He's cheating on me." Her sister says, "He doesn't think he is." What the cheaters think doesn't matter at all. Are they cheating or not? It doesn't matter how they feel or think. When it comes to relationships, you want to know for sure. You don't believe in anything but the absolute truth.
- **Court Proceedings.** Have you ever heard of somebody going to court to have the judge say, "Raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the relative truth, the whole relative truth, and nothing but the relative truth, so help your future experience"? It would never be accepted in court, because you've got to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in court proceedings. Everyone really believes in absolute truth when it comes right down to it in life.

So what is truth? It is that which corresponds to reality. Can truth be known? Try to deny it, and you affirm it. Is truth absolute? There's no way to escape it.

OBJECTION ONE: TRUTH CHANGES

Relativists tell us that what is true today may be false tomorrow. The progress of science is proof that truth is constantly changing. After all, we once believed the world is square. We now believe it's round. We once believed that the sun moved around the earth; now we believe the earth moves around the sun. Everything changes. Truth changes, doesn't it? Earlier truth said the earth is flat; later truth says it is round.

The answer to this objection is that truth doesn't change. Truth has not changed. The earth was always round. It wasn't once really square, and then became really round. The people were square! They thought the earth was square. Those who believed it was flat were in error, not in truth. There aren't two truths—one truth when they believed it was flat, and now another truth when they believe it is round. There's only one truth. It was always round, and they were wrong when they believed it was anything but that.

OBJECTION TWO: BELIEF IN ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS A NARROW VIEW

My kindergarten teacher was narrow. And she always used my middle name. I knew I was in trouble when she said, "Norman Leo." She'd ask, "Norman Leo, what's two plus two?" And I'd say, "Five." Whack on the hand with a ruler! Cruel and unusual punishment, but that's how we learned in those days, you know. She was so narrow-minded that if I said one, two, three, five, six, or any number to

infinity I'd get an infinite number of whacks. That's pretty narrow, isn't it? I mean, in an infinite number of numbers you'd think I could pick one I wanted, right? No, she was so narrow that if you didn't say four, you were wrong. Don't you think that's pretty narrow-minded? That's exactly what truth is: very narrow.



YOU SEE, IF SOMEONE MAKES THE STATEMENT, "NOTHING IS TRUE FOR EVERYONE," THEN JUST ASK THEM, "IS THAT STATEMENT TRUE FOR EVERYONE?" IF THEY SAY, "YES," THEN THEIR VIEW IS SELF DEFEATING BECAUSE IF THAT STATEMENT IS TRUE FOR EVERYONE, THEN SOMETHING IS TRUE FOR EVERYONE, AND THAT'S AN ABSOLUTE TRUTH.



Truth is by its very nature narrow. If I say, "This is a bottle of water in my right hand," that means that an infinite number of objects in the universe that I could be saying are in my hand are excluded. No other item could be true, no matter what you might think. If you were to say that I have a pencil in my hand, or a Bible, or a rake, or a gun, you would be wrong. There is only one way to be

true ("This is a bottle of water in my right hand") and there are an infinite number of ways to be wrong. Truth is by its very nature narrow. To say, "I am here," means that I'm not anywhere else in the universe. Now, that's a little ridiculous, isn't it? Why can't I choose some other place in the universe? I cannot say I am somewhere else because I'm here, and I'm not anywhere else. Four plus four is eight and only eight. It's not seven, nine, 10, or any other number. It's eight and only eight. These are narrow facts, but they're true. And that's the way truth is.

I was debating an atheist at Rice University a number of years ago. His name was Dr. Konstantin Kolenda. He had written a book titled, *Religion without God*. (That's like romance without a spouse.) I wrote a book called *Christian Apologetics*. He held up my book and said, "You know, these Christians are narrow. You know what Geisler believes? He believes Christianity is true, and everything else is false. That's pretty narrow." So when I got up I said, "You know, these humanists are really narrow. You know what Kolenda says in this book?"



He says humanism is true and everything else is false. These are really narrow-minded people.”

Do you get the point? If E (exclusivism) is true, then all non-E is false. If C (Christianity) is true, all non-C is false. If H (humanism) is true all non-H is false. Everybody who makes a truth claim is an exclusivist. He’s excluding every other view. So, saying atheism is true is about as narrow as you can get because you’re excluding every other view in the universe. Claiming skepticism is true is narrow, because you’re excluding everything else except skepticism. Affirming pluralism is true is narrow, because if you say P is true, all non-P is false. All truth claims are narrow and exclusive. Then why is it that we Christians get blamed for being the exclusivists when everybody else is an exclusivist, too?

I’d just love one time to be on Larry King Live when he asks these questions. People have been trying to get me on there for years, but he never invites me. Instead he invites people who argue that for anyone to say that Christianity is the only true religion is really narrow. If someone else is on the program to debate this charge, they rarely if ever give a good response.

**OBJECTION THREE:
NO ONE CAN HAVE AN
ABSOLUTE UNDERSTANDING OF TRUTH**

Our response to this objection is that truth can be absolute without our having an absolute understanding of it. Who said I have to have an absolute understanding of truth in order for it to be absolute? My understanding is finite. “Now we see in a

mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12). Something can be absolutely true without our having absolute evidence for it. You may ask, “Well, do you have absolute evidence for God?” No, and I don’t have to. For there to be a God I don’t have to have absolute evidence. And for there to be truth I don’t have to have absolute understanding of it.

**HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF
SOMEBODY GOING TO COURT
TO HAVE THE JUDGE SAY,
“RAISE YOUR RIGHT HAND.
DO YOU SWEAR TO TELL THE
RELATIVE TRUTH, THE
WHOLE RELATIVE TRUTH,
AND NOTHING BUT THE
RELATIVE TRUTH, SO HELP
YOUR FUTURE EXPERIENCE?”**

**OBJECTION FOUR:
THERE ARE EXAMPLES
OF RELATIVE TRUTH**

I always challenge my class to come up with one example of relative truth. Because what I am asserting is not only that truth is absolute, but there is no such thing as a relative truth. There are no examples of relative truth. There are alleged examples of relative truth; but they all fail, because whatever is true is always true for everyone, everywhere and always. What’s a relative truth? A relative truth is something that’s true for some people, in some places or at some times. What would an absolute truth

be? An absolute truth is something that’s true for all people, in all places, and in all times.

Now that we know what an absolute truth is, and what a relative truth is, can you give me an example of a relative truth? The answer is no. You can’t give an example. Here’s why: whatever is true is true for all people and all places at all times. Take these two examples: this man feels cold, and this man feels hot. Now, that this man feels hot is true for me up here; it’s true for you down there; it’s true for people on the equator; it’s true for people at the North Pole, because of the nature of truth. Truth is what corresponds to its object. And that man in his circumstances “feels hot.” “That man feels hot” is a statement about his feeling that is absolutely true for everyone in the world everywhere no matter where they are. And that that man feels cold is absolutely true for everyone everywhere. You don’t have to feel cold for that statement about that man to be true because truth is what corresponds to its object. And the object there is that man’s feeling. And that is a statement about his feeling which is true everywhere for all time.

Did the sun once revolve around the earth? No. This answer is true at all times and all places. Truth didn’t change; our view did. Our view changed in a Copernican revolution. That the earth revolves around the sun is true in all places. The statement, “It is cold at the North Pole and it’s hot in Egypt” is true everywhere. Why? Because it’s a statement about the North Pole: it’s cold at the North Pole. And if you make that

statement in Egypt, it’s still true that it’s cold at the North Pole. If you make that statement in hell, it would still be true that it’s cold at the North Pole, because it’s a statement about the North Pole, not about Egypt, or hell, or any other place. The truth does not change when it’s uttered in different geographical locations. I don’t care where you go to utter it; it’s still true because truth is what corresponds to its object. And its object is that place, namely, the North Pole, and not any other.

**SERIOUS PROBLEMS
WITH RELATIVISM**

Like an old apple, relativism may look good on the surface, but it’s rotten at the core. It has serious problems. Relativists believe that relativism is true for everyone. OOPS...because if it’s true for everyone, everywhere, and at all times, what is it? It’s not relativism; it’s absolutism. And once the relativist claims that everyone should be a relativist, which is really the claim of our culture, he has become an absolutist. As a friend of mine said, “They stand on a pinnacle of their own absolute and relativize everything else.”

You can’t move the earth unless you have a stable place to put your fulcrum. Relativists have to borrow our view. As Francis Schaeffer said, “They’re living on borrowed capital.” They have to borrow our view to make sense out of their view. Relativism is self-defeating. The world would be full of contradictions if relativism were true. If something is true for me but false for you, then opposite conditions exist since truth is what matches its condition. But opposite conditions

can’t exist at the same time. Either this Bible is in my right hand or it’s not in my right hand. It can’t be both at the same time. Opposite conditions can’t be true. It is simply impossible. No one would ever be wrong about anything. Just think of it: if relativism were true, then no one in the history of the universe since Adam has been wrong about anything. If truth is always relative, then I can never be wrong. If someone claims I’m wrong, then I can just say, “It’s wrong for you, but not for me.”

Relativism makes truth-gaining impossible and makes education impossible. If truth is not absolute, you would never learn anything. If we can never be wrong, then we can never learn anything, because learning involves moving from not knowing the truth to knowing the truth. And if you really learn, and go from not knowing to knowing the truth, then truth has to be absolute. If truth were relative you would never be able to learn anything. It is no wonder the apostle Paul said of men living in the last days, “Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7).

**OBJECTION FIVE:
COMPARISONS ARE
ALLEGED TO BE
RELATIVE**

Relativists argue that comparisons are examples of relative truth. For example, being warmer, better, or taller is relative to time, space and person. So, surely, that’s a relative truth. But no,

these are not relative truths. Saying Wilt Chamberlain is taller than Willie Shoemaker will always be true everywhere, all the time, and at all places. I don’t care if you go to San Francisco and say it or if you go to Boston and say it, Wilt is taller than Willie. That statement is about them and the relation between their heights, and it’s absolutely true no matter where you go and make that statement about that object. The same is true of all other comparisons.

**CONCLUDING
OBSERVATIONS**

**BELIEFS CANNOT CHANGE
A FACT NO MATTER HOW
SINCERELY THEY’RE HELD**

One can sincerely believe that the world is flat, but that just makes you sincerely wrong. I can sincerely believe that I live in Charlotte, North Carolina, which is near Highway 85, and that if I take 85 East to 95 and turn right on 95 that I can get to New York. It doesn’t matter how sincere I am, I’m going to end up in Miami, not New York!



TRUTH IS TRANS-CULTURAL

Three plus three is six here, there, and everywhere. It's true in Beijing, and it's true in Moscow. In fact, it is true wherever you go. It is truth and therefore transcends culture.

