

# Theology for Life

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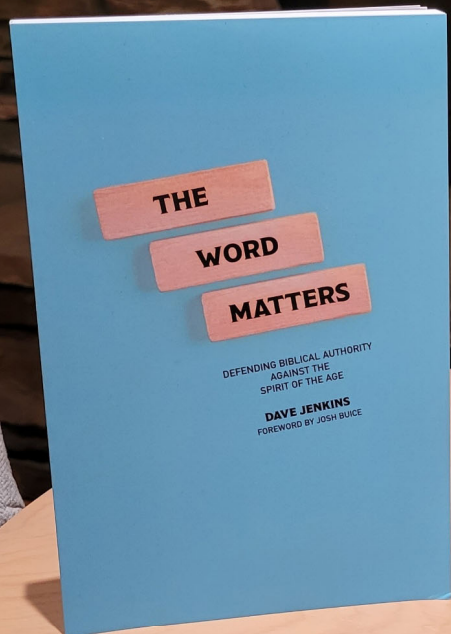


## **FALSE TEACHERS:** **Exposing the Wolves Among the Sheep**

### **Inside this Issue...**

- **The Difference Between Error and Heresy**
- **The Importance of Speaking Out Against Bethel Church**
- **The Foundation of the New Apostolic Reformation**

In ***The Word Matters***, Dave Jenkins takes readers by the hand and helps them understand how serious the issue of biblical authority is and how the Bible is under attack, so that they can stand with confidence on the Word of God.

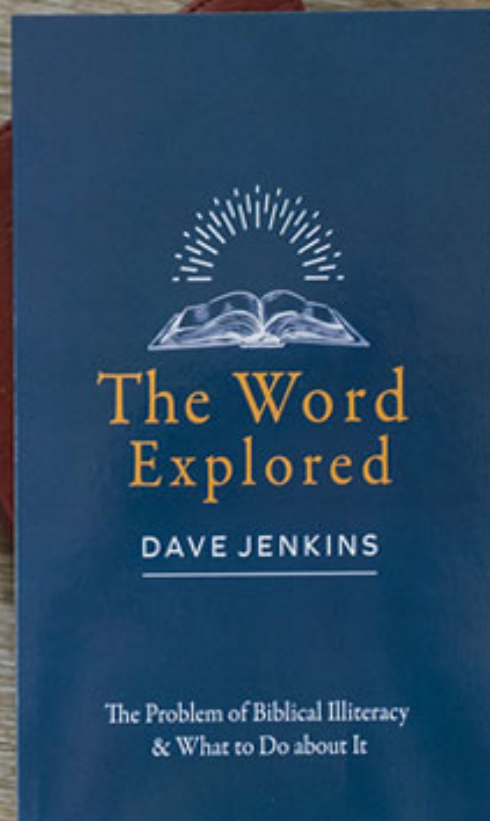


# The Word Matters

DEFENDING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY  
AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE



**Grow in your relationship with God!**



*The Word Explored:  
The Problem of  
Biblical Illiteracy &  
What to Do about It*  
is an easy-to-read,  
biblically-based work  
for lay-people and  
pastors alike.

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## Editor's Corner

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False prophets were a constant problem in the Old Testament, and those who falsely claimed to be prophets of God were to be stoned. The people rarely had the will to deal with them, so they multiplied, causing disaster to the spiritual life of God's people. In the same way Peter says, "There *will be* false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1). Notice the words "among you". Peter is writing to the church and says, "There will be false prophets *among you*." So, he is not talking about New Age people on television. He is talking about people in the local church—members of a local congregation.

There is no such thing as a perfect church on this side of heaven. You will never find it. The wheat and the tares grow together. How can we recognize counterfeit Christianity? In Second Peter, chapter 1, we read about genuine believers. And in Second Peter, chapter 2, we read about counterfeit believers. If you put these chapters side-by-side, you will see the difference between authentic and counterfeit believers.

### **1. Different Source—Where Does the Message Come From?**

Peter says, "We did not follow *cleverly invented stories* when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:16, emphasis mine). And then he says the false teachers exploit you "with stories they have made up" (2 Peter 2:3). So, the true teacher sources what he says from the Bible. The false teacher relies on

his own creativity. He makes up his own message.

## **2. Different Message—What is the Substance of the Message?**

For the true teacher, Jesus Christ is central. “We have everything we need for life and godliness in Him” (2 Peter 1:3). For the false teacher, Jesus is at the margins: “They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them” (2 Peter 2:1).

Notice the word “*secretly*”. It’s rare for someone in church to openly deny Jesus. Movement away from the centrality of Christ is subtle. The false teacher will speak about how other people can help change your life, but if you listen carefully to what he is saying, you will see that Jesus Christ is not essential to his message.

## **3. Different Position—In What Position Will the Message Leave You?**

The true Christian “escapes the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4). Listen to how Peter describes the counterfeit Christian: “They promise...freedom, while they themselves are *slaves of depravity*, for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him” (2 Peter 2:19, emphasis mine). The true believer is escaping corruption, while the counterfeit believer is mastered by it.

## **4. Different Character—What Kind of People Does the Message Produce?**

The true believer pursues goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Peter 1:5). The counterfeit Christian is marked by arrogance and slander (2 Peter 2:10). They are “experts in greed” and “their eyes are full of adultery” (2 Peter 2:14). They also “despise authority” (2 Peter 2:10). These are the general characteristics of a counterfeit believer.

## **5. Different Appeal—Why Should You Listen to the Message?**

The true teacher appeals to Scripture. “We have the word of the prophets made more certain and you will do well to pay attention to it” (2 Peter 1:19). God has spoken, and the true teacher appeals to His Word. The false teacher makes a rather different appeal: “By appealing to the lustful desires

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## Editor's Corner

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of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error" (2 Peter 2:18). So, the true teacher asks, "What has God said in His Word?" The false teacher asks, "What do people want to hear? What will appeal to their flesh?"

### **6. *Different Fruit*—What Result Does the Message Have in People's Lives?**

The true believer is effective and productive in his or her knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:8). The counterfeit is "like a spring without water" (2 Peter 2:17). This is an extraordinary picture! They promise much but produce little.

### **7. *Different End*—Where Does the Message Ultimately Lead You?**

Here we find the most disturbing contrast of all. The true believer will receive "a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). The false believer will experience "swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). "Their condemnation has long been hanging over them and their destruction has not been sleeping" (2 Peter 2:3).

Jesus tells us that there will be *many* who have been involved in ministry in His name, to whom He will say, "Depart from me; I never knew you" (Matthew 7:21). Who are these people? Surely Peter is describing them in this passage.

### **Don't Be Naïve**

We must not be ignorant: "There will be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1). So how do we apply this warning? First, Peter's plain statement reminds us that the Church needs to be protected. Among the many wonderful people who come to through the doors of the Church each year, some would do more harm than good.

They may seem the nicest of people, but they do not believe in the authority of the Bible or the exclusivity of salvation in Christ. We welcome



such people, because they need Christ as much as we do, but we must not allow them to have influence in the Church.

Second, skeptics will always be able to point to hypocrisy and inconsistency in the Church. They've always done it, and they always will. One of the strangest reasons for not following Christ is a statement like the following: "I've seen people in the church who are hypocrites." So, you will not follow Christ because some people who claim to do so are hypocrites?

The existence of the counterfeit is never a good reason for rejecting the genuine. Peter essentially tells us, "Of course there are counterfeit Christians. Of course, there are teachers who do the Church more harm than good. What else would you expect in this fallen world? Grow up! Don't be naïve! Don't miss what's real simply because you have seen the counterfeit." Next time you meet someone hiding behind this excuse, point them to 2 Peter 2:1 and allow his admonitions to strip away their faulty reasoning.

Throughout this Issue of *Theology for Life* we will discuss why and how false teachers are leading people astray from the truth of God's Word and the person and work of Christ. This Issue is one you'll want to share with your friends and family to help arm and equip them with the truth of God's Word.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

## The Difference Between Error and Heresy

By Dave Jenkins

**A tree has a root structure that supports the base and the weight of the**

**tree.** Inerrancy is the root structure and base on which the doctrine of Scripture is built. God has given special revelation of Himself via Scripture and in-

spired His servants to record it. Christians want assurance that the Bible is a dependable source of revelation from and about God. The doctrine of inerrancy gives Christians the confidence that God's Word is without error, and entirely reliable in all that it teaches.

Inerrancy is a test for orthodoxy, but it is not a test for salvation. One can potentially deny inerrancy and be saved, but we need to ask the following ques-



tions: “Are they inconsistent in their beliefs? All salvific truths are found in the Bible, but how can one trust those salvific truths without inerrancy? What if the salvific statements are wrong?” To be consistent in their beliefs, Christians should affirm the inerrancy of Scripture. In this article, we will see inerrancy as a test for orthodoxy as we view two beliefs held by Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as church history’s refutation of those beliefs. Then we will be able to determine our response to these arguments today from those who would claim the name “Christian”, while their doctrine is not rooted in inerrancy. Inerrancy of Scripture and its divine inspiration provides the contrast between true and false Christianity.

