

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

A **MAJOR** “key” to a *victorious* Christian life is **obedience to the faith God gives you**. Romans uses the phrase, “*the obedience of faith*,” and I will *distinguish* it from either **obedience to all rules right now** or you’re ‘living in sin’ (“**law**”) and **no obedience at all** (lawlessness or “**license**”). James refers to our obedience as **faith working with our works**. (Rom. 1:5, Jas. 2:22).

We believers need to learn to be **completely** and **immediately obedient** to the leadings of the Lord, through Scripture and prayer, by God’s power, with experience, over time.

See: Faith-Walking, Grace and Spirit-Filled and Led

WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

See: Body Life, and Gospel Tract Page 2

GIVING AND USE OF MONEY

American Church-Going Believer...

DID YOU KNOW the Bible taught the following things about money?

You Can't Take it With You

For we have **brought nothing into the world**, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have **food and covering**, with these we shall **be content**. But **those who want to get rich** fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which **plunge** men into ruin and destruction. For the **love of money** is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and **pierced themselves** with many a pang. (**I Tim. 6:7-10**)

'He With The Most Toys in the End' Is NOT the Winner

And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of **greed**; for **not even when one has an abundance** does his life *consist* of his possessions." (**Lk. 12:15**)

Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is **gone**. For wealth certainly makes itself **wings**, like an *eagle* that flies toward the *heavens*. (**Pv. 23:4-5**)

On the Love of Money

Let your character be **free from the love of money**, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL **NEVER DESERT** YOU, NOR WILL I EVER **FORSAKE** YOU," (**Heb. 13:5**)

The Value of Money

How much better it is to get **wisdom** than gold! And to get **understanding** is to be chosen above silver. (**Pv. 16:16**)

Ambition

[Aspirers:] (**Jas. 4:13-17**). Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "**If the Lord wills**, we shall live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is *sin*.

[Achievers:] (**Jas. 5:1-6**). Come now, **you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you**. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and **which has been withheld by you**, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. **You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter**. You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

(I Cor. 7:29-32a) but this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the world is passing away. But I want you to be free from concern.

(Pv. 23:4-5) **Do not weary yourself to gain wealth**, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.

Worldliness: The Devil can Make you Rich!

(I Jn. 2:15-17) Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the **lust of the eyes** and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

(Jas. 1:27) Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to **keep oneself unstained by the world**.

(Mt. 4:8-10) Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'

Ultimate Justice: God Will Even it Out in the End

(Lk. 16:19-31) Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw[^] Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.' 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said[^], 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

(Lk. 6:24) "But woe to you who are rich, for **you are receiving your comfort in full**.

Other

(Ecc. 9:11) "I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the **wise**, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of **ability**; for time and chance overtake them all."

(Pv. 10:4) “Poor is he who works with a *negligent hand*, but the hand of the **diligent** makes rich.”

**Are you glad you *learned* these things, or is the flesh
frustrated by CONVICTION at such knowledge?**

See: Mt. 6:19-34, Lk. 6:20, ~16:25, II Cor. 9:6-7 (essentially all of chapters 8-9), Phil. 4:11-13, II Th. 3:10, I Tim. 6:17-19, II Tim. 3:2, Jas. 1:9-11, 4:13-16, ~I Jn. 2:15-17, ETC.

BODY LIFE (i.e., True New Testament “Church”)

See: Body Life

DISCIPLESHIP 'PROGRAM HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

The 20 Key *Memory* Verses:

Mk. 11:22-24
I Cor. 10:13
Phil. 4:6-8
Mt. 28:18-20
Jn. 3:16
Rom. 3:23
Rom. 6:23
I Jn. 5:11-13
I Jn. 1:9
Heb. 11:1, 6
II Tim. 2:15
II Tim. 3:16-17
Rom. 12:1-2
Rom. 8:37-39
Jas. 1:2-4
Ps. 119:9-11
Pv. 3:5-7
Col. 3:1-4
Mt. 6:19-21
Mt. 7:7-8

26. Doctrinal Statement

My Denominational Affiliation(s):

I am *proud* to have regularly attended the following churches (either as a frequent guest or regular **member**) the past 30 years! **Thank MOST of you, *pastors***, for your outstanding wisdom and influences in my life:

Mild Charismatic (Southern Baptist): Highland Baptist Church, Waco, TX (an **excellent** church!)

Southern Baptist (Conservative): Second Baptist Church, Houston, TX (**before** it became *church-as-a-business* in the mid 1990's--**See:** YouTube, search "Church Conflicts")
First Baptist Church, Houston, TX (still a godly church)
Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, TX (**not nearly** as proud
In 2010 forward—**See:** YouTube, search "Church Conflicts")

Bible Church (Independent): Cypress Bible Church, Cypress, TX (pastor later was revealed to myself as a hypocrite on *personal evangelism*—**See:** YouTube, search "Church Conflicts")

Note: This list will likely never be added to, as **I will not become a church member again** unless a church is committed to evangelizing all near their building, discipling all their members, getting their 5% who evangelize to a much higher percentage and implementing body life.

In an effort at expediency, efficiency and not reinventing the wheel—at least for the time being, I refer you to the **Baptist Faith and Message (2000) Doctrinal Statement** as a quite adequate representation of my *personal views*. ONLY where I would **add** things for accuracy, emphasis or specificity, or where I might rarely, slightly **disagree** have I noted any opinions of my own which differ from those stated. (**See:** www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp)

The Scriptures.

I would add the term "inerrancy:" i.e., the Bible, in the original writings, was accurately and exactly—word-for-word—what God wanted written, and is His divinely-inspired Scriptures and revelation.

Salvation.

The "Lordship Salvation" being presented here I completely disagree with as an inaccurate portrayal of the Scriptural requirements for salvation (vs. for discipleship/sanctification).

"Lord" I will take as deity/God/divinity in this rendering. (**See:** Lordship Salvation Errors). The concept usually means commit to Jesus as Master of your life for the rest of your life, which is a wonderful decision for someone to make—and all believers should (and some people do it at salvation, Ex.: Paul)—but is **not** what I believe the Scripture teaches as a requirement to receive a **free gift** (as opposed to being a requirement for discipleship/sanctification). It offends my innermost sensibilities to think that I could decide to be holy and live holy without God inside me making that desire and willingness happen—100% His work—I simply let Him do His miracle!

The same goes for my disagreement with the definition and/or description of 'repentance,' which is accurately interpreted as "a change of mind." I will take the words stated as a positional turning from a **condition** of being totally **sinful**—i.e., a sinner—to an opposite position of being

totally forgiven—i.e., a saint. Considering “repentance” as turning from being a sinner to having a reliant trust in Christ for eternal salvation I can agree with as a usage of that term.