BEING RAISED IN A GIVEN CULTURE DOESN'T MAKE A PERSON'S BELIEFS TRUE

I was raised in the most racist city in the United States. You ask, "Were you born in Birmingham, Alabama?" No, I was born in Detroit, Michigan. We had two all-out race wars; I mean there were guns and knives in the street while I was growing up. I don't know any other city that had that. It was a racist culture. So does that justify me being a racist because I was raised in a racist culture? No!

What if you were raised a Nazi? Does this excuse your atrocities against mankind? They tried this argument at the Nuremberg trials. They argued, "Well, I was a Nazi, and I was just taking orders." They captured Adolf Eichmann in South America, brought him over to Israel, and tried him. They said, "What's your justification?" He said, "Well, I was a Nazi and I was obeying orders." Well, they executed him, cremated him, and threw his ashes in the Mediterranean. Being raised a Nazi doesn't make Nazism true. Being raised a racist doesn't make racism true.

A PERSON'S ATTITUDE DOESN'T CHANGE THE TRUTH

Did you know one's attitude doesn't change the truth? Every once in a while you will hear someone say, "Well, you people that hold this narrow view that Christ was the only way, you've really got a bad attitude. I mean, you're arrogant. You think you've got the truth in a suitcase. That's just a bad attitude." But you know, one's attitude doesn't change the truth. A bad attitude about truth doesn't make it an error. Suppose I have a bad attitude? My daughter had a history teacher with a bad attitude and she said, "I can't stand history." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because my teacher has such a bad attitude." Well, if your history teacher teaches you that Martin Luther tacked up his 95 theses on October 31, 1517, and he has a bad attitude, can you arbitrarily decide that Luther nailed his theses on October 29, 1723? No, a bad attitude doesn't change the truth. It doesn't make truth into error, or the reverse—a good attitude doesn't change error into truth.

HOW ABOUT LOVING RELATIONSHIPS?

Josh McDowell has an excellent message in which he says that people who live in a non-loving relationship are not as open to truth, and they don't receive it as well. However, one thing you have to be very careful of is not to say that truth is based in relationships. Truth is not based on relationships because relationships are subjective. Objective truth is not based on subjective things. Basing truth in a loving relationship will enhance the accept-

ance of the truth, but it will not change the nature of the truth. It will still be either true or false. Some time ago I was debating the top Moonie in the country, a man who afterwards, by the way, left the Moonies. He came up to me after the debate and said, "Boy, you really got me on some points there." And he was a Harvard PhD. He was an apologist for Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, and he realized he could no longer defend them and he gave up defending them. There was a Moonie girl saved after the debate; she came to Christ. Describing her experience with Moon's church, she said, "You know, I've never been loved so much in my life. These people loved all over me and I felt so at home, and just felt a wonderful family feeling." So the error of the Moonie cult was based in a loving relationship. A loving relationship doesn't change error into truth, and it doesn't change truth into error. The basic truth in a subjective relationship does not change its objective nature, but only its subjective appeal.

CONTRARY BELIEFS ARE POSSIBLE, BUT CONTRARY TRUTHS ARE NOT POSSIBLE

There is no such thing as your truth and my (different) truth. There is the truth. And if you don't have the truth, you don't have the truth. Contrary beliefs are possible. You can believe any cockamamie thing that you want. You can believe there's a little green gremlin in my digital watch changing the numbers and making a new second come up on my dial every second. That doesn't make it true.

YOU CAN BELIEVE EVERYTHING IS TRUE, BUT EVERYTHING CAN'T BE TRUE

Everything can't be true. Why? Because there are opposites and opposites can't both be true! Objective truth can't be denied. The denial of objective truth makes a claim to be an objective truth. The claim, "There is no objective truth," is an objective truth claim. You can't deny truth is objective. You can't deny it is absolute. You can't deny its correspondence to reality. Truth is what corresponds to the facts. Truth can be known. What is true is true for everyone. Now, that makes sense because now I can open the Bible and say to someone, "[Jesus is] the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes unto the Father but through [Him]" (Jn. 14:6). That's true for everyone, not just true for Christians.

And yet the surveys show there are as many people in our churches today who believe truth is relative as there are outside of those churches. It is no wonder that by age 23, sixty to eighty percent of our young people have left our churches. That's right! I was just speaking to people at the "Back to the Bible" organization. They have a professional scientist on their staff taking surveys, and it's a proven fact that 80 percent of our young people will leave the church by age 23. Why? Well, because they didn't have much of a grasp of the truth to begin with and because 80 percent of them are relativists sitting in the pews. They believe, "Well, that's maybe true for me, and maybe true for my mother, my father, the pastor, but

it's not true for everyone." What will that do to missions? It will kill missions. Why? Because relativistic Christians will reason, "Why go and talk to the Buddhist, the Hindu, when what's true for him is true for him, and it doesn't matter?" You say, "Well, Jesus is true for me." Yes, but, do you really believe it's true for everybody? (cf. Acts 4:12).

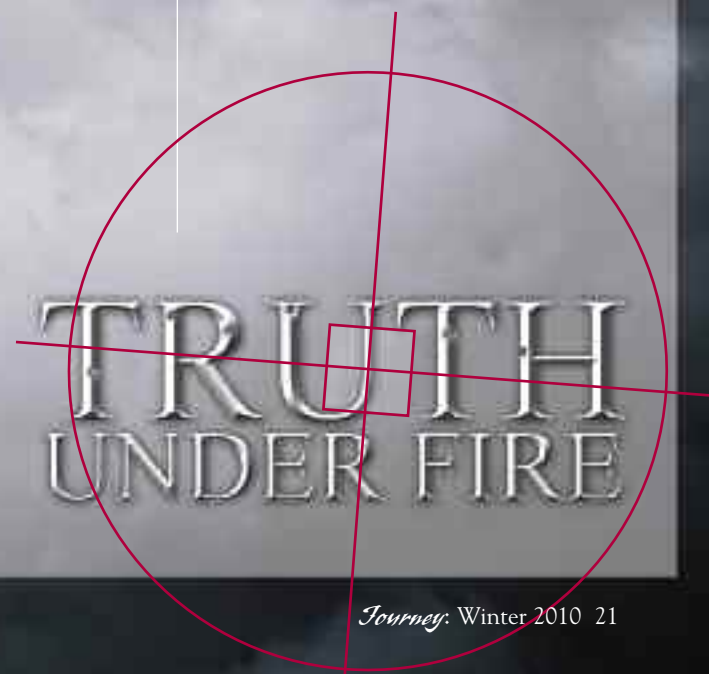
If you don't believe in absolute truth it undermines everything we believe as Christians. It undermines the Bible if we believe that it is just one of many truths. It undermines salvation through Christ if we believe that He is only one of many ways to God. I can't think of anything in our culture that is more important than to pre-evangelize people by explaining to them the nature of truth. †

i Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), 266-68.
ii Alan W. Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: Vintage 1957), 3-28.



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BEHOLD YOUR GOD

BY MARK STEVENSON

RECOVERING THE MAJESTY OF GOD

This article is an edited version of a message delivered at the 2009 “Iron Sharpens Iron” Conference on the campus of Emmaus Bible College. The article appears in a slightly more technical form in the Emmaus Journal 17 (2008): 167-183.

Psalm 96: 4-6 (ESV):

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

The Greatness of God

Psalm 96 celebrates the greatness of God. It’s a psalm that calls on God’s people to sing and proclaim the greatness of God in salvation and judgment. In fact, it calls all peoples to recognize God’s majesty and greatness, and thus to worship Him as the only true God.

All of this celebratory activity flows out of a foundational truth: “**For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to**

be feared above all gods” (v. 4).

There is no one like Him. And because of the uniqueness of His person; because of the marvelous nature of His works; because of the comprehensive scope of His sovereignty, He deserves our highest worship.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!

It would be profitable to simply expound a text like Psalm 96, beholding the greatness of our God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. But part of our purpose is to identify some of the ways sound doctrine is under fire today. I would suggest that at the root of the doctrinal confusion and distortion in the church and in our culture is a wrong view of God. Whether it is the question of the nature of truth, or the issue of authority, or substitutionary atonement—or a host of other issues—it all starts with in an inadequate view of God.

The Greatness of God Under Fire

We want to look at three key areas the greatness of God is under fire today.

“GREAT IS THE LORD, AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED; HE IS TO BE FEARED ABOVE ALL GODS. FOR ALL THE GODS OF THE PEOPLES ARE WORTHLESS IDOLS, BUT THE LORD MADE THE HEAVENS. SPLENDOR AND MAJESTY ARE BEFORE HIM; STRENGTH AND BEAUTY ARE IN HIS SANCTUARY.”

PSALM 96:4-6 ESV

The Denial of God: The New Atheists

In one sense, of course, atheism is not new. The psalmist declared: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). In more modern times, atheism became one of the products of the Enlightenment, where human reason replaced revelation. Yet there is something different about contemporary atheists in comparison to their Enlightenment counterparts.

Albert Mohler, in his book *Atheism Remix*, indicates that one of the things that marks the new atheists is an unprecedented boldness.¹ They are aggressively “evangelistic.” They write popular level books that are selling by the millions. Some of their books have stayed on the best-seller list for months. Mohler says, “In the history of books about atheism nothing like this has ever happened.”²

Who are the new atheists? Mohler identifies “The Four Horsemen of the New Atheist Apocalypse” as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens. These authors argue that religion—and certainly biblical Christianity—is ignorance and foolishness. In fact, if these new atheists had their way, parents would not be allowed to instill biblical beliefs in their children. Teaching your children about God, they argue, is a form of child abuse.

It is not our purpose to focus on the new atheists. There are credible responses available, but frankly, the new atheists are not my greatest concern for the church. To be sure, they are a formidable cultural challenge and

WE WANT A POLITICALLY CORRECT GOD. THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS TOO THREATENING FOR OUR TASTES, SO WE FASHION A GOD IN OUR LIKENESS—A GOD WHO IS MORE MANAGEABLE AND MARKETABLE.

they have a significant influence, especially on people who are not grounded in the faith. We need to take them seriously. I am thankful for those who are taking the time to answer these writers because we need to be prepared to give an answer. But I suspect there aren’t too many atheists in our local churches. Church is not where they like to hang out. I am more concerned about the second area in which the greatness of God is under fire because this category affects us directly.

The Distortion of God: God in Our Image You thought that I was one like yourself” (Ps. 50:21).

There is in our evangelical churches, to say nothing of the culture at large, a belittling of God. In a number of different ways, God is being domesticated. In conformity to the world, we think we need to tame the majestic God of Scripture in order to meet the approval of cultural sensitivities.

In other words, we want a politically-correct god. The God of the Bible is too threatening for our tastes, so we fashion a god in our likeness—a god

who is more manageable and marketable. Voltaire once said: “If God created us in his own image, we have more than reciprocated.”