## **Unorthodox Views of Christ and the Word**

The doctrines of both Mormonism (including FLDS and RLDS/Communities of Christ) and the Jehovah’s Witnesses are riddled with error and heresy. There is no way possible in this article to cover the breadth of them. However, two of the errors they share revolve around the Word of God and the person and work of Jesus Christ. These two areas of doctrine are constantly under attack today, and we would do well to examine these issues briefly and consider how Christians today should stand on the inerrant and authoritative Scriptures to defend against those who falsely claim Christianity.

### **Mormonism**

The Mormon Church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; LDS) holds an unorthodox view of the Word. Mormonism teaches that the Bible is correct only so far as it is “correctly translated” and is considered “basically trustworthy”, according to Mormons. These followers of the teachings of Joseph Smith have four standard works in their religion: the (modified) King James Bible, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price (which includes the “Book of Abraham”, a burial instruction written in ancient Egyptian,

having nothing to do with Abraham). The eighth Article of Faith in Mormonism states, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.” They further clarify that “errors do appear in the original renders from the original renderings from the Hebrew and Greek,” and the biggest issue is that within the delivery of the ancient texts to the present day, “many plain and precious things [were] taken away” (1 Nephi 13:28). What they mean is that, “one-way modern revelation helps clarify and confirm the truths in the Bible is by restoring other truths that were lost.” None of these works—according to their official church doctrine—is considered without error and without the possibility of error.

**In truth, however, the “144,000 witnesses” refers not to the number of people saved, but to the Christians taken from the twelve tribes of Israel...**

Furthermore, Mormons have an unorthodox view of Jesus Christ. They do not hold that Jesus, the Son of God, is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but rather they are three separate persons. This warped view of the Trinity also leads to a flawed understanding of the work of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. The atonement of Christ does not atone enough for the Mormon Church; they believe that salvation comes not only by the work of Christ, but also by our work on earth. While it is not my purpose to describe all of the errors found within the doctrines of the Mormon Church, I believe that addressing these two dissensions to the inerrant, inspired Word of God will bolster the believer in defending the Scriptures against these same attacks today.

### **Jehovah’s Witnesses**

Jehovah’s Witnesses, on the other hand, also hold unorthodox views of Christ and the Word. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach this about Scripture: “Only this organization

functions for Jehovah's purpose and to his praise. To it alone, God's Sacred Word, the Bible, is not a sealed book." And according to *Watchtower*, the organization's publication, they also believe as follows: "The Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind." The Jehovah's Witnesses are in great error as they proclaim that the Word of God is not complete and therefore interpret many facets of biblical truth as false.

One example of the Jehovah's Witnesses' view of the Bible in action is that only 144,000 can be saved—a misinterpretation of the book of Revelation, chapters 7 and 14. Therefore, they officially teach, "Likewise, the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, is not the Mediator between Jehovah God and all mankind. He is the Mediator between his heavenly Father, Jehovah God, and the nation of spiritual Israel, which is limited to only 144,000 members." They explain, "The exact number of the 'little flock' approved by the Father to be Kingdom heirs was not known until Christ, through an angel, revealed it to be 144,000 'who have been purchased from the earth.' This 'little flock' of 144,000 Kingdom heirs, then, are those ones from among mankind who are 'born again.'"

In truth, however, the "144,000 witnesses" refers not to the number of people saved, but to the Christians taken from the twelve tribes of Israel, commissioned by God to preach and teach the gospel, the song they know (Revelation 14:3). Not only is the Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation of these chapters a distorted (mis)understanding of Scripture, this also results in a distorted and false understanding of the identity and work of Jesus Christ.

In a conversation I once had with a Jehovah's Witness on the Boise State

University campus, I asked, “What’s your view of Jesus?” The man responded, “I don’t believe in the corrupt Bible you believe in. Also, I don’t believe that doctrine matters.” His statement that he didn’t “believe in the corrupt Bible” that I believe in refers to his belief that the Protestant Bible is not clear (or perhaps not correctly translated), which means it’s also not authoritative to him. Only the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ translation of the Bible would be considered clear to him. Interestingly, this man was on the campus of BSU (Boise State University) spreading his “doctrine” by handing out leaflets, contradicting his own statement that doctrine doesn’t matter. Sadly, my experience with this Jehovah’s Witness is not the exception but the norm, as it has similarly been with Mormons, who equally dismiss orthodox views of the Bible.

Much like the Mormon Church, the Jehovah’s Witnesses also have a deeply flawed understanding of Jesus Christ and His work. While it is far beyond the scope of this article to detail all of the ways in which their understanding of Je-

sus Christ is incompatible with the truth of Scripture, we will take a closer look at the same error made by the Mormons—that Christ’s atonement is not sufficient for salvation, and works are required.

Without a proper understanding of Scripture and Christ, they are sorely lacking salvation in Christ alone, which we will see later in this article. Now, we will go to the early Church and the Church throughout history to better understand the fight for these truths that has already taken place, from which we can learn to respond to the false religions of Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“While throughout the first three hundred years of the Church various heresies had come and gone, few—if any—of the heresies would cause significant issues like those of Arianism.”

## Precedential Refutations from Church History

Because all Scripture is God-breathed, it is useful and profitable for Christians and the Church. As Paul instructed Timothy, so Christians today should make good use of Scripture for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). In the early Church, many questions were raised about the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). As the gospel spread among the Greco-Roman civilization and beyond, the task of clarifying orthodox doctrine became critical.

As we consider the religions of Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, we need to understand these are not new heresies but old ones, with their roots going back to the Church's beginning. Biblically-minded Christians have good biblical and historical reasons to reject the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism, since the Church has previously responded to such false teachings at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. In this section, we will glimpse what the early Church and councils in church history believed and fought to protect regarding the deity of Jesus Christ, as well as the inerrant, authoritative Word of God.

### Jesus' Deity and Divinity

While throughout the first three hundred years of the Church various heresies had come and gone, few — if any — of the heresies would cause significant issues like those of Arianism. Arius (256–336 A.D.), a presbyter in the Alexandrian Church, argued that “God is by nature, essentially uncreated and owes his existence to nothing else. That being so, [Arians] argued the Son cannot not be God, because he owes his existence to something else—the Father. And if the Son was begotten by the Father, then there was a time when he did not exist, which is hardly compatible with being God. Moreover, how can there be two Gods?”

Arius's belief centered on how the Son of God was not divine, but rather a creature (a mere created being) or an archangel. This, of course, caused conflict in the Church because the Church taught that Jesus was both fully God and fully human, as Paul explained in Philippians 2, verses 5-8:

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

The Council of Nicaea was called to deal with the issues raised by Arius's ex-communication, and also to settle the meaning of what exactly was considered orthodox.

Also, part of this Council of Nicaea, Athanasius (295–373 A.D.) was a bright and dynamic leader of the Alexandrian Church, standing as a fierce defender of the orthodox doctrines of Christian faith against Arianism. This man had a strong faith and a sharp mind. His argument was based on the belief that Father and Son are one (John 10:10). He is a key player in both defending the Word and the deity of Jesus.

Athanasius argued that divine will has nothing to do with the decision of the will. Jonathan Hill writes, "It is the nature of the Father to beget the Son, just as it is in the nature of the Son to be begotten. This essentially means that the divine nature itself exists in this way, on the one hand, begetting, and on the other hand, begotten." Athanasius was heavily persecuted throughout his life for upholding the Trinity, but Christianity is indebted to his boldness and work at the Council of Nicaea and the clarification and defense of the Nicene Creed.

At Nicaea, it was distinctly clarified what the Church would believe, and Arius's views were soundly rejected. Inerrancy and the authority of Scripture became the foundation by which Christians were able to make clear distinctions be-



tween what was and was not orthodox.

As the Church began to form, more attacks came against it, so the need to clarify precisely what was Scripture/Scriptural became more critical. To determine what (New Testament) Scripture was, they used a test. First, the writer had to have been witness to Christ during His earthly ministry. Second, they had to have been apostles—those who were believed to have been commissioned by Jesus Himself. And therefore, Peter, James, Jude, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul were authorized to spread His teachings. This standard of rooting doctrine to Scripture that was authoritative and inspired is one that would be foundational for the Church in the years ahead.

However, the argument for the deity and divine nature of Jesus Christ had not reached its end with Nicaea. The Christological controversy raged between two of the most influential churchmen of the East—Cyril of Alexandria (376–444 A.D.) and Nestorius (386–450 A.D.), the patriarch of Constantinople. Dr. Gonzalez writes, “This debate primarily revolved around who Jesus was, was He fully God and fully man or not? Nestorius insisted Christ had two natures while Cyril branding this belief in two Christ’s said he had only one.”