“Commitment...as Lord,” as Baptists usually define these terms, I do not agree with as a salvific requirement. I will take the “commitment” as a commitment/decision to sincerely trust Christ to entirely and graciously save you, based on His promises and performed by the Spirit’s influence and power in your life at the point you make that decision.

God’s Purpose and Grace.

“Free agency of man” referring to “free will” is acceptable in all matters **non-spiritual**. As to man being free to choose God apart from the Spirit’s calling (or, contrarily, that calling **forcing** man’s will God’s direction), I disagree with entirely. God prepares and changes our heart to want to receive Christ, but we still must do so (in His convicting power). **See:** Calvinism and Arminianism Errors

The Church.

I wish a sentence on “Body Life” would be added, but it’s probably too much to ask for people to even **know** what I’m talking about.

The Lord’s Day.

Church services can legitimately be held on other than Sunday (Ex.: Saturday night services, which I attend), which appears to be *precluded* by this language. (Rom. 14:5-7)

Last Things.

This paragraph is **quite** undefined and non-specific, and there is no commitment to a pre-Tribulational rapture, pre-Millennial return of Christ, or MANY other detailed events other than a general return of Christ “in the future.” I understand it’s hard to get agreement, but at least **identify options** upon which we may differ. Even any possible distinction between a rapture and 2nd coming is ambiguously blurred or obfuscated.

Stewardship.

I’m thankful the term “tithing ” was left out, and the document stays with a more accurate description of New Testament *giving*.

War and Peace.

I wish a phrase would be added extolling, as does Ecclesiastes, that there is a proper time for both **war and peace**. This fact has been sadly *omitted*, and could easily lead to the impression that Baptists are against all necessary wars. (Ecc. 3:8)

27. APPENDIX A: Doctrinal Problems (that Can Negatively Affect Evangelism)

Doctrinally, there are **4 major theological movements** which, despite having some *advantageous* qualities, can also have a **negative impact** on completion of the Great Commission, for which reason the following refutations are offered.

27A. “Lordship Salvation” Errors

Boiled down to the core of the issue, is sincere faith in God to eternally save you through Christ’s death on the cross enough to be sure one will go to heaven (1 so-called “step”), or must a lost person:

- 1) “Repent” of (usually defined as “turn from”) their sins,
 - 2) Receive Jesus (i.e., trust Christ), and
 - 3) Totally surrender (i.e., commit to living for God the remainder of their life)? (3 steps).
- Said another way, is salvation a free gift or something we qualify or work for, or earn? Is there anything a human can do to achieve salvation, or must he solely let God do all the saving, by faith?

The difference between these two viewpoints (referred to as Saviorhood Salvation and Lordship Salvation) could not be more important, as a wrongful message constitutes a false Gospel, and could endanger the hearer’s eternity (if their response is not what God had required).

If one defines “repentance” as a commitment to turn away from a sinful lifestyle, do humans have the ability to cease sinning, and even if they could—perfectly—that decision alone wouldn’t save, as they still have unforgiven sins prior to their decision to be perfect thereafter.

If “surrender” is required, that is the greatest “work” a human could offer, and is the beginning step to all religions which teach that a life of works earns you salvation. Even if one decided to live completely (perfectly) holy from that point onward, they would still have unforgiven sin from their past, and one sin qualifies a person for hell. So, neither “repentance” (as commonly defined by Southern Baptists and others) nor “surrendering” save, in and of themselves. Only Jesus saves, and He does so by forgiving us all our sins when we trust Him to, and ask Him to live within.

Efforts at merging the two views are intellectually dishonest, though sought with moral (peace-making) intentions, as 3 only equals 1 when discussing the Trinity. Most Christians have no idea this issue even exists. Many pastors gloss over it (or are ignorant of the distinctions) and try to merge the views by generalizing only where we both agree—that Jesus is the answer to man’s need for salvation. Both groups want Christians to live holy lives, and Lordship salvation was nobly, but wrongly instituted as an attempt to solve the problem of so many sinfully-living Christians in our churches.

Saviorhooders, on the other hand, believe the Bible teaches salvation is a pure gift of grace, which, over time and with conscious discipling by maturer believers, will result in true believers living committed lives unto God, out of gratitude and thankfulness for all He gave them

at salvation (and biblical promises, including heavenly rewards). Saviorhooders also acknowledge the reality that Christians do sin, and some sin badly—even worse than non-Christians, which is a problem needing a remedy and not to be solved by changing the Gospel’s message and requirements, but through growth and discipleship.

SOME INITIAL QUESTIONS TO PROMPT YOUR RENEWED THINKING:

1. If men must be life-long totally committed to God in order to qualify for salvation, a) have all those nominally committed in our churches lost their salvation?, or b) do we assume they are all ‘tares’—deceived that they are saved?
2. Relatedly, can we only believe we are saved if we rely on a life of good works to prove that decision to ourselves and others?

As you review the following questions, consider which viewpoint is more consistent with the word of God, and only cleave to that which is true.

Lordship and Saviorhood Salvation: The Crux of the Matter

1. Are there **1 or 3 steps** man must take in order to get saved? (i.e., 1. Turn/repent from sinful living, 2. trust Christ and 3. total commitment to live for Jesus, ethically, the rest of your life **OR** by contrast, truly receive Jesus Christ as one’s **personal Savior**, by full and sincere **faith** from the heart in His **completely** saving you, **forever**?)
2. Is salvation biblically viewed as an **event in time** (i.e., a point, with **eternal effects**) or a **life-long process** (i.e., a line), or somewhere in-between (“both/and”)?
3. Is the security and assurance of the believer from the **Holy Spirit, at salvation**, or by increasingly **good works all your life** as a Christian?
4. What are the proper **definitions** of “repentance” and “faith” as they pertain to **salvation requirements**?
5. Are all sinful-living “claiming” Christians **unsaved** and deserving our **doubting** their salvation? (i.e., **can Christians be “carnal”/“sinful”/“fleshly”**? Will all true Christians produce **life-long** good works?)
6. Can Saviorhood and Lordship Salvation **both be the true Gospel** of Jesus Christ (or is one a false Gospel, from the **devil**, even from the noblest of mens’ intentions?)
7. Is salvation a **free gift** or are there **strings** attached? It being **free** does not mean we receive it lightly, glibly or disrespectfully!
8. Does true Saviorhood Salvation **teach carnality**, a 2-step salvation, momentary **intellectual assent**, and **easy believism**, as it has been accused of teaching?
9. Are the **requirements** for **salvation** the same as those for sanctification/**discipleship**? (i.e., Is the call to salvation the same as the call to live as a disciple as indistinguishable **synonyms**?)
10. Is it biblical, in trying to be a “**peace-maker**,” to simply **agree** with both camps that Christ is man’s sin answer, and **avoid answering this debate** in specificity or taking any position? (i.e., are pastors who alternate, intersperse and otherwise **confuse the evangelism invitation** and Gospel offering and requirements **doing the right thing**, trusting God’s conviction will clear it all up, because “God knows the heart?” and they don’t want to “rock any boats?”)