Let me suggest three ways God is domesticated within evangelicalism.

Theological Level: Open Theism

Open theists tell us plainly that they reject the traditional understanding of God. They don’t like the concept of an immutable God. They challenge the doctrine of God’s omniscience, denying much of God’s knowledge of the future. Open theists believe that humans and demons have the power to thwart the purposes of God.³ When it comes down to it, they simply don’t like to think of God as an all-knowing, transcendent sovereign because they find it difficult to relate to such a God.

Instead, open theists prefer to think of God as a caring parent who is vulnerable and sensitive; who takes risks and learns along with us. Clark Pinnock says, “I believe that unless the portrait of God is compelling, the credibility of belief in God is bound to decline.”⁴ In other words, our portrait of God must not be offensive in any way, or people will not believe in God at all.

But of course the result is a god in our image, not the God of Holy Scripture.

Popular Level: *The Shack*

A second way God is being domesticated is at the popular level, as illustrated by the best-selling fictional book *The Shack*.⁵ The novel presents God in very human terms. In fact, God the Father—“Papa”—is presented as an African-American woman who enjoys cooking. Jesus is a Jewish man skilled at woodworking. The Holy Spirit is depicted as an Asian woman with a real talent for gardening.

The triune God is presented as insightful but playful; a therapeutic god who gives lots of hugs. What’s striking about this novel, beyond the basic distortion of the Godhead, is its presentation of man’s greatest need. From the perspective of *The Shack*, man’s greatest need is not be reconciled to a holy God whom we have offended through our sin, before whom we stand condemned, whose wrath we justly deserve. Rather, in *The Shack* God has offended us and he (or she) has some explaining to do. Our greatest need is for therapeutic and emotional healing. The overall impression the book leaves is of a god stripped of his majesty and glory.

What is disturbing is how *The Shack* is passionately endorsed and defended by some evangelicals. Countless readers claim the book has changed their lives. TV personality Kathie Lee Gifford wrote this endorsement of the book: “*The Shack* will change the way you think about God forever.” I’m afraid that’s true for many people. And it’s a sad commentary on

our theological poverty.

One more level:

Internal Level: Our own thoughts

Tozer said: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”⁶

How do we really think of God? Do our prayers reveal that we view God as some kind of cosmic Santa Claus who ought to be there to meet our needs and grant our wishes? Is He the kind grandfather who never wants us to go through hard times, but is there to bail us out, and prop up our self-esteem? We would never articulate that in our statement of faith, but is it how we sometimes think about God? Gauge your immediate response to God next time something goes wrong.

Transcendence and Immanence

What is happening in these trends is a loss of the transcendence of God. Transcendence simply means that God is not limited by His creation. He is independent of it and superior to it. In His glorious being, He transcends the universe He has made. Immanence, on the other hand, is the wonderful truth that God is present and active and involved in the world. Immanence speaks of God’s nearness. The Bible presents God as both transcendent and immanent, and these are brought together in many passages (see, for example, Isaiah 57:15).

He is a God of majestic holiness, but also of amazing grace. Both of these dimensions come together most gloriously in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross demonstrates God’s

righteousness while at the same time it is the highest expression of His love (Rom. 3:25; 5:8).

But in a domesticated view of God, we project our own limitations on the infinite God. We sacrifice transcendence in favor of immanence. David Wells unpacks what happens in this move. He writes:

We put all our eggs, so to speak, in the basket of God’s nearness, his relatedness, and we lose everything related to his otherness and transcendence. This yields a God who is familiar, safe, accommodating, but also very small. This is the “god” who is accessed through the self, who showers us with therapeutic benefits...But it loses the God of the Bible who, in addition to being near, is also elevated over all of life and who summons us to see him, not just as our psychological aid, but as he is in himself, in his glorious beauty and power, to be in awe before him, worship him as something other than ourselves, and to hear in his Word something other than what we naturally sense within ourselves.⁷

One way this happens is when we elevate the love of God to the central and defining attribute of God. After all, our culture wants to hear of a loving God. So we are tempted to focus on the love of God in virtual isolation from His holiness and justice. But in so doing we domesticate and sentimentalize the love of God; we refashion it to conform to our understanding and to make God more marketable. In truth, we distort God. We allow Him to love us and forgive us, but forbid Him to

AT THE ROOT OF THE DOCTRINAL CONFUSION AND DISTORTION IN THE CHURCH AND IN OUR CULTURE IS A WRONG VIEW OF GOD.



judge us. Our doctrine has Him standing with us, but never over us.

But in the biblical portrait of God, His love is so amazing precisely because it's displayed in harmony with His holiness and justice. Without the holiness of God the cross is emptied of all meaning. We stand amazed before the cross of Christ because in it we see God's love paying the price that His holiness demands.

The Weightlessness of God: Practical Atheism

In his book *God in the Wasteland*, David Wells says this:

[God] rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He has lost his saliency for human life. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgment no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertisers' sweet fog of flattery and lies. That is weightlessness.⁸

We may reject the errors of open theism and *The Shack*. Our statement of faith, when it comes to the doctrine of God, may be impeccable. But perhaps along the way we have lost the fear of the Lord. We may defend an orthodox doctrine of God, but we live too often as practical atheists. The weightlessness of God means He rests very lightly on our minds and hearts, and thus makes very little difference in the way we live our lives from day to day.

Before the modern era and the advances of modern medicine, people lived with the awareness that they were a breath away from eternity. But in our entertainment culture and with a user-friendly God, our concern is not to live coram deo (before God); after all, God exists for us. Our concerns are self-centered, not God-centered.

But when we see God in His glory, the effect on our lives will not be weightlessness, but a joyfully gravity. A vision of the majesty of God shapes all of life. When His greatness grips us, we want to live and work and worship and serve and use the Internet and eat and drink to the glory of God.

So we need a vision of the greatness and majesty of God. The greatest

issue facing mankind today is not the economy or the threat of terrorism. It's God! Do we know Him as He truly is, and not some domesticated version of our own making?

So let's come back to Psalm 96 and reaffirm the greatness of God.

(Re)Affirming the Greatness of God (Psalm 96)

GOD'S UNIVERSAL LORDSHIP

In verse 1, all the earth is to sing to the Lord. Verse 3 states that God's people are to declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples. That universal theme continues throughout the psalm.

The psalm is celebrating the universal Lordship of Yahweh. He is not merely a regional deity. He's the supreme Lord of heaven and earth; He rules over the nations. What's the proof? Verse 5: **"All the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens."**

JOYFUL WORSHIP

When we see God as majestic and holy and Creator and Lord and judge, *we are not to remain indifferent!* We're to be moved to worship. Thus the psalmist exhorts: **"Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!"** (vv. 7-9).

Notice manner of worship. Yes there's trembling before the splendor of His holiness. But there's also something about the greatness of God that makes

us want to sing! And so the psalm begins: **"Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!"** If you look closely at the first three verses you will see we are called to sing and proclaim and declare His glory and rejoice in His salvation. Why? Again verse 4: **"For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised."**

We domesticate God because we want a manageable deity; we think we can relate more to a god like us. But a god in our image is not worth worshipping. We were not created for a domesticated idol. We were created for the glory of God (Isa. 43:7; Col. 1:16). We were created and redeemed by Jesus Christ with the central purpose of our lives to declare and delight in the excellencies of the true God in the fullness of His greatness and glory (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Our hearts cry out for a great and majestic and holy God; and when we see His glory in creation, when we hear Him in Scripture and when He shines in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

THE SUPERIORITY OF GOD TO IDOLS

We were made to worship. The problem is that in our fallen condition we go after substitutes. The Bible calls them idols. They take all kinds of different forms, whether it is a graven image, or money, or career, or family, or the Internet. We may be more sophisticated in our idolatry than the ancients, but we are no less idolaters. Our fallen hearts are veritable idol factories.

Yet there is a problem and the

psalmist brings it out in verse 5: **"All the gods of the peoples are worthless idols."** The word for idol literally means "nothing" or "worthless." In contrast, the Lord is great. How do we know He's great? How do we know He is to be feared above all gods? Verse 5: **"But the LORD made the heavens."**

Scientists tell us that the galaxy of which our solar system is a part is about 100,000 light years in diameter. Yet it is only one of about a million such galaxies in the optical range of our most powerful telescopes.⁹ The Lord made the heavens—can your idol claim that? Then why give it your allegiance?

Every time we follow some other god and give our allegiance to something else; any time we want to bring God down and lessen His glory, we have to deal with the testimony of the heavens. Psalm 19 says, **"The heavens declare the glory of God...Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge."** What are the heavens saying? They declare day after day, year after year that God is great and majestic and powerful and there is no one like Him!

The truth is that idols shrivel our souls, rob our joy, and end up destroying us. Why chase pathetic little idols when there is a great God who made the heavens, who has condescended to deliver us from the folly of idols, and redeemed us to serve the living and true God?

GOD'S GREATNESS MANIFESTED IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY AND JUDGMENT

Two of the least popular concepts about God in our culture and even in the church are God's sovereignty and God's judgment. But notice verse 10, **"Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.'"**

The politically correct god is not sovereign because humans do not want to bow to God's authority. The politically correct god never judges anyone. He's just there to affirm us and love us, regardless of our wickedness and rebellion.

But in this psalm, God's sovereignty and justice are part of what make Him a great God. Make no mistake, this world is ruled by a sovereign King who is wise and good. The world is not spinning out of control. God will accomplish His sovereign purposes. And, Jesus Christ is coming to judge the world in perfect righteousness. Evil will not prevail. God will not turn a blind eye to sin and wickedness and injustice. That's a praiseworthy thing.

Atheists can pretend God does not exist. We can imagine that God is just a big, warm teddy bear. But it does not change what God has revealed in His Word, namely, that He is great, that He reigns, and that He's coming to judge the world. Don't be deceived by low thoughts of God! **Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!**

Practical Suggestions for Recovering the Majesty of God

Again Tozer said: “The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him—and of her. In all her prayers and labors this should have first place.”¹⁰

Where do we begin? Let me offer a few practical suggestions.

1. See and know God in Scripture

God has revealed Himself in Scripture. We see Him and know Him through His Word. As New Testament believers we have a Christological focus in knowing God. Second Corinthians 4:6 says “**For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**” How do we see Jesus today? Do we pray for some mystical vision? No, we learn to meditate upon Holy Scripture. Ultimately it is through Scripture that our knowledge of God is corrected and purified and elevated—and transforms us. Labor to see God in His Word.

2. Read and promote God-centered, God-glorifying books

Read and re-read J. I. Packer’s *Knowing God* or Tozer’s *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Encourage others in your church to do the same. In fact, start a reading group and come together Saturday mornings to talk about what you have read and to pray together in response to what you have read. You may just discover the worship in your local church is transformed.