Likewise, Dr. Hill writes, “The Western church stepped into the situation when, Leo Bishop of Rome (400–461), wrote a famous letter to Flavian known as the Tome in which he approved of the condemnation of Eutyches. Leo spoke of the two natures of Christ, one divine and one human. He taught that even after the Incarnation, Christ retains these two natures, but he remains a single person identical with the Second Person of the Trinity.”

This Christological controversy was settled at the Council of Chalcedon. In A.D. 451, Emperor Theodosius called this council into session, and the council approved of Bishop Leo’s teaching from the Tome and put forth the Chalcedon Creed, an expansion of the Nicene Creed. Jonathan Hill explains, “This creed agreed with Cyril that Christ was one person, identical with the pre-

existent Son. Still, it also agreed with Leo that after the Incarnation, he possessed two distinct natures, one human and one divine.” While we have only skimmed the surface of the work done to establish in the Church both the deity and divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, this simply shows that these arguments are not new; the Christian Church has a long history of defending the truth of the identity and work of Jesus Christ.

## The Canon

The Bible has a great deal to say about itself. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul says to young Timothy, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*” Paul’s point here is the Holy Spirit, through the testimony of Himself, recognized the Old Testament as authoritative. Later, the Church considered the whole of the New Testament completed and closed. The word translated as “breathed out” by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, means that Scripture owes its origin and content to the divine breath of the Holy Spirit and is found in many other passages. The human authors were guided and directed by the Holy Spirit, so what they wrote is not only without error, but it’s impossible to err. Thus, the Scriptures are of supreme value for man, because they are all the Lord wanted the Word to be. The Scriptures alone constitute the “without error” and “without the possibility of error” rule of faith and practice for the people of God.

The word *canon* means to stand or rule. The Canon is the list of authoritative and inspired Scripture. In Protestant Christianity, the Canon is the body of Scripture that constitutes the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament. Athanasius was the first to recognize what are now the twenty-seven letters in the New Testament. The first list, which has come down to us of the twenty-seven books, which embrace only those that appear in our New Testament, is in a letter written by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in

the year A.D. 367.

Dr. LaTourette comments, “It was not till after that date that uniform agreement on the list was found among all teachers in the Catholic Church by at

“One of the men who caused the initiation of the Church’s efforts to acknowledge widely the authority and completion of the canon was Marcion of Sinope (85-160 A.D.).”

its closure. The councils knew then, and we know now, that their consensus on the matter did not close the canon; that was the work of the Holy Spirit. However, in order to protect and defend the authority and inerrancy of the Holy Scripture, it was acknowledged and solidified.

One of the men who caused the initiation of the Church’s efforts to acknowledge widely the authority and completion of the canon was Marcion of Sinope (85–160 A.D.). To Marcion, the Old Testament God was a God who chooses only a particular people because He’s vindictive and intent on punishing them. To Marcion, Jehovah is a “god” of arbitrary justice. Marcion put the Old Testament aside in favor of the New Testament. The parts Marcion didn’t like, he changed. The only Scriptures recognized by Marcion were the epistles of Paul and the Gospel of Luke. The Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses are guilty of Marcion’s error because they retranslate, add to, or remove from the Bible to suit their theology, rather than believing the Bible as a reliable, sufficient, au-

least the end of the second century a body of writings embracing a majority of the present twenty-seven was being regarded in the Catholic Church as the New Testament and was being placed alongside the Jewish Scriptures.” In order for the councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon to be able to tackle the discussions of the Trinity and Christology, the Church had to come to a consensus regarding the contents of the canon and

thoritative, and trustworthy source of doctrine.

## The Church's Response Today

While it is outside the scope of this article to respond to the entirety of the reasons to accuse both the Mormon Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses of herodoxy, which is a deviation from accepted or orthodox stands or beliefs. In this article, we have examined two of the grave errors their religions have made regarding Jesus and His Word. We have also briefly viewed a few of the actions taken in church history to prevent these heresies from entering Christian doctrine. Now, in light of the clear and sufficient Word of God, what should our response be to these false sects claiming the name of Christianity? Let us further examine their beliefs next to Scripture.

When we consider, for example, the teachings of Mormonism, we learn how they believe that extra texts are needed alongside the Bible to provide clarity for their beliefs. As Protestant Christians, we reject such teachings because the Bible provides a warning to not to add to or take away from the words (or meaning) of Scripture—the now-canonized sixty-six books of the Bible (Revelation 22:18–19).

Furthermore, as stated by the Westminster Assembly in 1646, we believe the clarity of Scripture entails “those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of

**“To Pelagius, Christianity was a religion of merit, and thus man was ultimately responsible for his actions.”**

them.” What these two cults (Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses) claim as true, which is not found within the confines of the Holy Canon, prevents them from rightly understanding salvation, which is the heart of the matter. Biblically-rooted Christians reject the interpretation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormonism because they believe differently about what constitutes the Scriptures, and thus about the person and work of Christ, among a whole host of other issues or topics.

At the heart of both the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormonism are different views of the Bible and how one can be saved. In the case of Mormonism, the belief is “that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe similarly in that they state that “salvation is by faith and what you do.” Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses not only have the wrong view of the Bible, but—because they have the wrong view of the Bible—they also have the wrong view of Jesus. At the center of Scripture is the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

During the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Augustine was considered one of the Church’s greatest theologians; he and Pelagius fought a battle over God’s grace. Through Augustine, we have *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, a truly remarkable piece of literature that testifies of the grace of God in Christ. The argument between Augustine and Pelagius was one Dr. Trueman rightly identifies as being of “sin, grace, predestination.” The central issue of the battle between these two men was the idea of freedom.

To Pelagius, Christianity was a religion of merit, and thus man was ultimately responsible for his actions. Augustine’s point was different because, to him, grace now makes the fallen will free again by instilling a love for righteousness. Therefore, without the proper belief and understanding of grace and the work of Jesus Christ as both truly God and truly man on our behalf, Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses are left with a warped view of salvation

which depends primarily on their own works, not faith alone by the grace of God. Warfield writes:

*In proportion as the grace of saving God in Christ is obscured or passes into the background, in that proportion does Christianity slip from our grasp. Christianity is summed up in the phrase: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world with himself" [2 Cor. 5:19]. Where this great confession is contradicted or neglected, there is no Christianity.*

**"The whole purpose of Scripture is to teach and proclaim God's whole counsel to His people."**

Dr. Warfield is absolutely correct. His statements regarding orthodox confessions of Christianity help highlight with abundant clarity the main differences between biblical Christianity, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormonism. Stating that salvation is by "all you can do", in addition to Jesus' salvific work, as Mormonism teaches, or stating that salvation is "by faith alone and all you can do", as the Jehovah's Witnesses insist, creates a different religion entirely than biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity is a revealed religion whereby God, as 2 Corinthians 5:19 states, has revealed Himself in Christ alone.

In the incarnation, what we see is Jesus—fully God and fully man—came on a rescue mission under a death sentence to save sinners (Matthew 1:21). On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Now Jesus pleads the merits of His blood on behalf of sinners, and they are saved (Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1–5). Now ascended, Jesus serves as High Priest over His people, living to serve as their Advocate (1 John 2:1) and Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25). This is the holy and divine Jesus, God the Son, revealed in the inerrant, living Word of God.

Neither Jehovah's Witnesses nor Mormons, who believe and practice their respective doctrines, are Christians. Mormons ran a recent ad claiming they are

“Christian”, but if you ask a Mormon if they are a Christian or a Mormon, they will tell you they are Mormon. Jehovah’s Witnesses proclaim something similar. Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses hold neither to orthodox views of the Bible, nor the orthodox views of the person and work of the Lord Jesus. What does this mean to us? Our view of the Bible matters. The clarity of Scripture teaches us that the Bible matters because it shows us the truth about God, who has revealed Himself as the great “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Seven times in the gospel of John, the apostle shows how true this is, by highlighting Jesus’ “I AM” statements (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5.). The “I AM” God of Exodus 3:14 is now the incarnate Son of God and Son of Man.

Because they deny basic Christian doctrine and insist that salvation is *not* through faith alone in Christ alone, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses are not Christians. Unfortunately, these two groups have the wrong view of the Bible, and thus the wrong view of God and the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Biblical Christianity grounds itself in the truth of all that Scripture teaches. Scripture is as clear as the morning sunrise, testifying of the glory of Christ’s incarnation, and His return at the sunset of redemptive history. The grace of God is not something we deserve, as Pelagius taught, nor is it something we can “do all we can to earn”, as Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses teach. Instead, when the grace of God “is contradicted or neglected, there is no Christianity.” Christ is all, and throughout the Bible—from the first words of Genesis 1 to the last words in Revelation 22—He is the centerpiece.