The '10 Commandments' of 'FREE' Eternal Salvation

(sarcastically cumulated as mandatory to a biblically-CONSISTENT "Lordship Salvation" position)

Those who espouse the teaching that the **requirements** for salvation (i.e., through evangelism) are *synonymous* and *contemporaneous* with the requirements of sanctification (i.e., discipleship), in order to be accurate and consistent with the **whole** counsel of God, MUST face the fact that **all** of the following commands are *required* in order to receive the 'free' gift they call salvation **under their theory**. With these standards, is ANYONE on earth saved?

I personally know of no Lordship preacher who has sold all he had in order to get saved, and the Bible does NOT say simply a willingness to do so is sufficient. This philosophy teaches a life of un-peaceful WORKS, for if you stray much at all, or your fruit is *not good enough*, others (and yourself) can *rightly* and *constantly* doubt that you were ever saved.

If you ever slip, or act *too bad*, can you get re-saved? (Ex.: I Cor. 5:1; I Tim. 1:19; II Tim. 4:10; I Pet. 4:15—action obviously possible, or why else prohibitively warn?; Mt. 24:12; Lk. 18:8; II Tim. 4:3; I Cor. 3:2-4; Heb. 5:12-13; I Cor. 15:34; III Jn. 1:9-10; I Pet. 4:1-3; Rom. 13:12, ETC.).

In Old Testament times, would King *David* have been the equivalent of unsaved or carnal, when he killed a man and slept with his wife? What about *Moses*, who also slew a man? Finally, we are commanded to take up our cross **DAILY**, as a disciple's requirement. Does that mean we are **saved on a day-long** and day-to-day basis till we die? How is salvation a "free" gift with all these stipulations?:

1. **FAITH**. The only *ONE true condition*, wherein by the grace of God and enabling of His Spirit we ask/allow/rely on Christ to do ALL the saving, due to our totally helpless and sinful condition, wherein we can only offer/'give' God **sin-tainted** deeds. (**Ac. 16:30-31, etc.**)
2. **REPENTANCE**. Defined by Lordshippers as 'a decision to stop sinning or to commit to turning, forsaking or renouncing a sinful lifestyle/way of life/practice of living.' Funny, God Himself repented 37 times in the Old Testament! Better to define it from its grammatical roots, as a 'change of mind.' (**Ac. 17:30, etc.**)
3. **SUBMISSION**. Full commitment/dedication to Christ's Lordship and Mastery of the *entirety* of one's earthly life, **in order to qualify** to inherit a "**free**" *eternal gift*. This involves three main facets:
 - a. **Deny Yourself**. (**Mk. 8:34, etc.**)
 - b. **Take Up/Carry Your Cross (DAILY)**. (**Lk. 9:23**)
 - c. **Follow Christ**. (**Mk. 8:35, etc.**)
 - d. **Other**: Count the Cost, Hate Your Family and Friends (compared to God), Hate and Lose your Life/Die to 'Self.' (**Lk. 9:24, 14:26-31; Jn. 12:24-25; See also: Lk. 9:57-60 and Mt. 8:19-22**).
4. **GOOD WORKS**. "Faith **PLUS**" works or obedience, as *inevitable* fruit, or else that 'faith' was not faith at all, or else one's salvation was lost. (**Mt. 7:15-23, etc.; See Also: Lk. 10:25-28**).
5. **BAPTISM**. Water—**not Spirit**—baptism, as a requirement for 'washing away' sins (not simply as a symbol or memorial of spiritual washing). That really would be a miracle for WATER to erase a spiritual (vs. physical) thing! (**Ex.: Ac. 22:16, Mk. 16:16**)

6. **CONFESSION.** Public, *verbal expression* of your personal experience of saving faith in Christ. ‘Unless you express it, you don’t possess it’ goes the mantra, even though God knows your heart. Confession is a natural outgrowth of faith—not a synonym. (**Rom. 10:8-11; Mt. 10:32-33**)
7. **DIVESTMENT.** Sell and/or leave all you have (and give your possessions—money and assets) to the poor. (**Lk. 14:33**)
8. **MARTYRDOM.** Or, *at least*, immediate willingness to be killed for Christ’s sake; taking seriously the call to “bear your own cross,” which was an instrument of death. WE would say carry your electric chair (or equivalent). Peter and company grew in their willingness and conviction on this matter, *over time*. (**Mt. 10:37-39, etc.**)
9. **TONGUES.** The spiritual gift of speaking in tongues as bona fide and conclusive evidence of eternal salvation, applicable to **EVERY** believer, or he is not saved?. The Bible teaches not. (**Mk. 16:17-18, I Cor. 12:30**)
10. **ENDURANCE.** Perseverance in *good deeds to the end*, or you prove that you were never saved, or lost your salvation *somewhere along the way*. (**Mt. 10:22; Lk. 21:19; Rev. 14:12**). Ironically, most Lordship Salvationists don’t believe one can lose their salvation, so they **must doubt conversions** if much sin is present, because they also reject the Bible’s teaching that Christians not filled with the Spirit—only indwelt—are “**carnal**” and **fleshly**, or immature babes. What a non-reassuring, confusing and un-solid foundation for spiritual growth effort—to never know till you’re an **old man** that you were **ever born** in the first place!

Four other traits from the Bible tell you your process of discipleship is going well (i.e., true for sanctification but not **salvation**): Loving believers (Jn. 13:35), continuing in the word of God (Jn. 8:31), bearing much fruit (Jn. 15:8; Ex.: good works), and evangelizing people (Mt. 4:19). If salvation is a life-long process, you’re only saved in the end, and you must maintain works in order to “earn” entrance into heaven.

Yes, salvation truly is the **free gift** of God’s tremendous grace, which we can **only** live thankful for in response. Salvation is neither a *transaction* between equals, a *gift exchange* (what do you have to offer but **sin**?), or analogous to *joining the army*—*free* to join but *costly* to qualify and live for, as a leading Lordship author convolutedly ‘reasons.’