3. Cast a vision of the greatness of God for your children and youth

In 2005, Christian Smith published a book entitled *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. In this study hundreds of interviews were conducted to discern the religious beliefs of American teenagers. The results were disturbing. Here is part of an interview with a “14-year-old white conservative Protestant girl from Idaho.”

Interviewer: Where do you get your ideas about God?

Girl: *The Bible, my mom, church. Experience.*

Interviewer: What kind of experience?

Girl: *He’s just done a lot of good in my life.*

Interviewer: Like, what are examples of that?

Girl: *I don’t know.*

Interviewer: Well, I’d love to hear. What good has God done in your life?

Girl: *I, well, I have a house, parents, I have the Internet, I have a phone, I have cable.*¹¹

Smith concluded that the dominant form of religion or spirituality of American young people today is what he terms “moralistic, therapeutic deism.” He summarizes as follows:

The creed of this religion, as codified from what emerged from our interviews, sounds something like this:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other...
3. The central goal of life is to be

happy and to feel good about oneself.

4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.¹²

Too often we think we can only reach young people with frivolity and games and a domesticated God. But we sell them short. And what we win them with, we win them to. Young people won’t be shaken from their apathy by a politically-correct god. They get that every day from the culture. What they need is their families, churches, and youth groups to rock their worlds with a vision of the holy, majestic, awesome God of Scripture.

4. Preach and teach a great God

Don’t assume people know and appreciate the greatness of God. It’s not just the youth in our assemblies who are moralistic, therapeutic deists.

One book that offers a vision for God-centered preaching is *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, by John Piper. In the book Piper tells the story of a sermon he preached on Isaiah 6—Isaiah’s vision of God in His holiness. This is what he says:

I preached on the holiness of God and did my best to display the majesty and glory of such a great and holy God. I gave not one word of application to the lives of the people. Application is essential in the normal course of preaching, but I felt led that day to make a test: Would the passionate portrayal of the greatness of God in and of itself meet the needs of the people?

A GOD IN OUR IMAGE IS NOT WORTH WORSHIPPING. WE WERE NOT CREATED FOR A DOMESTICATED IDOL.



I didn’t realize that not long before this Sunday one of the young families of our church discovered that their child was being sexually abused by a close relative. It was incredibly traumatic. They were there that Sunday morning and sat under that message. I wonder how many advisers to us pastors today would have said: “Pastor Piper, can’t you see your people are hurting? Can’t you come down out of the heavens and get practical? ...” Some weeks later I learned the story. The husband took me aside one Sunday after a service. “John,” he said, “these have been the hardest months of our lives. Do you know what has gotten me through? The vision of the greatness of God’s holiness that you gave me the first week of January. It has been the rock we could stand on.”¹³

The greatness and the glory of God are relevant, and we need to preach it.

5. Cultivate a 1 Corinthians 10:31 attitude in your life and church

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” One of the great themes that came out of the Protestant Reformation was *Soli Deo Gloria*—to the glory of God alone. For example, justification by faith is important, Calvin argued, because, “Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished.”¹⁴ Indeed, the heart of Calvin’s

quarrel with Rome “was that Rome had destroyed the glory of Christ in many ways—by calling upon the saints to intercede, when Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between God and man; by adoring the Blessed Virgin, when Christ alone shall be adored; by offering a continual sacrifice in the Mass, when the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is complete and sufficient.”¹⁵

The Puritans lived out *Soli Deo Gloria* by rejecting the division we often make between the sacred and the secular. They viewed all of life as sacred because all of life is the arena in which to glorify God.

Is *Soli Deo Gloria* the ethos of your church? It has to be cultivated, because our natural tendency is to be man-centered. So talk about the glory of God in your church and what it means to do all to the glory of God.

6. Pray

The apostle Paul prayed that the Colossians might increase in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10). That’s a good prayer. Revival often comes through gaining a more profound and biblical sense of the greatness of God. Use prayer as a means of centering your heart and mind in God. Focus on His excellencies. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. As you meditate on Scripture, pray that the Lord would impress with Himself and with His Son.

Pray for yourself and for one another that we would have a radically biblical and exalted view of God that shapes us to the very core of our being; that revives our churches, enlivens our worship and rescues our young people.

Behold Your God! May He grant us the grace to rediscover His majesty. †

¹ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *Atheism Remix: A Christian Confronts the New Atheism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 54.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

³ See for example, Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 37-38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵ William P. Young, *The Shack* (Newbury Park, CA: Windblown Media, 2007).

⁶ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1961), 1.

⁷ David F. Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 120.

⁸ David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 88.

⁹ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 19.

¹⁰ Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 4.

¹¹ Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 135.

¹² *Ibid.*, 162-163.

¹³ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 10.

¹⁴ John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto, *A Reformation Debate: Sadoletto’s Letter to the Genevans and Calvin’s Reply*, ed. John C. Olin (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 66.

¹⁵ T. H. L. Parker, *Portrait of Calvin* (London: SCM Press, n.d.), 109.



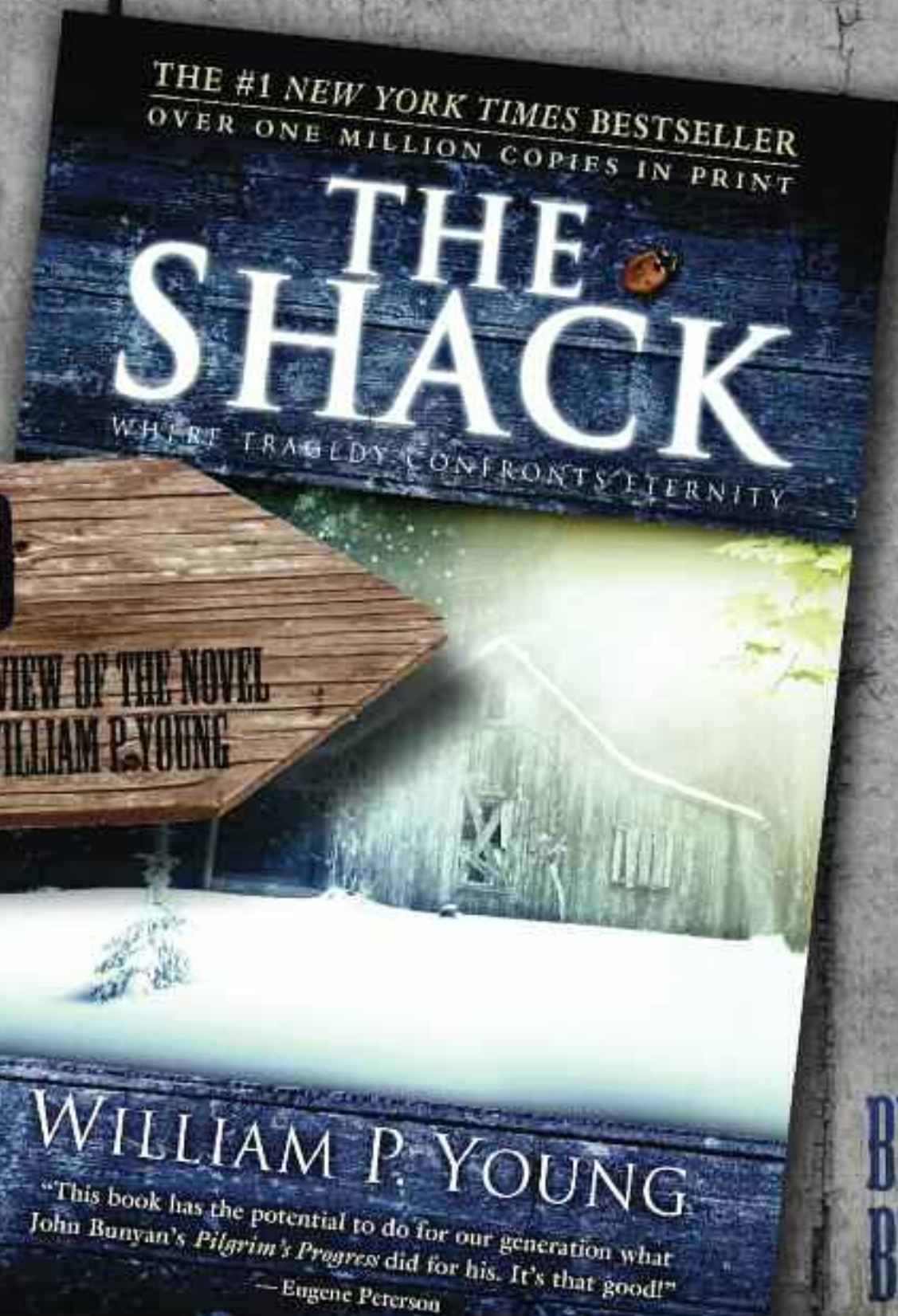
Mark Stevenson
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OBVIOUSLY IT IS A WORK OF FICTION;
BUT DO THE IDEAS AND CONCEPTS IN THE
NOVEL ELEVATE OR UNDERMINE THE TRUTH OF
GOD AND HIS WORK? THE MEDIUM AND
CONTENT BOTH MATTER.



STEPPING INTO THE SHACK:

A REVIEW OF THE NOVEL
BY WILLIAM P. YOUNG



BY
BEN MATHEW

More than two years have passed since Paul Young first introduced the world to *The Shack*. The bestseller tells the story of Mack, a man who lost his daughter to a brutal murder and goes back to the scene of the crime to literally meet with God and come back a changed man.

The Shack continues to be an international best-seller with endorsements and cautions from many across the evangelical spectrum. The novel deals with one of the most important questions of life; how do we reconcile the nature of a good and loving God with the evil and suffering we all face? While some hail this book as the modern-day equivalent of *Pilgrim's Progress*, others warn us it is nothing short of a modern-day heresy. This article will take a look at the ideas presented in *The Shack* and how we can discern fact from fiction, and truth from lies.

“It’s Just Fiction!”

Some believe that since this is a work of fiction, we should not be overly concerned with the content or theological issues. Comments like, “It’s just a book of fiction; we can’t take it too seriously!” are common from many people. The problem with this thinking is twofold: First, while the medium is fiction, the author is clearly trying to communicate ideas and concepts of God that are to be part of the reader’s reality. While Mack is a fictional character in the book, what he learns and discovers about God is meant to impact the reader in his/her real life. Second, if we are to follow this line of thinking, we should then admonish those that have been encouraged by the book, to not find too much help or hope from *The Shack*. We could say to them, “It’s only fiction; you really shouldn’t be too encouraged by it!” Many remember the fictional work by Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*. Obviously it is a work of fiction; but do the ideas and concepts in the novel elevate or undermine the truth of God and His work? The medium and content both matter.