The whole purpose of Scripture is to teach and proclaim God’s whole counsel to His people. All of God’s words in Scripture were given by God Himself, and are therefore important and enough for believers. Wayne Grudem remarks:

*God issues severe warnings to anyone who would take away even one word from what He has said to His people (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18–19) so we cannot*

*add to God's words or take from them, for all are part of His larger purpose in speaking to His people. Everything stated in Scripture is there because God intended it to be there; God does not say anything unintentionally!*

All of Scripture is reliable, sufficient, authoritative, and trustworthy, which means all Scripture ought to be studied, taught, proclaimed, and enjoyed by Christians so they can learn about God, His ways, and especially about His Son, Jesus Christ.

The errant teachings of both the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism have been clearly dealt with throughout church history. We do not need to reinvent the wheel when ministering to Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons. Instead, we need to be faithful to understand and communicate that the Scriptures are not unclear with regard to the person and work of Jesus Christ, but clear and binding.

## Summary

Inerrancy is not only an issue facing the Christian Church; it is also one that is under attack from cults. Doctrine not only matters but it is also essential, and the doctrinal differences between Orthodox Christianity and those of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism are significant. Central to those differences, as it pertains to this article, is how we view the Bible as Protestant Christians. Protestant Christians believe the whole Bible—the sixty-six canonized books—are the reliable, sufficient, trustworthy, and authoritative Word of God. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism don't teach this as truth, and thus they retranslate the Bible, making modifications to it.

As I previously stated, inerrancy is not always a test for salvation. However, heretical groups such as those previously mentioned have glaringly erroneous views of Jesus Christ and His work. Therefore, a contradictive belief that Scripture contains error is a fairly reliable identifier as to a lack of salvation.



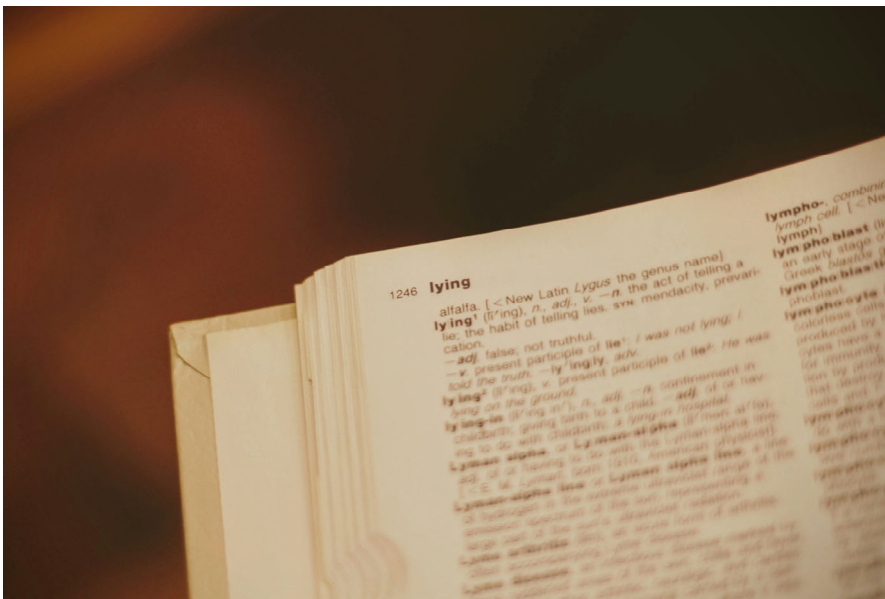
And without repentance and turning to the True Christ found in the Holy Word of God, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are lost in their sin and self-reliant "salvation". We can stand on Scripture which cannot fail, both to defend it and show them the way.

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## The Foundation of the New Apostolic Reformation

By Dawn Hill



*“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in*

*whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19-21).*

One of the main verses used to discuss the teaching of modern apostles and prophets today in the government of God is Ephesians 2:20. Other verses such as 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11-12 are also referenced in support of this teaching today. When many hear the word *apostle* today, it brings to mind a position of authority, at least to those of us who were once under apostolic leadership. Though this word will be described as being “sent out”, this ti-

tle is viewed by many as an office with weight and authority. These apostles are said to be part of the foundation, as they provide instruction and revelation to those who will embrace this “new wineskin” that God is “releasing to the church at large”.

C. Peter Wagner held to the belief that verses such as Ephesians 2:20 supported the need for modern-day apostles and prophets with governing authority. He believed and taught that the second apostolic age began in 2001 and that there were two axioms of note regarding this movement. The first was that this was the most radical way of doing church since the Protestant Reformation. The second was the high level of spiritual authority given to one individual. There were integral aspects to this movement, such as changes in church structure, prayer, worship, missions, evangelism, and finances. There was a focus on transitioning from pastoral churches to apostolic churches and even apostolic networks. These types of practices and beliefs continue to this day, in spite of the

fact that some will deny that this movement exists. It is important to discuss them because of the claims and teachings that can still be found and noted today.

**Eckhardt has stated in his writings and public ministry that the Church must embrace present truths in order to receive the “new wine”...**

John Eckhardt, a noted pioneer in the current apostolic movement and proponent of the New Apostolic Reformation, stated in his book, *A Shift in Leadership*, “If a church is to transition into an apostolic position, the minds of the people must be renewed. People must receive a revelation of the present plans and purposes of God. Apostles and prophets have a unique anointing to reveal to the Church the mysteries of God...people need to understand what apostolic ministry is and how it relates to what the Lord is presently doing in the

Church.” He went on to say that this is called “relaying apostolic foundations”. According to Eckhardt, the previous foundation of the Church is insufficient for expansion. Rather, “a new foundation of truth must be laid in the Church. A foundation based on present truth must be put into believers.”

Eckhardt has stated in his writings and public ministry that the Church must embrace present truths in order to receive the “new wine” from the new wineskins. These present “truths” come from modern-day apostles and prophets, and having a taste for the “new wine” involves accepting the restoration of apostles and prophets today. But there are serious concerns surrounding what Eckhardt has stated. The Church established by Jesus Christ has one foundation and one Chief Cornerstone. To state that the previous foundation laid is insufficient undermines what the Lord laid in His sovereignty and what He has been building for two thousand years. He began the work, and He has been building His Church. To claim that those who do not embrace this present “truth” cannot fulfill the Great Commission is troubling.

However, the most troubling thing to consider is that by stating a new foundation of truth must be laid, it seems to conclude that another building is being established, which is not the Church of Jesus Christ. Eckhardt has stated, “The present foundation is insufficient to build what the Lord is revealing today.” What about the foundation laid by what God has said in His Word? Is that not sufficient? Has that not been sufficient for two millennia? I believe there are thoughtful questions to pose, especially when those claiming to be apostles with governing authority in the Church today claim revelation and present “truths from God”, while saying it is not on par with Scripture. At what point has God spoken without authority to where we are not obligated to obey Him as His people?

It is worth examining when restoration of apostles and prophets for today is being taught, because we should be asking, “What kind of apostles and

prophets are to be restored?" Numerous references are made to the Apostles of Christ in Scripture when discussing the restoration of apostles and prophets today. The logic would follow that those teaching such restoration are referring to the Apostles of Christ. Peter Wagner even noted in his book, *Dominion*, republished by Destiny Image in 2022, "True, many Christian leaders do not as yet believe that we now have legitimate apostles on the level of Peter or Paul or John, but a critical mass of the church agrees that they are here."

**"What God began through His Apostles and Prophets in the early Church is a sufficient foundation with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone."**

There are people who have rightfully stated that another foundation is not laid after erecting a building, and I agree with that statement. Based on some of the things stated by leaders within this movement, if a foundation is needing to be re-laid, then another building is being established, which would not be the Church of Jesus Christ.

No new foundation is necessary. What God began through His Apostles and Prophets in the early Church is a sufficient foundation with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone. The first foundation was sufficient and still is. The mystery of the gospel has been revealed, and we can find this in Scripture. We are still under apostolic teaching today, which is found within the confines of the written Word of God. If you or someone you know holds to the beliefs found in the New Apostolic Reformation, I would urge you to test these things in light of Scripture and to understand the history of these beliefs. There are valid concerns regarding this movement and the beliefs being perpetuated among its leadership.

# The Importance of Speaking Out Against Bethel Church

By Richard Moore

**I threw that Christian sermon CD in the trash!**

Maybe I should explain myself. Let me start from the beginning. I have been a youth pastor and in



youth ministry for nearly all of my professional career. A little less than 20 years ago my wife and I picked up our lives and moved to California to become a youth pastor at a church in the San Francisco Bay Area. Shortly thereafter our first daughter was born to us. Surprisingly to us, she was born with Down syndrome. With that came many health complications. Some of which included a

hole in her heart, oxygenation deprivation issues, and then 10 months later infantile spasms (epileptic seizures) developed. We were deeply supported by our loving and amazing church.