Sanctification by works can result from such a false and **faulty** start, because you can **DO** nothing to deserve salvation—you can **ONLY** receive it, that receiving, biblically not being a work at all (**Rom. 3:27-28**). **God’s** the One doing *all* the work—you just let Him, if and when He *allows* you to, by the Spirit’s power, grace and calling.

SAVIORHOOD VS. LORDSHIP SALVATION: THE MOTHER OF ALL ISSUES

(Besides Evangelismlessness)

Are there **three** “steps” or only **one** thing a lost person must do for God to save him? Does a lost person have to be fully committed to living for God (and be committed not to live in sin) the rest of their life in order to receive the free gift of salvation and be saved from hell? Conversely, does faith in Christ alone to save a person from their sins—independent of any issues raised about how one will live thereafter (unless they bring it up)—save them?

Are we all destined to hell, or could our theology be suffering from mis-analysis of the difference between the free gift of salvation (instantaneous, cleansing guilt and punishment for sin and completely transforming from the inside, by faith), and the cost of discipleship (total commitment) which affects our post-salvation behavior unto death, is a life-long process, and is manifested externally?

I say, tongue in cheek, to, by all means, make sure you have thoroughly considered and complied with/fulfilled every item on this check list, as you do not want to miss out on the free GIFT which is NOT based on any works of man, and totally the gracious work of GOD in CHRIST, through Faith.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE

These 2 perspectives are not the same, and there is only one gospel, so one viewpoint has to be a false gospel. People can go to hell hearing the wrong message. Salvation is the most important issue for men, and the main reason Christ came to earth, so getting this issue right is essential.

Key Arguments for Saviorhood

TOP 12 BIBLE-BASED REASONS I BELIEVE IN SAVIORHOOD SALVATION

1. The vast majority of the Bible teaches faith alone—over 220 verses in the New Testament.
2. The clearest evangelism verses of the Bible teach faith alone.
3. The most evangelistic book never mentions repentance (the Gospel most geared to Gentiles—John).
4. God repented 37 of 40⁺ times in the Old Testament, so our common definition is flawed.
5. New Testament examples of Christians sinning very badly, and its doctrine of ‘carnality’ as possible in the Christian life. **Pv.** 14:14, **Mt.** 24:12, **Lk.** 18:7-8, **Jn.** 15:2, 6, **Ac.** 5:1-11, 8:12-24, **Rom.** 6:1-23, 7:1-6, 15-25, 8:1-17, **I Cor.** 5:1-5, 3:12-15, 11:28-32, 15:34, **II Cor.** 12:21, **I Tim.** 1:18-20, **II Tim.** 4:1-5, 9-10, 16, **Tit.** 3:14 (vs. Jn. 15, fruitful), **Heb.** 2:3, 3:7-8, 12-13, 16-19, 4:1-6, 5:11-6:8, 10:16-38, 13:9, 16, **Jas.** 1:13-15, 3:8-10, 13-4:10, 5:19-20, **I Pet.** 1:13-14, 2:11, 20, 4:1-5, 15, **II Pet.** 1:10, 2:17-19, **I Jn.** 2:9, 11, 28, 3:15, 4:1, 20-21, 5:15-17, **II Jn.** 1:8, **III Jn.** 1:9-11, **Rev.** 2:2-6, 13-16, 20-23, 3:1-3, 15-20.
6. New Testament exhortations to believers to lordship commitment (while never doubting their salvation). **Mt.** 5:18, **Rom.** 12:1-2, chs. 6-7, **I Cor.** 1:9, 3:22-23, 15:33-34, **II Cor.** 6:16-7:1, **Gal.** 4:19, 5:1, 13-16, 6:1, 9, **Eph.** 1:13, 19, 3:12, 17, 19, 4:1-3, 13-25, 5:1, 5-10, 14-17, 6:(11), **Phil.** 1:6, 9, 18, 23-24, 27-30, 2:1-4, 12, 5-6, 12, 15, 3:1-10, 17, 4:1, 5, 9, 12, (17), **Col.** 1:9-11, 2:6, 20, 3:1-12, **I Th.** 2:11-12, 3:1-8, (4:2, 10), **II Th.** 2:15-17, 3:13, **I Tim.** 6:12, 19, **II Tim.** 1:13, 2:19-22, **Tit.** 3:8, 14, **Heb.** 2:2-3, 12:3-17, 28, **Jas.** 1:21-22, 4:1-10, **I Pet.** 1:22, 2:1-3, 3:15, 4:1-5, **II Pet.** 1:2-11, 3:14, **Jude** 1:1-4, **Rev.** 3:2.
7. Like being offered a Mazaratti at Christmas—it’s the nature of a gift that inspires its usage, and its not a gift exchange, for we have nothing to offer but sin).
8. As the life of Ghandi shows, Lordship Salvation requires the same decision all religions’ faithful make, yet they go to hell with no faith in Christ. Goodness is good, but not salvific.
9. The issue of salvation is that you are facing hell for your sins—you need forgiveness above all else.
10. Salvation makes true, miraculous changes from within, which, over time manifest on the

outside.

11. Even if you turned from sinful living to righteous living, and lived perfectly hereafter, you'd still go to hell without Christ. Every religion teaches to live good and not bad, but their converts remain unsaved without Jesus.
12. How is "you have to commit to stop sinning and live right from now on" good news, unique to Christianity or related to Christ's work on the cross? No wonder so few claiming Christians never want to tell that message (i.e., evangelize). Lordshippers stop at the bad news—you are a sinner—solve it/heal yourself. Problem is, you can't live up to the promise to live right, that's why you need mercy and forgiveness. The lead Lordship advocate's army illustration is totally ludicrous, as anyone with child-like faith—including any child—could tell you.

P.S.—My personal experience tells me it's so, in agreement with the weight of New Testament evidence and the many faith alone verses. God called me through the Gospel presentation, and on the song "There is a fountain," I went forward in a Baptist church and received Christ. I did later commit to His lordship, which has produced a spectacularly abundant life, but it pales by comparison to the day all my sins were washed away/forgiven by God through Christ, and I will never rely on that Lordship commitment date causing me to end up in heaven, as its all of grace and none of my doing!

Additional Reasons I Believe in Saviorhood Salvation

1. Obvious difference between salvation and disciple requirements.
2. You can't talk to a baby about diapers and milk bottles TILL THEY'RE BORN! Lost do not have a spiritual nature to comprehend that sanctification is positive.
3. God wouldn't require anyone to lie in order to be saved (promise you'll live fully for Him all your life)
4. How can a "free" gift cost you everything? That is schizophrenic and internally inconsistent, and worse than marketing ploys using the term "free."
5. If during sanctification you backslide, you are no longer qualified to be a disciple, so you either lost your salvation or never had it, to be consistent with Lordship requirements.
6. The illogic of considering the 10 commands of Lordship disciple requirements as being either a gift, or free.