The Shack: The Strengths

Before a word is made about the concerns of the book, we do have to highlight the strengths and

reasons why this book has resonated with so many people. The book deals with a horrific situation, and one does not even have to be a parent to connect with the heartbreaking story of a father’s little girl brutally kidnapped, abused and murdered. The reader is quickly drawn into the story of Mack and his loss, and immediately feels a sympathetic connection to the protagonist.

Young attempts to find an understanding of the pain and suffering in Mack’s life through the relationship of the Trinity. He paints a portrait of the Trinity that is very intimate, passionate and relational, giving the reader a glimpse into trying to understand the essential nature of love and community found within the Godhead. Young also tries to emphasize the nature of God’s love in the midst of pain and suffering. He seeks to portray God not as a vengeful and angry God, but as a loving, sympathetic and compassionate God who knows our struggles and uses them for a greater purpose.¹

The eternal questions of *theodicy* (how to reconcile God’s love with our pain and suffering) are a constant with God’s people as we try to accept our pain and God’s goodness in our life.

It’s with little wonder that many readers have responded to this book with their own personal issues, and find comfort and help in how Young tries to deal with these issues in the medium of this fictional tale.

The Shack: The Concerns

While we applaud Young’s desire to find meaning and purpose in our pain by pointing to the character and community of the Triune God, there are serious concerns with this presentation.

Half a Picture Is Not the Full Picture

God is a loving, caring and compassionate Lord; but we cannot present only the characteristics of God that we like and ignore or downplay the ones we do not like. Scott Lindsey states it well:

In theology there is a paradoxical mix of God’s attributes. There is God’s transcendence and his immanence, his Holy Otherness and his intimate familiarity. God’s attributes are sometimes described as being of two kinds, hard and soft.

Hard ones are holiness, justice, and wrath. Soft ones are grace, mercy and love. Whether or not you like the terminology, you get the point. A full and accurate picture of God requires both be included.²

Scripture gives a clear presentation of both these “hard” and “soft” attributes of God, sometimes within the same book, and sometimes within the very same verse:

God’s “Soft” Attributes

God is Love - 1 John 4:7 (ESV): Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

God is Merciful - Ephesians 2:4: But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ.

God is Gracious - Isaiah 30:18a: Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

God’s “Hard” Attributes

God is Holy - Leviticus 11:44: For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.

God is Wrathful - Ephesians 5:6: Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

God is Just - Isaiah 30:18b: For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

Especially when dealing with such important matters of life and faith, it is the responsibility of the teacher, elder, pastor, friend, counselor or writer, to present a total picture of God and His attributes. Presenting only one side of God’s character is not only harmful for those in the middle of struggle, but

more importantly, is dishonoring to our Lord.

Is That How You Talk to Your Father?

We note again that this is a book of fiction and we are clearly giving some artistic license to what and how certain information is presented. We know that in reality, no man is able to see God and live, much less have a meal together while seated at a table.³ But the concern is not so much that Mack sits and has a discussion with God without being killed, but rather, the manner in which Mack addresses and presents his concerns to God. When Mack realizes and accepts that he truly is able to talk to God, “he was more than ready to get a few things off his chest, respectfully, of course” (77). While Mack is obviously hurt and in confusion regarding the pain of his situation, the reader is left wondering if the manner in which he addressed God is really in line with the biblical accounts of men encountering God:

Exodus 3:5, 6: Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, **for he was afraid** to look at God.

Job 40:3-5: Then Job answered the LORD and said: “Behold, **I am of small account**; what shall I answer you? **I lay my hand on my mouth**. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”

Isaiah 6:3-5: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “**Woe is me!** For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Mark 9:2-6: And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were

talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” **For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.**

Revelation 1:17: When I saw him, **I fell at his feet** as though dead.

Time and time again, the response of men throughout Scripture when confronted with the power and majesty of God is one of awe, respect, wonder, and holy fear. This response is right and understandable for it gives a clear understanding regarding the character of God in His glory and might. It also stands as a wonderful contrast in appreciation of the grace and mercy of God, in that He did not consume Moses, or destroy Isaiah, or wipe out John. With Scripture we are given a wonderful example of both the “hard” attributes of God as well as His “soft” attributes.

With Mack, we only see the immanence and approachability of God, and wonder if Mack’s response is truly biblical in light of the reality of who God is. As Tim Challis asserts:

In The Shack we find a man who stands in the very presence of God and uses foul language (140, 224), who expresses anger to God (which in turn makes God cry) (92), and who snaps at God in his anger (96). This is not a man who is in the presence of One who is far superior to Him, but a man who is in the presence of a peer. This portrayal of the relationship of man to God and God to man is a far cry from the Bible’s portrayal.⁴

Gandalf or Aunt Jemima?

When Mack first meets the members of the Trinity, the reader is given an interesting look at the presentations of the Godhead:

- Father - Large, beaming African-American woman named Elousia. (Or Papa, as referred to by Mack’s wife).
- Son - Middle Eastern man named Jesus (Yeshua, Joshua, even Jesse). He was dressed like a laborer, com-

plete with tool belt, gloves, plaid shirt and jeans.

- Holy Spirit - Small, distinctively Asian woman named Sarayu. She seemed to almost shimmer in light and Mack assumed she was the gardener with lightweight gloves and knees stained with dirt.

Again, the author uses some artistic license to present the members of the Trinity in novel and unusual manners to specifically help Mack and us, the readers, so we do not fall back into our old religious and hurtful ways in thinking about God. The Father clarifies that for Mack: “If I choose to appear to you as a man or a woman, it’s because I love you. For me to appear to you as a woman and suggest that you call me Papa is simply to mix metaphors, to help you keep from falling so easily back into your religious conditioning” (93). God wants to help Mack, (and Young wants to help the reader) to realize that God may need to change His appearance to help man because of man’s past, misinformed, or abusive thoughts of God. Mack had a bad image of God as Father because of past abusive dealings with his own father. Therefore, the traditional image of Father as a white male, with a long flowing beard (Gandalf-like), is counterproductive for Mack at this point in his life. A better image is an overweight, beaming, African-American woman (Aunt Jemima-like). This image is more caring, compassionate, and nurturing, rather than the cold, distant, and judging image of the bearded Father. Papa goes on to explain to Mack by stating, “Hasn’t it always been a problem for you to embrace me as your father? And after what you’ve been through, you couldn’t very well handle a father right now, could you?” (93).

But the reader needs to continue to ask the question whether the presentation of God the Father in *The Shack* correlates to the biblical model. It is interesting to note how many times the apostle Paul address the readers

of his letters:

- Romans 1:7: To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 1:3: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Galatians 1:3: Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and **God the Father**.
- Ephesians 1:2: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Philippians 1:2: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Colossians 1:2: To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from **God our Father**.

Paul continues to use the title “God our Father” as a means of greeting, encouraging and comforting saints throughout his letters. But this raises some interesting questions:

- Can we not assume that Christians in the various locations that Paul wrote to had very bad relationships with their earthly fathers?
- Didn’t some of them have abusive or hurtful fathers?
- Why wasn’t Paul more sensitive to the readers of his letters when using the title “God our Father”?
- Didn’t he realize he may be bringing up bad feelings in those who would read and hear those words of “God our Father”?
- Perhaps Paul should have used an imagery that would have helped

Christians embrace the concept of Father that was apart from the cruel reality that many of them had?

Obviously, with a high view of Scripture, we realize that Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was not wrong for using the title “God our Father.” Paul’s use of the title is intended to communicate clearly the nature of God, and how He relates to us.

In light of Paul’s teaching on the Father, we know that the way to deal with false presentations of God (Gandalf-like, mean, angry fathers) is not to present another false image of God (Aunt Jemima-like), but to help people get back to the presentation of God the Father as given to us in Scripture.

- Romans 8:15: For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the **Spirit of adoption** as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! **Father!**”
- 2 Corinthians 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies** and God of all comfort.
- Ephesians 1:3: Blessed be the **God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us** in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:16: Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and **God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace....**

It is agreed that God the Father transcends human gender, but we must not re-package the Father in novel and



confusing manners when they go against the clear teachings of Scripture.

You do not counter bad fathering with a presentation of good mothering; you counter bad fathering with a presentation of good fathering. It is important to note that God does not reveal Himself as Father because that is what **we need**. He reveals Himself as Father, because that is who **He is**. To avoid the metaphor of Father as a description and designation for God is to lose sight of the fact that Jesus chose this as His metaphor to address God and that He taught this as the metaphor by which His disciples should address God.⁵

The Trinity: Mystery, not Confusion

The doctrine of the Trinity is not an easily understood truth, but it is at the foundation of the Christian faith. “Try to understand the Trinity, and you’ll lose your mind. Try to deny the Trinity and you’ll lose your soul.”⁶ While we cannot claim to have an exhaustive knowledge and understanding of the Trinity, we are expected to honor the revealed truth of the Trinity as found in Scripture. Young’s portrayal and actions between the Godhead seem to be at best confusing, and at worst, near heretical.

When Mack comes closer to Papa, “Mack noticed the scars in her (Papa’s) wrists, like those he now assumed Jesus also had on his... ‘Don’t ever think that what my son chose to do didn’t cost us dearly... We were there together’” (95, 96). It could be argued that Young is simply trying to give the reader a glimpse into the unity of the Father and Son, and that he truly doesn’t believe the Father also literally suffered as the Son.⁷ But Young continues to present faulty information as it relates to the Godhead: “When we three spoke ourself into human existence as the Son of God, we became fully human. We also chose to embrace all the limitations that this entailed. Even though we have always been present in this created universe, we now became flesh and blood” (99). Young clearly

confuses the nature of the Incarnation and applies it to all members of the Godhead. It was only the Son that became man and took on flesh and blood.⁸ This point is made clear by Glenn Krider in his review of the book:

Since only the Son became incarnate and experienced death on the cross, only the Son could bear the marks of crucifixion. Neither the Father nor the Spirit bears the scars of the Son’s suffering. Surely His suffering affected the relationship between them, but those effects were not experienced in the same way by each person of the Godhead. Only the Son became flesh and blood, only the Son died on the cross, and thus only the Son could bear the marks of crucifixion in His body.⁹

Young tries to make sense of the relationship of the Trinity as it relates to the death of the Son: “Now wait, I thought you left him—you know—‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’... You misunderstand the mystery there. Regardless of what he felt at that moment, I never left him” (99). Young continues to miss the point. While there was no division of essence in the Trinity when Jesus cried these words, there was, at that moment on the cross, a break of relationship as a judicial act of atonement was completed and the righteous demands of a holy God were met in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul makes this clear when he states that “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).¹⁰

It is an historic doctrine of the Christian faith that Jesus didn’t just feel forsaken (as did David who spoke the words in Psalm 22) but that He actually was forsaken by the Father. David never became sin for humanity, but Jesus actually did (2 Cor. 5:21). And in becoming sin for us, He had to be punished, and the Father had to turn away from Him, forsaking Him on the cross

as the darkness descended in mid-day. This is why Isaiah 53:10 says those harrowing words, “But the LORD was pleased to crush Him [Messiah], putting Him to grief.”