During the time that our daughter was experiencing epileptic seizures because of an ailment called “infantile spasms”, a woman approached my wife and gave her a sermon on a CD. The sermon was by a “pastor” named Bill Johnson. I don't remember everything about the sermon, but the one thing I do remember was he said, “God is good, Satan is bad; cancer is bad, therefore cancer and sickness come from Satan.” I was so angry I threw the CD in the trash because that was the only place where such teaching and theology belonged in my mind.

This person meant it as an encouragement for us, however, it had the opposite effect. It was deeply discouraging, while angering and frustrating me. It enraged me that this woman had been so deceived that she would think it was a good idea to give such a condemning sermon CD to my wife—one that directly condemned our actual situation, as if our daughter's sickness and disability came from Satan. To give my wife a CD that would be so condemning of us and our struggle did not encourage us through the difficulty, but rather it communicated that our trials and the sickness that our daughter was experiencing were from Satan.

I did not keep track of Bethel Church in Redding, CA, until much later. Honestly, at that time 18 years ago, I thought they were on the fringe and an extreme movement. Moreover, at that time, I did what I only knew to do, which was to go to my supporters and my church family and describe my experience. So, I made a Facebook video called “*The Pain of the Prosperity Gospel*” to chronicle our experiences and give our testimony, which is still available today.

Since that experience nearly 20 years ago our family has consistently had contact with this healing theology that says it is *always* God's will to heal. Not only do they teach that it is God's will always to heal, but they teach that it is

**“As I discovered, the practices of this movement were numerous strange and unbiblical practices.”**

what Christ accomplished for us through the atonement. This theological perspective says Christ's atoning work on the cross purchased our physical health.

I believe this view originated in the more recent past in and through the theology of A.B. Simpson (1843-1919), who is the

founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. We've heard things like, “Don't you have enough faith for your daughter to be healed?” “Where's your faith?” “Why don't you claim your healing?” “Christ paid for her healing why isn't she healed?” “God can heal your daughter of Down syndrome.” The worst thing that has been said to us is when a church leader recently told my wife that our daughter's Down syndrome is from Satan. All these things have been said to us, not just on one occasion but frequently. This has been a constant recurrence for the last 18 years of our daughter's life. Of all these things that have been said to us about our daughter, the last one was the most recent, and it was said to us by a leader of a church that has become a Bethel proxy where we currently reside. And has, like Bethel, left the evangelical denomination of which it was previously a part.

After our wonderful time as youth pastors in California, God called us to become missionaries in Germany. We have been here for 10 years doing youth work, church planting, evangelism, and — most recently for me — theological work. After moving to Germany, we became aware of Bethel and the New Apostolic Reformation's (N.A.R.) influence here in this country.



I became very concerned when I saw the same movement that I had been introduced to nearly 18 years ago making huge strides and inroads into the mainline evangelical movement in Germany. I commenced investigating and researching. What I found was that this new movement coming into Germany was the same thing that I had encountered years ago in California. I discovered this movement coming into Germany had deep connections to Bethel Church in Redding, CA, the same church I had been introduced to years ago. This was deeply disconcerting. What I began to uncover was shocking, to say the least.

The first thing that alerted me to Bethel and their aberrant teachings, as well as their influence in Germany, was a thing that has been called “grave sucking”, “mantle grabbing”, “re-digging the wells”, or what became a sort of pejorative term called “grave soaking”. I was alerted and interested because, as a missionary and youth worker here in Germany, some of the young men I was teaching to be disciples of Christ were interested in “Awakening Europe” events, whose leaders have appeared in several videos engaged in this strange practice. I was immediately shocked about the discovery of these practices and that the young men that I was working with, and teaching, were being sucked into this movement. That’s when I started writing and researching for my book, *Divergent Theology*, hoping to warn my own personal friends about the aberrant teaching, theology, and practices—especially those coming out of Bethel, a big cog in the machine that is the New Apostolic Reformation.

As I discovered, the practices of this movement were numerous strange and unbiblical practices. Bill Johnson, the senior leader and “apostle” of Bethel Church in Redding, documents these strange manifestations himself in his book, *When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles*. He claims that small gems have appeared on people, angel feathers fall in their church building/meeting locations, and other phenomenon.

Even recently, leaders at Bethel have claimed angel feathers have fallen during their church services. Johnson claims they experience laughter, falling, shaking (in the Spirit, i.e., the Toronto Blessing), gold dust falling, anointing oil, and “glory clouds” as signs of God’s presence. These practices and emphases on such teaching diminish the message of the gospel. Johnson’s teaching either truncates or adds to the message of the gospel. One glaring example of this is when Bill Johnson—in that same book—writes, “without miracles, there can never be a full revelation of Jesus.” Johnson also emphasized that miracles are essential for gospel proclamation when he wrote, “miracles provide the grace for repentance.”

This teaching destroys the heart of the gospel, which is that its message may be presented and understood by anyone at any time in any place. The message is the power, not any particular miracles, manifestations, or any other insider secret, preserved for some elite class of Christian. The Neo-Gnostic practices that they label “signs and wonders” such as the “glory cloud”, “gold dust”, “angel feathers” falling, gems appearing, conjuring “angel orbs”, fire tunnels (in which they employ Kundalini methods), “spirit travel”, out-of-body experiences, and “healings” are practiced often enough at Bethel that they take great pride in trying to document them.

In other words, these strange things have not just happened once. Johnson prides himself in that they are a place where these things regularly happen. They also practice “prophecy”, “portal travel” (where people can go through portals to other places physically—so they claim—which is obviously a New Age/Occult practice), extra-biblical revelation, raising the dead (supposedly), charismatic praying in tongues, “soaking/grave soaking”, the New Wine movement, “drunken glory”, visualization, laughter (Toronto Blessing), and animal sounds...all while supposedly filled with the Holy Spirit. I do not condemn tongues—if done orderly—as the Bible explains in 1st Corinthians 14:26-40, but

the many practices that the N.A.R. employs when “slain in the Spirit” are never mentioned in the Bible.

One of the primary reasons Christians should care about Bethel Church is the divergence from evangelical theological orthodoxy present in much of its teachings. Bethel’s teachings, practices, and theology veer into theological error and excess, if not outright heresy. For example, the healing (dominion) gospel that I mentioned; gnostic, mystic, and occult-like practices; their emphasis on apostolic and prophetic government; and their emphasis on a Kenotic view of Christ—namely that Jesus “laid aside his

**“Furthermore, Bethel and the wider N.A.R. emphasize dreams, visions, and revelations over and against Scripture.”**

divinity.” If someone has an improper Christology—for example, the Kenotic theology—then he/she also has an improper view of the Trinity. The true historical Christian view of the Trinity is that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son, the second person of the eternal Triune Godhead. If Jesus laid aside His divinity at some point, then He is not part of the Trinity, because that “god” cannot be the God of the Bible. God is immutable and so He cannot *not* be God, otherwise He was *never* God, and thus not part of the triune Godhead. This is why Bethel and Bill Johnson’s precarious view of Jesus’ divinity also brings their trinitarian beliefs into question.

Furthermore, Bethel and the wider N.A.R. emphasize dreams, visions, and revelations over and against Scripture. Bethel also emphasizes prosperity (i.e., Bethel’s weekly offering readings), and physical healing in this life (included in Christ’s atoning work) as I have explained. Bethel also emphasizes New Age practices.

In the book, *The Physics of Heaven: Exploring God’s Mysteries of Sound, Light,*

*Energy, Vibrations, and Quantum Physics*, which has the Bethel author's seal of approval on it, one author writes, "...the New Age has counterfeited, such as having a spirit guide, trances, meditation, auras, power objects, clairvoyance, clair-audience, and more. These actually belong to the church, but they have been stolen and cleverly repackaged." These emphases can and do lead to a distorted understanding of the gospel, and an unhealthy pursuit of dangerous New Age experiences, all at the expense of sound doctrine.

Because of my work in this area, I receive consistent communication from people who have come out of this movement. I can confirm that these emphases by Bethel and others in the N.A.R. *do* lead to a distorted understanding of the gospel. Among people who come out of this movement, the story is consistent: that they finally first perceived and understood the true gospel only after leaving Bethel. Some must first deconstruct their faith away from the tenets of the N.A.R. and Bethel's practices, theology, and teachings, before being able to understand and receive the true gospel.

Another grave concern is the impact of Bethel's teachings and practices on the wider Body of Christ. Bethel's influence extends far beyond its local congregation. Among many other advancement programs from Bethel, their musical endeavors are probably the N.A.R.'s leading global mouthpiece. Nearly every song released by Bethel Music has millions of YouTube views. Their channel has 4.5 million subscribers, and their more popular songs have 50 to 100 million views (not counting other YouTube channels that have re-posted these Bethel songs).