LORDSHIP SALVATION ERRORS

Boiled down to the core of the issue, is sincere faith in God to eternally save you through Christ's death on the cross enough to be sure one will go to heaven (1 so-called "step"), or must a lost person:

- 1) "Repent" of (usually defined as "turn from") their sins,
- 2) Receive Jesus (i.e., trust Christ), and
- 3) Totally surrender (i.e., commit to living for God the remainder of their life)? (3 steps).

Said another way, is salvation a free gift or something we qualify or work for earn? Is there anything a human can do to achieve salvation, or must he solely let God do all the saving, by faith?

The difference between these two viewpoints (referred to as Saviorhood Salvation and Lordship Salvation) could not be more important, as a wrongful message constitutes a false Gospel, and could endanger the hearer's eternity (if their response is not what God had required).

If one defines “repentance” as a commitment to turn away from a sinful life, do humans have the ability to cease sinning, and even if they could perfectly, that decision alone wouldn’t save, as they still have unforgiven sins prior to that decision to be perfect thereafter.

If “surrender” is required, that is the greatest “work” a human could offer, and is the beginning step to all religions which teach that a life of works earns you salvation. Even if one decided to live completely (perfectly) holy from that point onward, they would still have unforgiven sin from their past, and one sin qualifies a person for hell. So, neither “repentance” (as commonly defined by Southern Baptists and others) nor “surrendering” save, in and of themselves. Only Jesus saves, and He does so by forgiving us all our sins when we trust Him to and ask Him to live within.

Efforts at merging the two views are intellectually dishonest, though morally sought, as 3 only equals 1 when discussing the Trinity. Most Christians have no idea this issue even exists. Many pastors gloss over it (or are ignorant of the distinctions) and try to merge the views by where we both agree—Jesus is the answer to man’s need for salvation. Both groups want Christians to live holy lives, and Lordship salvation was instituted to try to solve the problem of sinfully living Christians in our churches.

Saviorhooders, on the other hand, believe the Bible teaches salvation is a pure gift of grace, which, over time and with conscious discipling by maturer believers, will result in true believers living totally committed lives unto God, out of gratitude and thankfulness for all He gave them at salvation (and biblical promises, including heavenly rewards). Saviorhooders also acknowledge the reality that Christians do sin, and some sin badly—even worse than non-Christians, which is a problem needing a remedy and not to be solved by changing the Gospel’s message and requirements but through growth and discipleship.

Perhaps this issue is best summed up in the fact that salvation is a miracle, and for the human mind to fully understand how receiving a gift can transform a life (manifested by efforts of both the Gift-Giver and recipient, over time), even without initially requiring one to commit to such, is spiritually impossible.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

Both groups agree salvation in Christ is the answer for sin, and that Christians should not live carnally. The key to understanding the truth on these matters is that Saviorhooders do not teach a no-lordship sanctification for believers, and do not ever teach lost people they can receive Jesus and then are free to live sinfully thereafter. The issue man faces is NOT how they will live their life, morally speaking, but first, where they will spend eternity—who is their spiritual father—in a word, are they saved and forgiven, or not. After this threshold question has been resolved, it’s time to address how to use the gift they received (or not). Sanctification is not the issue of salvation, and only comes into play if the lost person raises a question about the aftermath effects > “requirements” of salvation.

TYPICAL RESPONSES OF PASTORS TO THIS CONTROVERSY

1. Ignore it, believing that all “controversies” are from satan and “divisive,” even for something as important as taking a stand for the true Gospel vs. an imposter one, and Jesus made many moral divisions.
2. Ignore it out of lack of knowledge of the subject, or that the issue exists (or claiming to be too busy).

3. Continue to preach their view, and never address the opposing view. Called being a theological chicken.
4. Try to merge the two doctrines as a sort of “peace-maker,” usually through a confused hodge-podge of terms which belong to both viewpoints (though three steps vs. one step for salvation can never be reconciled into an agreeable, consistent theology).
5. Teach both sides’ existence, but take a stand for the biblical viewpoint (i.e., teach Saviorhood, as you do, and encourage, exhort, teach and hold Christians accountable to follow Christ in commitment through personally discipling and motivating them with scriptural promises, being accountable for the results of their congregation, vs. just preaching words and never knowing if believers are personally growing).

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST LORDSHIP SALVATION

1. If, as I assert, Lordship is unbiblical, it has a spiritually satanic origin (Gal. 1:8-9)
2. Second only in importance to that first problem, and possibly more serious is that Lordship Salvation can lead some lost people to end up in hell, because they were not offered the true Gospel, and were told requirements God did not place on people in order to be saved (as opposed to sanctified, as believers).
3. It focuses the gospel on man and his will—not Christ’s work, person and gracious forgiveness and mercy (i.e., what can and do I need to do and give to God in order for Him to be willing to save me vs. what is God offering me and how do I get in on it)
4. It begins a person with a salvation theology of works, and usually continues such persons in a sanctificational process of works (which can never lead to spiritual or moral success/victory, joy, or a true understanding of God and His grace).
5. It often slanders those adhering to the true New Testament gospel of Jesus Christ (Ex.: eternal fire insurance and cheap grace accusations, and assertions that we support carnality or teach Christian discipleship as an option the Christian is free to decline).
6. It confuses salvation with sanctification, and cannot account for the many biblical evidences for carnal Christians and exhortations to Christians to be fully committed to live for God.
7. It is deceptive in the usage of terms, words and definitions used in evangelism invitations, and confuses right-thinking persons (a trait—confusion—not associated with God).
8. It requires a lost person to, at best, lie to God in order to get saved, as they make promises they cannot and therefore will not fully keep.
9. It is rooted in human pride in one’s use of one’s will, as opposed to humble desperateness of needing Christ’s acting and forgiveness completely.
10. It makes salvation not a gift received, but an exchange of gifts, as if a lost person has anything to offer God.
11. It destroys the biblical bases of sanctificational motivation, by making a life of committed living required in order to receive a free gift, rather than the free willed fruit of a life thankful for complete forgiveness.
12. Though rightly intended, Lordship Salvationists seek to secure holy Christians using completely unbiblical means (i.e., securing promises to live holy and not live sinfully, in order to qualify to receive a “free” gift).
13. It can, in reality, only speak of grace—never fully able to experience or understand grace, because the doctrine is steeped and rooted in the same origins as cults’ salvation theologies—works.
14. If a Christian ever ceases to be fully committed for any period of time, has he lost his salvation, as he no longer meets the requirement for discipleship.