No Higher Hierarchy?

Young continues to have God explain Himself to Mack in very confusing and harmful ways. When trying to communicate aspects of the Trinity’s relationship with each other, God states “We have no concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are in a circle of relationship, not a chain of command... Hierarchy would make no sense among us... Actually, this is your problem, not ours... Once you have a hierarchy you need rules to protect and administer it... you rarely see or experience relationship apart from power. Hierarchy imposes laws and rules and you end up missing the wonder of relationship that we intended for you” (122, 123). Young tries to have God explain how hurtful and abusive hierarchy is and how it ultimately ruins relationships and hinders community. This egalitarian viewpoint as applied to the relationship of the Trinity clearly misses the teaching of the Bible. Jesus willingly submitted to His Father’s will (Lk. 22:39; Jn. 5:19), did only that which His Father commanded Him to do (Jn. 6:38; Jn. 8:28) and joyfully humbled Himself to please His Father (1 Cor. 15:28; Phil. 2:8).

A “logical” outworking of Young’s view of hierarchy would inevitably challenge the nature of relationships between children to parents (Eph. 6:1); wives to husbands (Eph. 5:22); men to Christ (1 Cor. 11:3); church members to elders (Heb. 13:17); and citizens to rulers (Titus 3:1). While we are willing to admit there have been abuses of hierarchy in relationships, it does not then logically follow that all hierarchy therefore is antithetical to relationship. Christ teaches that a willingness to submit and follow His authority is actually an indication of love and devotion; not fear and abuse (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3).

The Nature of Salvation(s)?

If concerns regarding the presentation of the Trinity weren’t troubling enough, Young then has troubling statements regarding the work of Christ and the nature of salvation.

God informs Mack, “I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment devouring from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it; it’s my joy to cure it” (120). While we can agree that God does have joy in His defeat of sin, it does not mean that God is against the direct punishment of sin.

Scripture speaks of God’s direct judgment via the flood, on Sodom and Gomorrah, on Dathan and the rebels. In the New Testament, He strikes down Ananias and Sapphira for their sin, and judges the sin unto death. He says that some are weak and sick in Corinth because of their abuse of the Lord’s Supper, meaning He has punished them. Countless Scriptures deal with God punishing sin.¹¹

The grace and forgiveness of God only find meaning when put in contrast to the holy wrath and judgment of God. One cannot be pitted against the other.

Young uses confusing statements stating that “Christ is just the **best** way to relate to the Father” (110). Young continues to be obscure in his writing, and misses a wonderful opportunity to teach that Christ is not just the “best way,” but that He is the only way.¹²

The character Sarayu (the Holy Spirit), informs Mack that Jesus “chose the way of the cross where mercy triumphs over justice because of love. Would you instead prefer he’d chosen justice for everyone?” (164-165). Young appears to pit mercy against justice rather than to present mercy as the satisfaction of justice so that God *might* be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

When Mack asks what the death of Christ accomplished, Papa responds by claiming that “through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world” (192). Young puts

the emphasis of reconciliation on God to man, rather than Scripture’s emphasis of man to God. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:17-18). While the death of Christ is efficacious to all (2 Cor. 5:19) it is applied only to God’s children.¹³

“Who do you say I am?”

The question Jesus asked Peter continues to push people to realize the truth of who Jesus Christ is. When Mack is given information regarding the relationship of Jesus to God, and the works He did, Papa states that “He (Jesus) did so as a dependent, limited human being trusting in my life and power to be at work within him and through him.

Jesus, as a human being, had no power within himself to heal anyone” (100). While Young does state that Jesus is fully God, he confuses the abilities (and thus the character) of Christ in His incarnation. Jesus most certainly did have power within Himself. He is God! Young’s view sounds like kenotic Christology, that Christ gave up His deity when He became human. If He did not retain full deity on earth, He is not fully divine.¹⁴ If He is not fully divine, then he is no Savior of mankind.

Walking out of the Shack

The Shack has obviously had an impact on the evangelical scene. With its captivating story, its novel presentations of the Godhead, and its desire to portray God as a caring and loving companion; it’s no wonder that millions have been sold.

But as with any book (or teaching, commentary, pamphlet or video), all forms of communications about God and life must be held to the standard of God’s Word.¹⁵ There is great concern with *The Shack* in its theology and application to the life of the reader. But

the greater concern is that it portrays God merely as one who is more love than justice, as a peer who submits to man, and may be only the “best” way to knowing God. It is during our times of suffering and struggle that we need a clear, glorious, and strong picture of God in our lives; but the picture from *The Shack* may not be the one we need. †

¹ John 11:5-14

² Scott Lindsey, *The Shack: Detailed Book Review* (<http://theresurgence.com/files/The%20Shack%20Review.pdf>) 10, 11.

³ Exodus 33:20

⁴ Lindsey, *The Shack: Detailed Book Review*, 4.

⁵ Luke 11:2

⁶ Robert South, “The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity Asserted, and Proved Not Contrary to Reason” from *Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions* vol II (Philadelphia: Sorin and Ball, 1844), 184.

⁷ For further discussion of this ancient heresy, see information about Patripassianism: a label to describe an unorthodox teaching about the Christian God in which the Father suffers on the cross rather than the Son. This would happen in a form of modalism, the teaching that there is only one God, who appears in three different modes (as opposed to the orthodox teaching that there is one God, who exists in three persons).

⁸ John 1:14

⁹ Glenn Kreider, http://daily.insight.org/site/PageServer?pagename=shack_details#two

¹⁰ See also, Galatians 3:13

¹¹ Lindsey, *The Shack: Detailed Book Review*, 14.

¹² Acts 4:12

¹³ Ephesians 1:3-6

¹⁴ Colossians 2:9

¹⁵ Acts 17:11



Ben Mathew

Ben is a native of Southern Ontario, Canada and was actively involved in a number of ministries in his home assembly. Ben received his B.S. in Biblical Studies from Emmaus Bible College and continued his graduate work at Dallas Theological Seminary, earning his M.A. in Biblical Counseling. Ben worked in the Dallas area for a number of years in private practice and at the nationally known Minirth Clinic specializing in adolescent rehab and conflict resolution. Ben is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the state of Iowa and now ministers at Emmaus as a professor in the Biblical Counseling department and also works in the Student Services department as the Director of Counseling Services. Ben & his wife Jenna live in Dubuque, IA with their children Elias and Zachary. They stay involved with various ministries while he is a favorite speaker at numerous churches, camps and conferences across North America.

Dr. MacLeod Asks

Faculty member Dave MacLeod leads us in a public forum to discuss issues pertinent to contemporary Christian life. Last issue he asked the following question:

A Bible study of 1 Corinthians 5 led to a general discussion of excommunication. None of those present, representing a variety of backgrounds and experience, could remember an act of excommunication in the churches of which they were members. Is excommunication ever practiced in the churches to which readers of Journey Magazine belong—and for what kind of offense?

Ruth Harris Responds

Your question opened a can of worms for me. I have memories of several excommunications practiced in the assemblies I have attended.

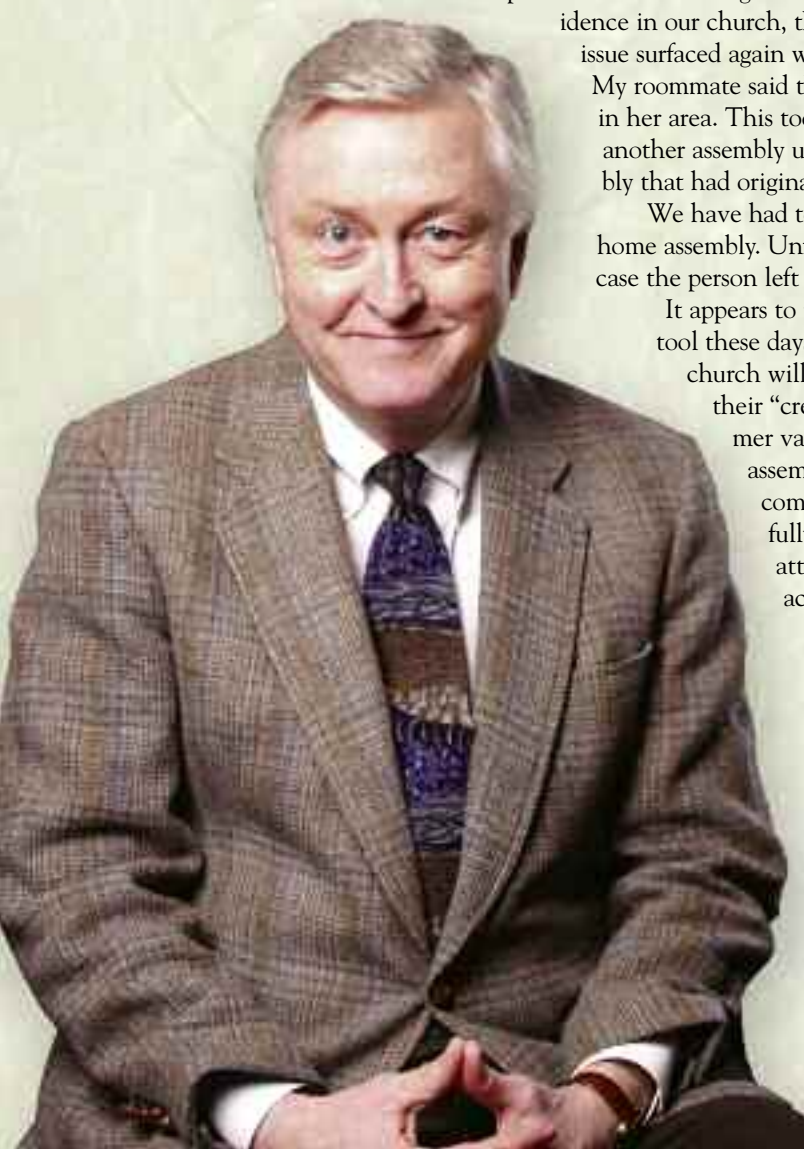
The first I remember was when I was about 13 years old. A commended worker (itinerant preacher) from our church was caught in adultery and was excommunicated for that reason. It came as a great shock to me, and a friend and I went into a back room and cried our hearts out. One of the church elders found us back there and spent some time talking and praying with us. Because the fallen preacher's family was in residence in our church, the terrible reality of the situation was all too apparent. The issue surfaced again when I was at Emmaus Bible School in Oak Park in 1972–1973. My roommate said the excommunicated preacher had been attending an assembly in her area. This took me a back. I felt that he should not have been accepted by another assembly until he had repented of his sin and been restored by the assembly that had originally disciplined him.