When Bethel releases an album, it tops iTunes and other music charts. These huge numbers testify to the church's following and global advancement. Additionally, the N.A.R. controls a large segment of video, music, radio, and print media—such as Destiny Image (their printing arm), GOD TV, and *Charis-*

*ma Magazine*, all of which have been purveyors of N.A.R. content.

A clear example is Bethel worship leader, Brian Johnson, son of Bill Johnson, who recently posted on Instagram his yearly Spotify stream numbers for 2023. His music was streamed 192.4 million times. At 3-5 cents per stream, he could have very easily earned a humble estimate of 5.7 million dollars from his royalties on Spotify alone. And that is only *one* Bethel artist! This is not to mention any of the other Bethel artists on all the streaming platforms combined could be in the ballpark of *billions* of dollars.

**“As of September 2022, of the 10 songs most widely used through CCLI, eight were from N.A.R.-related churches or artists.”**

Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) is a global company that licenses Christian music for use by churches and other Christian organizations. As of September 2022, of the 10 songs most widely used through CCLI, eight were from N.A.R.-related churches or artists. Another just-completed study found that of songs that made the Top 25 for CCLI between 2010 and 2020, all but two had originated from four N.A.R.-oriented churches or organizations: Bethel, Hillsong, Passion City Church in Atlanta, and Elevation Church in North Carolina, USA. The researchers pointed out that only a few of the most popular songs talk about the cross or salvation, instead highlighting personal experience and blessing. They concluded that the theology of these four churches has deeply influenced the spiritual practices of many evangelical congregations.

Furthermore, through Bethel conferences, music, books, and online resources, Bethel's teachings reach millions of Christians worldwide. Consequently, theological errors or excesses within the Church can have ripple effects

throughout the global Body of Christ, leading to confusion, division, and spiritual harm.

In light of these concerns, it is vital for Christians to engage with the teachings and practices coming out of Bethel Church with discernment and biblical scrutiny. This means evaluating teachings and practices in light of Scripture and the historic Christian faith. It also means speaking out against any deviations from biblical truth, while “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) to those within the Bethel community.

Ultimately, the goal is not to condemn but to promote sound doctrine, spiritual discernment, and unity within the Body of Christ. By engaging in respectful dialogue and upholding the authority of God’s Word, Christians can

**Unfortunately, the leaven that Bethel has produced has leavened nearly the entire “lump” of evangelical Christianity.**

navigate the complexities of issues surrounding Bethel Church and work toward greater doctrinal clarity and spiritual health within the global Church.

Paul, the apostle, dealt with the Judaizers, who consistently spread their false teaching in his time. He saved his harshest and most damning words for those

people who falsified the gospel. He said of the false teachings of the Judaizers that added circumcision to the gospel, “a little leaven leavens, the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). The same thing is happening with Bethel. The little leaven that they insert into churches and other ministries is spreading rapidly throughout the whole Body of Christ. By the spreading of Bethel’s theology, they falsify the gospel.

Unfortunately, the leaven that Bethel has produced has leavened nearly the entire “lump” of evangelical Christianity. Everyone—from the layperson to

local elders, pastors, and deacons—must react and either purge the leaven or suffer the consequences of false teachings and heresies, which could change the shape of the evangelical world if we do not react.

In my 20+ years of study and research into this movement, I have personally heard the tragic stories of many people who have had their faith shipwrecked (1 Timothy 1:19-20) by the Bethel/N.A.R. movement. Let me tell you a story of a faithful mainline evangelical church. This church was vibrant and lively, however they wanted more. This church started to incorporate Bethel worship music into their worship time. Bethel Music has an air of depth, devotion, and deeper spirituality, but is a theological Trojan Horse, which smuggles in N.A.R. theology. Pretty soon young people at this church started getting interested in Bethel, and many even decided to pick up their lives and travel to Redding, California to attend the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM). If the youth could not make it for BSSM, they would go to Bethel or other New Apostolic Reformation-type conferences (I call them N.A.R. pilgrimages). After a few years, the church started a SOZO ministry through the help of people who had been trained by the parent ministry of the same name at Bethel. This church leadership became more and more influenced by the theological aberrations found and propagated by Bethel.

The church started showing Bill Johnson sermons along with all sorts of other invited N.A.R./Bethel guests, including “prophets” and “apostles”. Speakers started speaking less from the Bible and more from “God spoke to me”, or other dreams, visions, and revelations that they had supposedly received directly from God. Such preaching became commonplace, and on many occasions, preachers quoted verbatim the “apostle” of Bethel, Bill Johnson, and or the “prophet”, Kris Vallotton, and many other N.A.R. leaders. The one true holdout, who was trying to hold all these theological developments back, was the pastor. However, the eldership conspired to get rid of that pastor. They were successful

after years of effort. After that pastor's departure, there was very little resistance to all these new developments and affinity for Bethel.

A couple of other elders were also holdouts to the Bethel theology, teachings, and practices. However, they were summarily bullied and forced out. The few leftover leaders who opposed these new developments very closely followed the exit of the pastor. After the final opposition departed, there was very little resistance to the transition to a Bethel/N.A.R. church. Subsequently, the remaining elders tried to implement a "fivefold ministry" leadership structure by having the congregation vote on "an apostolic leader, a prophetic leader, an evangelistic leader, a teaching leader, and a pastoral leader." The congregation voted against "an apostolic leader" and "prophetic leader". However, that did not deter the eldership. They kept pushing for a full takeover of apostolic and prophetic leadership.

A war of attrition became the ensuing strategy. The few remaining holdouts who had not given in to the new direction could holdout no longer, and their long battle to save their church ended. The eldership in opposition to all the previous members' requests installed the pastor ("apostle/prophet") who was a Bethel missionary.

Even though the membership had up to this point consistently voted down and voted against these developments, the elders kept pushing forward, hoping and seeking a Bethel takeover. Eventually, this pastor ("apostle/prophet") was installed and a proxy organization for Bethel took over. After a short while of this pastor ("apostle/prophet") and his organization being the new de-facto leaders of the church, they exited their evangelical denomination and renamed themselves to their N.A.R./Bethel branding.

The fledgling proxy Bethel church replaced the previous members (those who had left shortly after the original pastor left) with a new congregation that



would be completely on board with everything that the new leadership had planned. After installing the new pastor (“apostle/prophet”) and all the other leadership that came with him, the takeover was complete.

You may read this story and wonder if this is an exaggeration. It is not. It is a true story, albeit one containing an amalgamation of all the churches that I have observed over the years of my research, including the stories that my contacts from those churches shared with me, as well as personal experience. This is not an exaggeration. Details reflect actual events in churches that have experienced Bethel/N.A.R. teachings and its Dominionism takeover mandate (*Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate*).

What this movement does, in essence, is it displaces numerous faithful Jesus-loving Christians, and — as I have personally witnessed over and over

**“For these reasons, we must speak up and oppose this movement, because it might just shipwreck your faith...”**

again — shipwrecks people’s faith. If not opposed, it runs roughshod over people who are kind and accommodating Christians, those who do not want conflict. This movement takes advantage of true Christians who are honest, kind, faithful, and meek. And if not opposed, it will take over such wonderful, faithful, Jesus-honoring, and vibrant evangelical churches. I have both witnessed and experienced the same story over and over. I have people contacting me consistently who have lost their own children to this movement, lost their churches, or tragically both. For these reasons, we must speak up and oppose this movement, because it might just shipwreck your faith, and even worse yet, change the face of evangelical Christianity.

This moment in church history is not unlike the threat posed by Arianism

to the Church around the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Arianism threatened to change the definition of the gospel, and the everlasting Son of God into a created and finite being. Bethel and the N.A.R. may pose a similar multifaceted threat to evangelical orthodoxy that could redefine a great many churches within the Body. To preserve evangelical biblical orthodoxy, we must stay vigilant; otherwise, theological entropy takes hold. This has been the pattern across church history; it could happen to us, too. Evangelicalism could wake up one day and discover that it is no longer what it once was.

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## **Wolves in the Flock: How Pastors Can Equip the Congregation to Navigate the Challenges of False Teaching**

**By Dave Van Bebber**



### **God's Word warns that wolves will enter the Church**

(Acts 20:28-31). Further, it declares that *"the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). There will be false gospels that will enter the Church and deceive many (2 Peter 2:1). If those warnings, indeed promises, are not clear enough, Christ Him-

self cautioned, *"Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray"* (Matthew 24:11). Unfortunately, many Christians have stuck their heads in the sand and failed to account for this reality. Because of this, even within the Church, those

opposed to the gospel and preaching false gospels are overlooked and consequently mislead many.