15. Do we properly withhold giving someone assurance till their death bed?
 16. If works give us assurance of salvation, what are we to conclude from the fact that every Christ is imperfect?

SOME QUESTIONS FOR LORDSHIPPERS

- If Lordship must be total commitment, what happens if a “believer” wanes in that level of commitment for a time?
- If Lordship commitment is for life, every “nominal” or carnal Christian must be lost, as they don’t meet God’s requirement for salvation (or they lost salvation).
- Nowhere does God say that willingness is enough. In fact, the story of the two sons shows that decisions are nothing—implementation of them (even reversing a bad decision) is preferred to making the right one and never implementing it.
- Commitment is a work and a commitment to live a life of good works, not needing faith. False religions prove that committing to live ethically and stop living sinfully saves no one. So if it can’t save you, why would God require it of lost people in order for them to qualify to be saved?
- With only 10% of American Christians being committed believers, and Lordship Salvation (and Relational Evangelism) being the majority viewpoint, under their theory are the 90% unsaved, as they certainly don’t meet disciple qualifications, and the parable of the two sons proves to us God is not impressed with mere words of commitment? Their false theology has certainly not accomplished what its founder—John MacArthur—intended it to resolve: the blithe of carnal Christians in our churches (which is only solved by discipling).

Analysis of Proffered Salvation Requirements

1. FAITH

Explicitly 67 times in the book of John; ~159 times elsewhere in the New Testament. ~226 total.

Synonyms: Believe, trust, rely, lean, ask, turn to, depend, accept, receive, call upon, faith).

___--Underline indicates verses teaching assurance of salvation upon faith in Jesus Christ.

Please See: “Additions to Faith” for a preliminary discussion of reasons to believe in faith alone.

Mt. 9:2, 18:6, (21:25), 32, 27:42; **Mk.** 1:(15), 9:42, 15:32, 16:16-17; **Lk.** 5:20, 7:(47-49), 50, 8:12-13, 18:(17), 22:67, 24:25; **Jn.** 1:7, 12, (16), 50, 2:11, 23, 3:(11), 12, 15-16, 18, (27, 32-33), 36, 4:(10), 39, 41-42, 48, 53, 5:24, 38, 44, 46-47, 6:29-30, 35-36, 40, 47, 64, 69, 7:31, 38-39, 48, 8:24, 30-31, 45-46, 9:35-36, 38, 10:25-26, 37-38, 42, 11:25-27, 42, 45, 48, 12:38-39, 42, 44, 46, (48), 13:19, 14:(1, 10-12, 17), 16:9, 27, 30-31, 17:8, 20-21, 19:35, 20:29, 31; **Ac.** 2:(21, 33, 41), 44, 4:4, 32, 5:14, 8:12-13, (14), 37, 9:(35), 42, 10:43, 45, 11:(1), 21, 13:12, 39, 41, 48, 14:1, (15), 23, 27, 15:5, 7, 9, 11, (19), 16:1, 31, 34, 17:(11), 12, 34, 18:8, 27, 19:2, 4, 18, 20:21, 21:20, 25, 22:(16, 18), 19, 26:18, (20, 27), 28:24; **Rom.** 1:5, 8, 12, 17, 3:22, 25-28, 30-31, 4:5, 9, 11-14, 16, 19-20, 5:1-2, 9:30, 32, 10:6, 8, 11-12, 17, 11:(15), 20, 16:26; **I Cor.** 2:5, 15:14, 17; **II Cor.** 4:13, 10:15; **Gal.** 2:16, (20), 3:2, 5, 7-9, 11-12, 14, 22-26; **Eph.** 1:15, 2:8, 3:12; **Phil.** 3:9; **Col.** 1:4, 2:5, 7, 12; **I Th.** 1:8, 2:10, 13, 3:2, 5-7, 10; **II Th.** 1:3-4, 10, 2:(11), 12-13, 3:2; **I Tim.** 1:2, (4-5), 14, 2:7, 3:(13), 16, 4:(6), 6:2; **II Tim.** 1:5, 12-13, 3:15; **Tit.** 1:1, 6, 15, 3:8, (15); **Phm.** 1:5-6; **Heb.** 4:2-3, 6:1, (18), 10:22, 12:2; **Jas.** (1:3, have to have faith, for it to be tested; 1:7 includes salvation), 2:1,

5; **I Pet.** 1:(1), 5, 8, 21, 2:6-7; **II Pet.** 1:(1), 5; **I Jn.** 3:23, 4:16, 5:1, (4?), 5, (9), 10; **Jude** 1:(5), 20; **Rev.** 2:(13), 19, 13:10, 14:12;

2. REPENTANCE

Specific Repentance Verses

Excerpted from Tom Eckman's **Salvation Marathon and Additions to Faith** (cassettes)

Ac. 2:38 and in Lk. 24:47.

[Ac. 2:41 defines that change of mind as having received his word (i.e., faith). –JM]

“What do you change your mind about? Sin? You could do that and still not change your mind about receiving Christ. It can be two separate things, but he’s calling them to one repentance both in Ac. 2:38 and in Lk. 24:47. What’s he saying to them? Change your mind. About what? The context suggests (i.e., in Ac. 2) prophecies concerning Christ and the person and work of Christ (in Peter’s sermon). That is, repent about who Christ is—what you’re going to do with Christ. That is very different from a change of mind about sin. First, repentance from personal sin does not accomplish the task... you still have to deal with the sin nature and how do you turn from that? Only one way...taking Christ’s righteousness (a separate change of mind). [What’s the repentance about?]. What’s the very last thing he speaks of? “This Jesus, whom you crucified, God has made Him both Savior and Lord.” “Brethren, what shall we do...?” Repent! Change your mind about Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross. Change your mind about who He is. You’ve been sitting there thinking He’s just an insignificant man, who you put to death, and that He didn’t accomplish anything, and that all He was was some political figure. But, no! He rose again, and you need to recognize this and change your mind! Change your mind about what He did. You’ve got wrong thinking about these things. You need to trust Him for your salvation, and you haven’t been—change your mind! The context suggests that this repentance is about Christ. Let’s look at several other basic passages...

Mk. 1:15. Repent and believe seems to talk of two different things. What’s he actually saying? Change your mind and believe in the gospel. If they were believing in any other thing and he says, “change your mind, and believe in the gospel,” what happened when they believed the gospel? They changed their mind! If you are anything other than a Republican, and I say, “repent and become a Republican,” what happens when you change your mind? You’re a Republican! Did you do two separate things? Just one. In changing your mind, you obtained the result. [Ex.: get on the bus and go to Cleveland—Cocoris ill.].