We have had to consider excommunications several times in our present home assembly. Unfortunately, in all cases repentance was never realized. In every case the person left the church before the discipline could be enacted.

It appears to me that excommunication is largely ineffective as a disciplinary tool these days. If our church expels a believer because of gross sin, another church will be only too happy to take him or her in without ever checking their "credentials." I remember when traveling with my family on summer vacations in the '60s we always carried a letter from our home assembly saying we were in fellowship so other assemblies would welcome us to break bread with them. I remember being rather carefully scrutinized by some of the more exclusive places we tried to attend on these vacation Sundays. We never see such letters accompanying visitors in our assembly these days.

In conclusion I would say that excommunication has never achieved the result the apostle Paul desired of repentance and restoration because true discipline is not practiced in the church at large. The excommunicated persons simply find pastures elsewhere.

Ruth A. Harris
Missoula, Montana



Steve DuPlessie responds:

This is a timely question. The elders in our assembly have recently been convicted by the Holy Spirit through comments of concerned saints that we have not been upholding our responsibility as under-shepherds in the area of purity of the flock. While the precipitating unaddressed problem was five unmarried pregnant young women in the assembly in the past two years, a closer examination of the health of our assembly revealed a number of other areas where there were persistent, obvious/public sinful habits that had been allowed to continue.

We were also told by some of the teens and young adults that these sin issues were none of our business as elders; it was between the individuals and God. Others told us that confronting these "public" sins was unfair as others were sinning (unknown to us) and had never been confronted.

The elders spent a day together in prayer, Bible study and discussion. This resulted in a public confession and apology by the elders for failing in our responsibility and an admonition to the entire body to live pure lives for the sake of the name of Jesus. This was followed by biblical teaching on the doctrine of the church and our mutual responsibilities as parts of the body on the one hand (Romans 12:5) and as shepherds of the flock on the other (Ezekiel 34:4), and a call to all to repentance and purity.

In addition, teams of two elders visited with a number of individuals (and in the cases of some teenage believers still living at home, visited the individual in the presence of their parents) to humbly confront the sin (Galatians 6:1, 2) and call the individual to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10). In each case, the issues were addressed as first and foremost an offense before God—"Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4). The shame brought to the

name of Christ and the local Church was also presented (1 Corinthians 5:1). The goal of each of the conversations was always restoration to fellowship with God and fellowship with the saints: "...let him who is spiritual restore him gently..." (Galatians 6:1).

In most cases the response was an attitude of a broken and contrite heart, a repentant spirit that desired to turn from sin, and a wish for restored fellowship with God and the saints. Yet in one particular case a young adult deliberately chose to continue in his/her sinful life-habit and was told that his/her persistent attitude of defiant rebellion had broken his/her intimate fellowship with God and with the believers at the Chapel. With tears this person was told that they are no longer welcome at the Lord's Table until he/she repents.

A number of significant questions have risen from this effort. And I invite a response from Dr. MacLeod to the numerous questions, which my response raises.

Steve DuPlessie asks:

First, without formal "membership" lists, exactly who are the elders responsible for as shepherds? Everyone who attends any meeting of the assembly? Just those who have been baptized? Just those who choose to attend the Remembrance Meeting? And how often must they attend to be considered "part of the flock: weekly, monthly, occasionally?

David MacLeod comments:

It seems to me that the elders are responsible for the shepherding of all those who regularly (not occasionally) attend the meetings of the church. It is wise, I would suggest, to have a published policy to the effect that the elders feel a pastoral responsibility to all those who publicly identify with the church.

Steve DuPlessie asks:

Second, in the case of a young unmarried mother living with her boyfriend, should she be encouraged to marry the unsaved father of her child (Exodus 22:16; Deuteronomy 22:28, 29), or to separate from him because he is not a believer (2 Corinthians 6:14) and raise the child alone? Which of these two biblical principles apply? And if she is encouraged to marry the young man, should it be done by an elder in the chapel? If not, why not since we recommended that they marry?

David MacLeod comments:

The fact that the couple lives together and has had a child together makes the question of the unequal yoke moot. They have, in effect, a common law marriage. There should be loving counsel to the young woman encouraging her to be restored to the Lord. There should also be some pre-marital counsel in which the young man is faced with the gospel appeal. I believe an elder should marry them and that the elders should encourage the flock to do everything they can to befriend them and win them to Christ. An unbelieving husband is sanctified by a believing wife (1 Cor. 7:14).

Steve DuPlessie asks:

Third, if a young woman becomes pregnant outside of marriage, repents of her sin, and chooses to keep her child, should the normal rites still apply, *i.e.*, baby showers at the Chapel, etc? What does *grace* dictate?

David MacLeod comments:

Your reference to grace anticipates my answer. Grace and forgiveness should be complete. The young woman sinned, to be sure, but forgiveness brings her back into the full fellowship of the assembly (including a bay shower)!

Steve DuPlessie asks:

Finally, what is the nature of the exclusion? From the Lord's Table only? From any and all contact, even in the case of a family member, as seems to be implied in 1 Corinthians 5:11?

David MacLeod comments:

Discipline should go as far as is required to bring the person to repentance. There are issues that require only private counsel by the elders. In the case of the serious sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:11 biblical discipline will call for public censure if counsel does not have any effect. If that fails then he should be barred from the Lord's Supper (assuming that this is the eating Paul refers to). I am aware of one case where all efforts failed until the person was barred from all meetings of the church. In the end he repented only when his family refused to fellowship with him.

Steve DuPlessie concludes:

Sin has multiple consequences and is never simple to remedy. It cost the life of our Savior above all. And frequently some consequences persist, even after repentance. In our case, more difficult conversations will follow as we attempt to be faithful, humbly confronting sin in the camp and seeking to maintain both purity and grace. We welcome your prayer.

Steve DuPlessie
Attleboro, MA

Ian Taylor responds:

I have been in a number of different assemblies where the discipline of excommunication was necessary. It is really an unpleasant part of pastoral work, but necessary as it not only affects the individual concerned, but if not dealt with, will have a devastating affect on the whole local church. A little yeast will work through the

whole batch of dough, (1 Corinthians 5:6).

The reasons for the instances of the discipline of excommunication in which I was involved, were for unrepentant immorality, unrepentant substance abuse, and a few cases in newly formed assemblies in Colombia, where money was stolen from assembly funds. Other reasons for this extreme discipline are for heresy (2 John 10–11; 1 Timothy 1:19–20), divisiveness, (Titus 3:10), and the sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:11–12. The discipline of excommunication is an action of the local church and not just the decision of the elders. The elders will have dealt with all the details of the case and then, having informed the local church in general terms the reasons why excommunication is necessary, will recommend the action to be taken (Matthew 18:16–17).

The church at Corinth provides a good example of a church infected by a lack of understanding concerning holiness and other doctrinal issues. For most of these matters Paul's admonition was sufficient to correct the sin and error, but in some cases the discipline of excommunication was necessary. Today, discipline must be exercised on the basis of Scripture and not on personal opinions and feelings. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Scripture provides various forms of discipline for the church to use, in order to deal with different situations involving a sinning member. The appropriate form of discipline should be used with respect to the sin committed. Unfortunately, some churches simplify the act of discipline by just cutting off fellowship with the person to get rid of the problem. Others treat serious issues so lightly that the person in question feels little discomfort and

continues his sinful practices. This lack of action usually stems from fear of offending people, or of not being politically correct. Sometimes a church fails to use the appropriate form of discipline that the particular situation requires.

The individuals who comprise any community, understand that collective action is necessary if someone breaks the community's rules and laws. Such laws are established for the well-being of its citizens or members. In the same way, a believer should be aware that he is part of a local church family, and as such there may be a need for the elders to correct, rebuke, or discipline that person for unchristian behavior.

There are differing forms of discipline mentioned in the New Testament. These include:

- Admonition (Romans 15:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Titus 3:10)
- Isolation (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15)
- Public Rebuke (Galatians 2:11–14; 1 Timothy 5:20)
- Silence (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Timothy 1:3–4; Titus 1:10–11)
- Excommunication (1 Corinthians 5:5–7, 13)

It is important that all believers recognize the need for accountability and submission to the Lord, to the Word, and to the elders in the local church. "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17).

A church should never exercise discipline without first studying the means of helping the one in sin so that he can one day be restored. Restoration is just as important as applying the disciplines in the first place. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers, if

someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

Anyone can fall into sin, and it is only by the grace of God that we are what we are. Thankfully, in the two more recent cases, which we have had to address, after much pastoral care, both were restored into fellowship with the Lord, and also into fellowship with the local assembly.

Discipline is not a weapon or a punishment, but a treatment; it is a remedy for the part of the body that is sick and in need of healing. Even in the case of the immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul exhorted the believers to receive again in love the one who had offended (2 Corinthians 2:5–11). But care must be taken that the restored saint does not fall back into the same old problems and ongoing pastoral care should continue.

Leviticus 14 contains a rather

lengthy list of instructions on how to restore the leper after he is healed. The principle we can draw is one of restoration. These Scriptures outline the measures the priest had to take in order to return the person to a normal life in the camp. We can see that it was a lengthy process, but one of much value, because its purpose was for the good of the affected person and for the well-being of the whole congregation.

Ian Taylor
Kenosha, Wisconsin

NEXT ISSUE'S QUESTION:

Years ago Prof. F. F. Bruce led a discussion on "Moral Problems in the Old Testament." In the course of the discussion he was asked the following question, "If Samuel had listened more carefully, might he have heard a Voice saying, much as Jonah heard it some centuries later, 'Should I not spare Amalek?'" (see 1 Samuel 15:13; cf. Jonah 4:11). Prof. Bruce's questioner was suggesting, I believe, that Samuel's instructions to Saul contradict what we know of the compassion and mercy of God. How would you have answered this man's question?

Please send responses to Journey Magazine, Emmaus Bible College, 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001, or e-mail to journey@emmaus.edu. Include name, city, state, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.

THE DISCIPLINES OF GODLINESS

Chris Lange

IT IS REMARKABLE that during the early centuries leading up to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire at the close of the 5th century, the church was involved in the preservation of the great body of literature from Greek philosophy and Roman jurisprudence. The work of men such as Augustine, Ambrose, Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Origen, Tertullian, and others began to form the basis of church doctrine and the fight to preserve purity against the onslaught of heresy. The Egyptian monk Anthony and Benedict of Nursia had immense influence on the establishment and refinement of monasticism. Jerome, after he began to live in a monastery outside of Jerusalem, would translate the Old and New Testaments from the original languages into Latin (Vulgate); and what resulted from that was the authorized version of the

Bible. Monks became scholars in their solitary cells, reading and copying sacred manuscripts.