One need look no further than the rise of “prosperity gospel” doctrines, the proliferation of devotionals like *Jesus Calling*, the rise of the Enneagram among evangelicals, or the spread of the Mormon Jesus in the ranks of the evangelical circles, demonstrated in the recent popularity of *The Chosen*. Given these problems, pastors and teachers must be ready to defend the Church against the wolves making their way into the flock, covered with sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). To deal with these continued assaults on the Church and the gospel, let us briefly consider four ways pastors and church leaders can work to confront the false gospels prevalent within the evangelical culture.

“Pastors working through the text of Scripture, in a verse-by-verse expository manner, will deal with numerous doctrinal truths each Sunday.”

## Expositional Preaching

The primary role of a pastor is not to be a corporate executive of a church. Acts 6:4 confirms that pastors are primarily called to preach God’s Word, study, and pray. Pastors working through the text of Scripture, in a verse-by-verse expository manner, will deal with numerous doctrinal truths each Sunday. With expositional preaching, there can be no hobby-horsing and failing to deal with a particular doctrinal matter. When one preaches expositionally through a book of the Bible, one is preaching the whole counsel of God’s Word.

While expositional preaching has undoubtedly found a resurgence in re-

cent years, many in the Church might struggle to understand the importance of this approach. However, when those in the congregation face a rigorous application of biblical and systematic theology, as will be encountered in expositional preaching, they are not only equipped to deal with problems of the day, but they can look into the Church and culture to identify how Scripture directly applies to specific situations. Rather than wonder how Scripture might speak to a particular topic, those in the Church can hear from the pulpit what Scripture declares about all matters. As Van Til noted, “The Bible is [...] authoritative on everything of which it speaks. Moreover, it speaks of everything.”

In light of the proliferation of “prosperity doctrine”, the Enneagram, the New Age synchronism found in numerous “Christian” devotional books

**“Some will dismiss the idea that Christians need to learn how to defend the faith.”**

(many times produced and sold at local Christian bookstores), and in the recent rise of popularity TV programs like *The Chosen*, the correcting power of God’s Word, delivered through the proclamation of the local pastor is not only corrective but restorative. When pastors preach

expositionally, congregants get to know the true Jesus and the authority of God’s Word, because they encounter it regularly out of the mouth of the local pastor. The local pastor cannot undervalue the incredible weight of both his task and the impact of said task. The truth will always separate itself from error. Further, expositional preaching allows God’s Word, more than human effort, to train a congregation in righteousness.

## **Apologetics Classes in the Local Church**

Some will dismiss the idea that Christians need to learn how to defend

the faith. This has not only been noted in numerous apologetics books, but also in the experience of many apologists. In this author's experience, even the word *apologetics* turns people off. Individuals in the Church have repeatedly failed to understand the significant value that learning to defend the faith has in regards to dealing with false teaching. Part of the problem is that many in the Church are more impacted by the prosperity-light gospel encountered on Christian radio or in the Christian bookstore, than by pastors serving in the local church.

Apologetics training and gospel proclamation go hand-in-hand, however. Christians have incredible opportunities to invite trained apologists into their local churches regularly. Further, by teaching apologetics in the local church, pastors can demonstrate how one should correct arguments against the Christian faith, or any other contention brought against Christian truth claims. Every local church should provide specific training to church members on defending the faith. They should set aside time each year to offer apologetics and evangelism training. When churches fail to train those in the congregation to defend their faith, it should be no surprise that people in their church don't know how to do it.

Many in the congregation will find the historical veracity of the Bible, classic arguments for the existence of God, and training on how to engage those in cults incredibly fascinating. Rob Phillips writes, "Churches lose the opportunity to equip those in the congregation to dedicate their minds and study to the Christian faith when they fail to train the congregation in apologetics. As a result, when a grandchild, child, or neighbor brings an argument repeatedly demolished by apologists for years, the congregant has no idea how to respond and loses an opportunity to declare the gospel."

## Directly Calling Out Doctrinally Deceptive Teachers

In the epistles, Paul makes no reservation when calling out those in sin or promoting false gospels (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 1:15, 2:16-18, 4:10, 4:14-15). Jesus likewise calls those opposed to the gospel, “*You brood of Vipers*” (Matthew 12:34-35). He calls Herod a “*fox*” (Luke 13:32). He tells Peter, “*Get behind me, Satan!*” (Matthew 16:23). Therefore, pastors have the responsibility to name names and to call out those who are promoting false gospels which are an affront to the true gospel.

Because souls are at stake, it is only appropriate that Christians directly confront false gospels that have made their way into the Church. James White notes, “[T]hose who disturb the peace of the church and draw disciples away after themselves are not just men with “a different view” as we are told today; they are “savage wolves.”” Things like the Enneagram, *The Chosen*, *Jesus Calling*, and anything by Joyce Meyers, Joel Osteen, or TD Jakes must be declared as false, heretical, and destructive teachings. Pastors must be assertive but, at the same time, loving in naming names. Many in the Church don’t know that some of the material they believe to be spiritually beneficial is destructive. It might hurt feelings for some to hear that one of their favorite devotions (e.g., *Jesus Calling*) is nothing but heretical and nonbiblical synchronistic writing. However, hurting feelings are much better than allowing souls to be deceived unto destruction.

It is challenging to navigate the tension in trying to declare the truth lovingly (Ephesians 4:15), but this is a problem that one will have to navigate no matter what. The gospel always hurts the feelings of those in sin. Those suppressing the truth hate to be called out. In the same way, those who claim the name of Christ are being deceived and need to be made aware of the destructive end that false teachers are leading them to. The most loving thing that pastors



can do is directly name those vending heretical teachings, who have made their way into the Church. Anything less than the true gospel infiltrating the Church is nothing but destructive.

Pastors and church leaders cannot hesitate to name the names of false teachers and call out the titles of works that deceive people. This must be done regularly. If people at a local church don't know that *Jesus Calling*, *The Chosen*, the Enneagram, or the works of prosperity gospel advocates are wrong, then the pastor has failed. These wolves in sheep's clothing are devouring, deceiving, and ultimately confusing and misleading many who genuinely desire to follow Christ.

## **Specific Training in Christian Worldview Integration**

Christian worldview integration is often thought of as an academic concept. However, "[t]he Christian life-and-worldview...presents itself as an absolute comprehensive interpretation of human experience. The Christian life-and-worldview presents itself as the only true interpretation of human experience." Christian worldview integration is treated in some college and academic literature, but it is far from only applying to seminary students and in Bible colleges. Pastors must think critically and intentionally about teaching their churches how to develop a Christian worldview. Pastors and leaders in the Church must demonstrate how one engages modern cultural issues from the framework of a Christian Worldview so they can train congregations to think from within that mindset.

When Christians are called to "*take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5), they are commanded to evaluate secular culture, think through current social issues, and demonstrate a regenerate mind. When Christ regenerates the soul, He does not stop with that. He regenerates the mind and

guides the Christian to think with the mind of Christ. In a society where Christians must navigate numerous moral and sociological issues counter to the Christian faith, those in the Church must be trained to integrate the Christian Worldview into every realm of influence.

This type of training is not easy. Oftentimes, Christians do not truly consider what it means to be a stranger and alien in the world (1 Peter 2:11). Whether it is a retiree who grew up in an America, where the Christian moral system was standard among most people or whether one is working with a member of "Gen Z", who has no idea what American culture looked like when Judeo-Christian morals were commonly accommodated by most Americans, pastors must continually frame culture and how a Christian should interpret it. Pastors must lead their congregations to interact and engage culture through the framework of a Christian Worldview.

Similar to the concept of having apologetics classes in the local church, Christian Worldview classes should be a section at least in a small group. Men's and women's groups should consider book studies about the Christian Worldview and how it is distinctly different. Christians should be trained in how different worldviews answer critical questions, and the implications of the answers for which each worldview advocates. At the same time, Christians should learn how to confront false worldviews with the truth only found in the Christian Worldview.

## Conclusion

Christians can count on the fact that there will always be individuals trying to synchronize the Christian faith. This is much of the reason that God warned the Jews as they entered into the promised land to destroy all of the outside cultures. Those who are unholy will always have a destructive influence on those who are holy. Pastors are called to protect the flock (1 Peter 5:2-

3). James tells teachers in the Church that they will be held to a higher standard because of what they teach (James 3:1).

Dealing with the numerous challenges that the current culture brings against the Church is imperative for the health of churches worldwide. Expositional preaching, apologetics training, directly calling out false teachings and teachers, and instructing those in the Church on integrating the Christian Worldview are just a few concepts that local pastors and church leaders can apply right away. While these techniques are not the only ones that can be used, they can be quickly enacted in any context to help the Church deal with false teachings. If pastors and church leaders are unwilling to adopt some strategy to confront this problem, then the wolves will feast and destroy many.