II Pet. 3:9. (“All to come to repentance”). This is God’s desire for every person. If this phrase refers to sin (as opposed to repentance concerning/about Christ), is what God is wanting for all people, something that falls short of salvation (according to those who would separate faith and repentance)? Or is the one repentance God wants everyone to come to a change of mind about Christ? “Obviously,” it is a change of mind about Christ and how you get saved. One more verse...

Heb. 6:1. (“Repentance from dead works, and of faith...”). This verse is often abused and taken out of context. Please note that the book of Hebrews was primarily written to Jewish/Hebrew Christians who had an understanding of Jewish tradition. Here, it’s obviously two separate things. What is he talking about repenting of? What context is the repentance in? From dead works. Is that the same thing as sin? Well, dead works are sin, and even if they are good they are against God. But what is he actually saying? He is speaking to Jewish Christians/believers...”To get saved you had to repent from dead works.” Why? Because they were trusting in those dead works. For example, if I say I’m going to really be good, and live up

to the law, and make it to heaven on my own, why do I need Christ? What he's saying is that you need to repent—change your mind—about the value of those things, and put your faith in Christ instead of yourselves. If I'm putting my faith in myself, how can I put it in Christ? And if I'm self-righteous—if I think I am righteous within myself—why do I need to trust Christ? Obviously he's telling them—especially the Jewish Christians (many of whom were very self-righteous)—you need to repent/change your mind about your dead works, because they are useless before God, and trust Christ/put your faith in Christ.

The idea is that repentance is part of salvation in that the main repentance that must take place is that you have to repent to Christ. It's a repentance about Christ that puts faith in Him. Anytime I put my faith in Christ and I had not previously put my faith in Christ, what have I done? I've changed my mind. I don't really see much justification in saying there's two steps involved, when most of the passages used by those who espouse that view we just refuted through exegesis. Most other verses in the New Testament say simply faith.

[Ac. 3:19] In 4:2, at the same event, it shows that the repentance called for is faith in Christ. – JM]

[Ac. 13:24] Verse 39 shows what action Paul was calling them to do, as with Mk. 1:15; Ac. 19:4. –JM]

Ac. 17:30-31. [Verse 34 shows that proper responders to this call believed. –JM]

This is a well-abused passage. “All everywhere should repent.” Everybody everywhere ought to change their mind. About what? Verse 31 gives us a clue. Why should they change their minds? “Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed.” What are they to change their mind about? Well, how are they going to be judged? They need to recognize that they're going to be judged through a man He has appointed—Jesus Christ. They had better change their mind and see Him for who He is, and they better trust in that man because He's going to be the one who does the judging. Whether or not they have received Him and trusted Him is going to determine how He judges them, and they had better change their mind real quick about who He is, because He's going to be their judge. That is, verse 31 clarifies verse 30, in my opinion.

Ac. 20:20-21. This is an interesting passage. “...Jews and Greeks of repentance” from sin. Did I quote this incorrectly? “Repentance toward God, and faith in ...” Here you are given the context. It's stated. Repentance is toward God. How does a person have repentance toward God? Think about it. “Both to Jews and Greeks.” Repentance toward God is a change of mind which points a person toward God. What are they changing their mind about? I would say, specifically as to the Greeks, that it was a change of mind toward God as being one, or toward monotheism (i.e., God as the one true and sovereign God). What was the problem with the Greeks? See I Th. 1:9. “you turned toward God from idols.” The Greeks had these idols, or pieces of wood, and they thought those idols would save them. They had a bunch of “gods” and thought those gods would save them (or else they were atheists, and said, ‘let's just pursue pleasure all our life, as there is no God’). So what do they need to do? They need to change their mind toward one God. Before they can place their faith in Jesus Christ, they have to believe in who He is, and if He's God, they had better believe in Him who is the one, true God. They had better become/be monotheistic before they place their faith in that one God, and they better change their mind away from polytheism (i.e., a belief in many/multiple gods) or idolatry (i.e., trusting in those idols), and/or atheism (i.e., a belief that there is no God), *toward* God. Now, what was the Jews' problem? How did a Jew “repent,” or change their mind *toward* God? Does the verse say to repent of your sins before you can receive Christ? Repentance toward God, yes. If I'm an atheist, I certainly have to change my mind before I can put faith in Christ—true? You had better at least agree that there is a God, and it might help to do that before you trust in Someone you don't think is out there. “I” believe this verse is speaking of two separate

things, but the first thing it is speaking of has nothing to do with sin, but of repentance toward God, and it results in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ac. 26:20. Question: If repentance is the same thing as “turning,” why does he say “repent and turn (and do deeds appropriate to repentance)?” They need to change their minds, turn to God and perform deeds appropriate to their having changed their minds. What is that change of mind about? We’re not told, here. So, it would be unfair to be dogmatic on this passage. We are not given a clue. It could be any number of things. We need to consider the fact that changing our mind is usually, in a New Testament context, for unbelievers, concerning Jesus Christ. What we change our mind about is the value of Jesus Christ for salvation, or, what we change our mind about is away from anything/something else we trust in for our salvation, and see Christ as the only One we can trust in/the only way that we can get to heaven. In my teaching, a person needs to change their mind about Christ, they need to turn toward God, and then they need to get sanctified. As believers, they need to begin living a holy lifestyle/life and walk with Christ. What Paul did, that’s exactly what I need to do. We need to teach not only justification, but also sanctification.

Mt. 3:2, 8. Who was John the Baptist and why did He come? He came to prepare the way of the Lord, so Christ could come and at least offer (we know that the Old Testament predicted it would be rejected) His kingdom. Christ offered it, though it was rejected by the Jews. Was John the Baptist an Old or New covenant prophet? He was an Old Testament prophet who prepared the way for the new covenant’s coming. Still, he was an old covenant prophet. Here, he says, “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Change your mind, for the kingdom is upon you. What’s he telling them? Knowing he’s an old covenant prophet, and he’s speaking to Israel, and that the new covenant has not yet come, he’s saying, ‘you Jews, change your mind. You’re under a covenant. God wants you to be ready for His coming when Jesus Christ offers you the kingdom, so you’ll be ready to accept it. And what you need for that to happen is a change of mind about the covenant you’re already under. You’re still His covenant people—He hasn’t destroyed that covenant yet.’ So he’s saying to them, ‘change your mind, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Christ is coming. He wants to offer His kingdom to you, but in order for you to be prepared for that offer, you’ve got to go back to your covenant.’ Knowing that the Gospels were primarily translated from the Hebrew, we could say that probably what happened was that the authors translated “shub” as “repent” (“meta noia”). Return! You’re under a covenant. This baptism is a baptism of repentance. What’s that mean? What is a baptism-type/kind of repentance? It’s a baptism that says you’re going to turn from your Hellenism or your Greek ways, or whatever, and go back to your covenant and start observing that covenant again. All your ideas about atheism or polytheism...you need to turn from those things and start obeying your covenant again because you are a covenant people, and you need to return to your covenant.