Men and women also perceived the need to separate themselves from the increasing secularism of the church. Many found the growing pomp and worldliness of the Roman Empire under Constantine (who had made Christianity a recognized religion of the Empire) to be far from the reality of the lives of the early martyred saints whose blood had become “the seedbed of the persecuted church.” Thereafter, true spirituality became defined by those who sought to suffer for the sake of Christ in order to identify with His suffering and to separate themselves from such worldliness. From lonely monks who separated themselves off into wild and barren places to those who physically injured themselves or endured horrid acts of penance, the age of medieval monasticism defined a severe and ascetic version of Christianity that would last for centuries to come. The goal was to suffer for Christ. But what eventually happened was a macabre formula for gaining favor with God through acts of bodily suffering and penitential punishment. The greater the pain, the greater the spirituality.

A Dangerous Precedent...

It was a mistake and a dangerous precedent set against the correct understanding of the grace of God shed abroad in the lives of believers through Christ. Ironically, though Jesus was acquainted with suffering and separation from men, He never engaged in this sort of harmful behavior, nor did He teach His disciples to do so. From this period, then, asceticism has retained a negative connotation down through the ages.

The question one might ask is this: Do Christians (ought

Christians) engage in ascetic practices that they might grow in godliness? Asceticism is the giving up or suppressing of things desirable or pleasurable for the sake of attaining an end *which cannot be attained without giving them up*. I submit that the personal practice of the spiritual disciplines is necessary for one to grow in godliness.

The mistake is that our Christian maturity, our growth in Christ, or our progress in faith and godliness, is attained merely by being associated with Christian themes, by being in the presence of others in the body of Christ, or by habitual participation in activities that are characteristic of the Christian life. Students at Emmaus do not become more devoted to God and to godliness simply by being at the college for a year or more. The struggle they face—we all face, with our sin and carnal appetites—requires greater attention to the manner in which we train ourselves for godliness. The apostle Paul’s reference in 2 Timothy 2: 5 to an athlete competing is clear that athletes must compete according to the rules. And if you are an athlete, perhaps having trained for a marathon or for another demanding sport, you know that diet and discipline in workouts is not simply recommended but essential. No serious athlete competes without the goal of victory in mind.

A Necessary Discipline...

So it is with believers. If we intend to grow in faith, become devoted to God, and to prosper in habits of authentic and true spiritual life, we must train accordingly. This may mean overt self-denial of many opportunities and pleasures that our life in American culture amply affords. Self-denial may become the means by which we enter into a fuller, deeper, more intimate relationship with Christ.

And yet, asceticism in the Christian life (self-denial of the flesh with the intent to remove physical, emotional, or spiritual hindrances in one’s relationship with Christ) must not be misunderstood. Opting for periods of silence in a world suffused with noise is not spiritual in and of itself. It is a step toward being able to hear clearly the voice of God *in the midst of it all*. For many of us, this in particular may be a survival move. The decision to go into solitude (at least to arrange one’s daily affairs so that one can be alone with God) does not make one more spiritual than another, but it may yield precious intimacy with the Savior. Fasting and prayer are hallmarks of the Lord’s teaching to His disciples. Is fasting a mystical connection to God? I don’t believe so. Our faith is based on the finished work of Christ, not on that plus our own acts of self-righteousness. But fasting may be a believer’s necessary and recurrent discipline in order to reconnect with God intimately, for spiritual as well as health reasons.

Such choices ought to be made as private commitments to God. I believe all Christians must understand the ascetic disciplines—and to practice them as their personal lives dictate—to glorify God and to live within the freedom and grace of His perfect provision for us. †



Chris Lange

Chris Lange teaches history, English composition and literature at Emmaus where he has served on the faculty since 2000. Chris and his wife Nancy have four grown children and are enjoying their two grandsons.

Emmaus On the Road

Emmaus On the Road

Name	Location/Events	City/State	Dates
 Lisa Beatty	Assoc for Biblical Higher Education Annual Meeting	Orlando, FL	Feb 18-20
 Ken Daughters	Cornerstone Koronis Winter Retreat Stratford Park Northwest Bible Chapel	Des Moines, IA Paynesville, MN Champaign, IL Chicago, IL	Feb 7 Feb 12 -14 Mar 14 Apr 11, 18
 Ken Fleming	Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel Bayside Community Church	Dubuque, IA Tampa, FL Logansport, IN Logansport, IN	Feb 7, 14, 21, 28 Mar 7 Apr 17 Apr 18
 Dave Glock	Lombard Gospel Chapel	Lombard, IL	Feb 7, 14, 21, 28
 Jon Glock	Oak Lawn Bible Chapel Oakwood Bible Chapel Bible Truth Chapel	Oak Lawn, IL Windsor, Ontario Wausau, WI	Feb 7, 14, 21, 28 April 9-11 April 16-18
 John Jimo	Oak Lawn Bible Chapel	Oak Lawn, IL	Mar 7, 14, 21, 28
 David MacLeod	Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel Oak Lawn Bible Chapel	Dubuque, IA Oak Lawn, IL	Mar 7, 14, 21, 28 May 2, 9, 16, 23, 31

Name	Location/Events	City/State	Dates
 Ben Mathew	Bible Truth Chapel Oak Lawn Bible Chapel Warrenville Bible Chapel	Wausau, WI Oak Lawn, IL Warrenville, IL	Mar 21 April 11, 18 May 23, 30
 Donald Patten	Bible Truth Chapel	Wausau, WI	Feb 7
 Steve Sanchez	Asbury Community Chapel Galena Bible Church, Men's Retreat	Asbury, IA Galena, IL	Feb 7, 14, 21, 28 Apr_____
 Dan Smith	Cedar Rapids Bible Chapel Bayside Community Church Woodside Bible Chapel Sandy Creek Bible Camp Northwest Bible Chapel	Cedar Rapids, IA Tampa, FL Maywood, IL Washington, TX Chicago, IL	Feb 7, 14 Feb 28 Mar 21, 28 Apr 5, 9 Apr 25, May 2
 Mark Stevenson	Wauwatosa Bible Chapel Warrenville Bible Chapel Bible Truth Chapel Iron Sharpens Iron, Emmaus Bible College	Milwaukee, WI Warrenville, IL Wausau, WI Dubuque, IA	Mar 7 Apr 4, 11 May 2 May 27-29
 Steve Witter	Charlotte Chinese Baptist Church Fairbluff Bible Chapel Warrenville Bible Chapel Cornerstone Community Church Chambersburg Gospel Chapel Laurel Bible Chapel Greenwood Hills Gospel Chapel Horton Haven Christian Camp Horton Haven Christian Camp Verdugo Pines Bible Camp	Charlotte, NC Charlotte, NC Warrenville, IL Ankeny, IA Chambersburg, PA San Diego, CA Fayetteville, PA Chapel Hill, TN Chapel Hill, TN Wrightwood, CA	Jan 29 Jan 30-31 Mar 7, 14 Mar 21 Mar 28 Apr 18 May 2 May 30, June 4 June 13-18 July 25-31

If you would like more information about having faculty speak at your assembly, retreat, conference or camp please call 1-800-397-BIBLE or e-mail info@emmaus.edu.



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Quick Facts

THE COLLEGE: A private, regionally accredited, four-year, residential, Christ-centered institution

LOCATION: Dubuque, Iowa

STUDENT DIVERSITY: Approximately 250 students from 35 states and many countries

STUDENT-TO-FACULTY RATIO: 12 – to – 1

GRADUATES: Motivated and values-minded graduates committed to their families, active within their churches, and employed in education, ministry, missions, communications, technology, insurance, business, sales and retail, health care, law, and many other areas

ATHLETICS: Inter-collegiate men's and women's basketball, men's soccer, women's volleyball; over 20 club and intramural sports.

STUDENT LIFE: Intramural sports, student organizations, mission trips, overseas learning opportunities, praise & worship, daily chapel, and much, much more!

ROOM & BOARD: Comfortable on-campus housing; \$5396 ('09-'10 year)

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FINANCIAL AID: Awarded to more than 90% of our students

AREAS OF STUDY:
Bible Exposition and Theology
Biblical Languages (minor)
Biblical Studies (A.A. or certificate)
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Computer Information Systems*
Counseling Psychology*
Elementary Education*
Intercultural Studies*
Music Education*
Music Ministry*
Nursing (A.A.S.)†
TESOL--Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (minor or certificate)
Youth Ministries*



*Features a double major in Biblical Studies
†Dual degree program with Biblical Studies through Northeast Iowa Community College



FROM THE DESK OF
DR. STEVE WITTER



Dear friend,

Greetings from the Heartland! I trust that you and your family enjoyed the holiday season....as we paused to consider the wonder that the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Thankfully, we can celebrate this truth all year long, but it is nice to be able to pause and especially reflect at Christmas time. But now, family has returned home, decorations have been taken down, and we again focus on daily life.

It doesn't take much understanding to realize that the theme of last year's Iron Sharpens Iron conference is really true....that we live in an age where Truth is Under Fire! Recent headlines have told of the secret life of a seemingly "perfect" athlete. The government continues to struggle to figure out health care, a sluggish economy, and a growing deficit. Will the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq be won? One could easily become depressed, except for one FACT—Jesus said, "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the Life" [John 14:6]. The lesson from the Lord Jesus Christ to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus was all about "the things concerning Himself". There IS nothing better. Afterall, Jesus IS the WAY, HE is the TRUTH and HE is LIFE! We MUST be committed to being followers of the Lord Jesus Christ whose life's ambition is to be salt and light in a dark world.

Emmaus is poised to be used by God to train men and women to live life in just that way. Our commitment to teach the truth of the WORD is as strong as ever. ALL of our students need to develop the mentality that they are servants of God. That is why as Emmaus BIBLE College the WORD will always be central to what we do. We also want to prepare our graduates for the marketplace, and our expanding programs, when combined with Biblical studies, are preparing the next generation of servant leaders who will impact their local church, their community and their place of employment for the cause of Christ.

As we embark on 2010, Emmaus is committed to continuing our ministry of training servant leaders. I invite you to continue your partnership with us. Please pray for us—that lives would be impacted for the glory of God. Please pray that faculty, staff and students of the college would be faithful to walk worthy of the calling with which they have been called. Please recommend Emmaus to prospective students that you know. And also, please consider if the Lord would use YOU to partner with the college in a financial way. There are multiple areas where funds are needed. Gifts to Financial Aid are used to provide scholarship help to students who want to train at Emmaus. Gifts to the general fund help to take care of the operating needs of the college. There are always projects of one sort or another going on, and I'd be glad to chat with you about one or more of them if you but ask.

What a privilege to be able to serve the Lord in such a dynamic way. Thank you for joining with us as we stand for truth. Please remember if you would like me or another representative to visit your local church to bring a personal update on Emmaus, I would be more than happy to arrange that. My email is switter@emmaus.edu, and my office number is 563-588-8000x1124. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Because HE lives,

Steven R. Witter, PhD
Vice-President for Advancement



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