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## **Raising Up Bereans: Helping Children Navigate the Challenges of False Teaching**

**By Jacob Tanner**

**False teachings are everywhere.** Like unwanted ads popping up on your computer monitor, false teachers seem to creep out from behind every tree and rock in view. Turn on the radio and you will find false teaching. Sit in front of the TV and you will find more false teaching. And, of course, social media is



full of it. Whether it's Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok, or something else entirely, false teachers will make their presence known.

As parents, the task ahead of us can seem rather daunting. How do we protect our children from false teachers and teachings without overly sheltering them? How do we teach them the truth, while simultaneously preparing them

to defend the truth? As loaded as these questions may be, the Bible—as always—is our greatest resource and treasure.

## Train Those Kids Up!

Proverbs 22:6 tells us that we are to, *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* The first half of the verse is clearly a commandment, though the second half does raise a few questions. Regardless, let’s examine the whole verse.

To train up a child in the way he should go obviously means teaching your child about God, the gospel, and his/her need for both. Whether you’re raising sons or daughters, it is your God-given responsibility to teach them about the Lord and His Word. This is not a job that can be outsourced to Sunday school teachers, your pastor, or even a private school. While they can learn from these other sources, they ought to supplement the teaching that you yourself have given them. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says:

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

How did God, through Moses, direct parents to train their children? It began with the parents knowing the Lord. After all, you cannot hope to teach what you don’t know. Imagine trying to teach your children about a past president of the United States of America without knowing who they really were. It wouldn’t work, would it? How much more important it is to know the Lord!

You must love the Lord. If you don’t love Him, you won’t care for His

Word, and you certainly won't care to teach His Word to your children. They will also be able to tell whether you really care about what you're teaching them, or if it bores you. You must love the Lord if you want to teach your children to do the same. Likewise, you must love the Truth.

The only way to protect children from false teachers and false teachings is if they know the truth of the Word. So, we begin to train them in the truth of the Word by "*diligently teaching them to our children.*" Think about that word "*diligently*". Does it mean to do things carelessly or without concern? Of course not! It means to genuinely set yourself about a particular task in such a way that you recognize the vast importance of what you're doing. It means to apply yourself with all the strength you can muster.

*This* is how we are to teach children about God and His Word. We need to tell them of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is three Persons but one God. We are to teach them the gospel and their need for salvation in Christ alone. We

**"The second half of Proverbs 22:6 tells us that if we train children up in the way in which they should go, that [when they are old] they will not depart from it."**

are to teach them the commandments of God and call them to follow Jesus wherever He leads—repenting when they fall short, and trusting that His grace is sufficient for all.

Then, we are to discuss this *constantly*. We aren't Christians just on Sunday mornings, or for a few minutes each day when we sit

down at the dinner table. Our worldview is to be baptized in Christ, saturated with Scripture. When we play with our kids, our playing ought to seek to glorify God. When we pray with our kids, we ought to seek to glorify God. When we drive our kids to practice, eat with our kids, go to the store with our kids, watch a movie with our kids, read a book with our kids, or any other number of

things, we ought to seek to glorify God. Jesus and His Word must be at the center of it all.

Children must learn that it is not awkward, weird, forced, or strange to see Christ at the center of everything in their lives, or to be devoted to Him as Lord in all things.

### **Don't Let Them Depart**

The second half of Proverbs 22:6 tells us that if we train children up in the way in which they should go, that [when they are old] they will not depart from it. The majority of the time, we are quick to articulate a defense of this passage that goes something like this, "Proverbs is wisdom literature, and wisdom literature does not offer universal laws but principles by which we must live." In other words, Scripture says here that our children won't depart from the way they're trained up, but does it really mean that? Don't many children depart from the faith?

In one sense, this verse means exactly what it says. If your child is brought into covenant with God through salvation in Christ, they will genuinely never depart from the faith. Jesus loves them too much to let them go. All the false teaching in the world will be unable to pluck them from the hands of Christ.

But, on the other hand, have not some Christian parents done everything right and then, in the final analysis, their children remain unsaved? This is true, too, and we cannot deny that it is genuinely God's prerogative to elect and save sinners. However, we must also remember the promise of Deuteronomy 7:9, which reminds us, "*Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.*"

In other words, these verses are encouraging us to not only teach our children and pray for our children, but to entrust them into the hands of our faithful God, who is mighty to save them. Rather than being fearful of having children,

we ought to be encouraged that God loves our children even more than we do. We ought to hope in the promises of God, knowing that as much as He has loved and saved us, so He has promised to be faithful to us and our households.

In turn, this helps us to trust that God will help to protect our children from the false teachers. We know, for example, *“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect”* (Matthew 24:24). So, we do two things to keep our children from being led astray by the falsehoods of antichrists: (1) We train them in the Word; and (2) We pray for them to the Lord.

In a sense, it is your duty to tell your children that they’re going to be Christians. No, you can’t save them. Yes, you must call them to faith in Jesus and repentance of their sins. Yes, you must teach them every time an opportunity arises. Ultimately, your job is to live out your faith and say, *“But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15). And, if you see them slipping, you reach out and grab them. As parents, we are to *“have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh”* (Jude 1:22-23).

**“Parenting is hard work. Keeping our children safe from false teaching is harder still.”**

Your job in the household, as parents, is to instruct your children in Christ. Paul once put it like this:

*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,*



*so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Ephesians 4:11-14).*

If you want your children to be protected from false teachings, you need to train them up. You need to pray for them. You need to model Christ-likeness. You also need to teach them about false teachings, so they know what to look out for. Our goal for our households and our children is to have a *unified and mature faith* that can stand against false doctrines.

Parenting is hard work. Keeping our children safe from false teaching is harder still. But praise be to God, He is with us and has promised to be faithful to us and our children. Let us trust in Him.

## Recommended Reading on False Teaching in the Church

In this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, we've been considering false teaching. We understand that we haven't covered everything on this topic, but it is our prayer that readers of this issue will grow in their understanding of it so they can stand fast on the Word of God.

If you've found this issue helpful and would like to study this subject further, please check out the following reading list. These books are at the top of their genre in both excellence and readability.

### Historical Church Doctrine

- *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* by Gregg R. Allison
- *The History of Christian Doctrines* by Louis Berkhof

### False Teaching

- *A Field Guide on False Teaching* by Ligonier Ministries
- *The Other Worldview* by Peter Jones

### New Apostolic Reformation

- *NonProphet Woke: The Reformation of a Modern Day Disciple* by Dawn Hill
- *Counterfeit Kingdom: The Dangers of New Revelation, New Prophets, and New Age Practices in the Church* by Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec
- *Reckless Christianity: The Destructive New Teachings and Practices of Bill Johnson, Bethel Church, and the Global Movement of Apostles and Prophets* by Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec
- *God's Super-Apostles: Encountering the Worldwide Prophets and Apos-*

*les Movement* by Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec

- *A New Apostolic Reformation? A Biblical Response to a Worldwide Movement* by Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec
- *Divergent Theology: An Inquiry Into the Theological Characteristics of the Word of Faith Third Wave Movement and The New Apostolic Reformation* by Richard Moore

I hope you'll find these resources helpful as I have.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

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Dave Jenkins is the Executive Director of Servants of Grace Ministries, and the Executive Editor of *Theology for Life Magazine*, and author of *The Word Explored: The Problem of Biblical Illiteracy and What to do About It*. Dave received his M.A.R. and M. Div. through Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Sarah, attend Covenant Life Fellowship in Roseburg, Oregon. Check out

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### **Dave Van Bebber**

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### **Richard Moore**

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Dawn Hill is a Christian blogger known as “The Lovesick Scribe”, and the host of *The Lovesick Scribe Podcast*. She is passionate about sharing the truth and pointing others back to Jesus Christ through the written Word as the standard of authority for Christian living and instruction while being led by the Holy Spirit into maturity. She is the author of *NonProphet Woke: The Reformation of a Modern-Day Disciple*. She writes articles for Christianity.com, Servants of Grace, and her blog posts have been shared by individuals such as Tim Challies. She will be featured in the upcoming docuseries, *American Gospel: Spirit and Fire*. She co-leads a women’s support group with Emily Massey called Snatched from the Flames, where they minister to women who have come out of the hyper-charismatic and New Apostolic Reformation movement. She is a wife to Nicholas and a mother to Anabel and Ephraim.



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Jacob Tanner is a husband, father, and pastor, living in Pennsylvania. Holding to the *1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*, Jacob is focused on both evangelism and reformation. He is the founder of the Sound of Truth Ministries, where they have regular podcasts and preaches whenever the opportunity arises. His passion and motto are, “To know Christ and make Him known because He has made us His own.” He can be found spending time with his family or with a book in his hands in his free time.

## Servants of Grace Ministries

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