Lk. 13:3, 5. The same thing is true in this passage. “Unless you repent...” Ask yourself what is the context? Here they are asked whether they think God is going to judge others more than He is going to judge them? No! They need repent also. What is the context? Obviously it is sin, and “repentance” pertains to their sin. Now ask yourself if it is a covenant or non-covenant people he’s talking to? That is, are they already under a covenant, or are they people who haven’t yet entered into a covenant relationship with God? Look at the passage, verse 6 (whose corollary is Rom. 11). The fig tree, in the New Testament, represents Israel. The whole passage is referring to Israel. God’s going to His covenant people as to a fig tree, and He’s looking for fruit on them and He’s not finding any. And if they continue to go and wander away from that covenant that they’re under, God’s going to cut them off and graft in the Gentiles—which is exactly what He did, because they continued to not bear fruit, and continued to be the barren fig tree.

Lk. 24:47. This verse comes toward the end of Christ's ministry. He has risen, and is sending them out and telling them what to do. You can view this passage as the institution of the new covenant, or the beginning of the Church age. We're going to see a real problem here, in verse 46. "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Repentance means a change of mind. A change of mind about what? Here, we're not directly told, but we need to think about it. It is repentance "for" forgiveness of sins. What does the word "for" mean, in this context? In order to get. What do you need to change your mind about in order to get this forgiveness of sins? Is it something you do? Do you have to change your mind about something you are doing? That depends. What brings you forgiveness of sins—is it you or is it the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ. Well then, what do we need to change our minds about, or "repent" about? Jesus Christ. We'll see many ways the word "repent" is used in the New Testament, but I'll say here that the primary usage is that you have to change your mind about Jesus Christ, and receive the forgiveness that He's already accomplished on the cross. You didn't trust Christ before; you didn't see Him as your Savior; you now trust Him as your Savior for the forgiveness of sins, and He gives it. When you trust Him, you'd better bet that that trust is going to accomplish something, because it's in Christ. So, here, it's in a New Testament context (i.e., at the end of His ministry—He's already died and been resurrected), and it is stating something that should be done (i.e., in the future). Now, when was the new covenant fully instituted? When did we really see it take shape, and we saw the Church really begin? At Pentecost.

Categories of Repentance

God causes repentance—Ac. 5:31, 11:18, Rom. 2:4, II Tim. 2:25

God's sorrow leads to repentance—II Cor. 7:9-10

All people need to repent, or face judgment—Mk. 6:12, Lk. 5:32, 15:5, 10, 24:47, Ac. 11:18, 17:30, 20:21, II Pet. 3:9

Lost repenting of specific sins—Rev. 16:11

Lost repenting of sin—Rev. 16:9

Jews needed to repent—Mt. 3:2, 11, 4:17, Mk. 1:4, Lk. 3:3, Ac. 3:19, 5:31, 13:24

Christians needing to repent—Ac. 8:22, II Cor. 12:21, Heb. 6:6, Rev. 2:5, 16, 21-22, 3:3

Principles of Repentance

---**Definition:** Repentance is a change of mind. God repented most of the time in the Old Testament, so blind adherence to the behavioral U-turn definition doesn't always work.

---There is no mention of repentance in the clearest evangelistic New Testament book—John.

---In salvation, you are turning from a state of being in darkness (i.e., a sinner).

---Repentance does not guarantee changed behavior (Mt. 3:8, Lk. 3:8, Ac. 26:20).

---Repentance leads to believing the Gospel (i.e., faith is repentance's result)—Mk. 1:15, Ac. 19:4

---Relying on works, idols or anything but Christ for salvation needs to be repented of (I Th. 1:9, Heb. 6:1)

---You cannot live holy on your own, so a required promise to do so would be hollow, and either make you a hypocrite, or teach that God requires one to lie to Him in order to be saved.

---There is no one to return to if you were not first related to them.

---Jews in covenant relation were more culpable for not repenting.

Conclusion:

Please consider this issue... Since repentance means a change of mind, what could that change of mind be about/concerning? A lot of different things. We've seen just a few New Testament alternatives/options. In a new covenant context, what you mainly see is that

“repentance” is either one of two things: Either repentance about Christ (that is, a change of mind about Christ—who He is and what He did, which results in receiving Him), or it’s a repentance away from something else that a person is trusting in, in order to bring them to see that all they can do is trust Christ.” --Thomas Eckman

3. COMMITMENT

What a great term Lordshippers use for salvation (I say, sarcastically)—“surrender”—as if God is warring with you, and you finally admit defeat, in order to receive a **free gift!**

MINISTRY CALLS OF THE APOSTLES

Mt. 4:19, Mk. 1:17 Call of Peter and Andrew. Christ says ‘Follow Me and I’ll make you evangelistic.’ Mk. 3:14 tells what this call was about—raising up leaders—and Jn. 2:11 tells WHEN these apostles were saved—AFTER this call, very early on (within days), just after Christ’s first sign.

Jn. 1:43 Call of Philip. Christ says, ‘Follow Me.’ As with the references above, we see the apostles were saved—believed—AFTER they responded to this call to ministry leadership.

Mt. 9:9, Mk. 2:14, Lk. 5:27 Call of Matthew/Levi to “Follow Me.”

DISCIPLESHIP CALLS AFTER SALVATION

Mk. 8:34-35, Lk. 9:18-27 To the disciples and the crowd. Same context as verse below. You “save your life” by keeping it for yourself vs. losing it in Christ, by coming after Him, requiring deny self, take up cross and follow (repent, believe and surrender?). Rewards for such lifestyle accrue in the life to come. Opposite lifestyle is to gain the whole material world and forfeit your soul (i.e., live for here and now—money, materialism vs. for God). (vv. 18-27) Context—He had been praying alone, with His disciples. Peter confesses Christ is God (Lk. 9:20), which Christ told him to keep secret. The disciples are ALREADY SAVED (except Judas).

Jn. 12:24-25 Unless a grain of wheat dies (loses it’s life)—Stated late in His ministry, regarding His impending death, just after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Jn. 21:19, 22 Three years into Peter’s salvation Christ tells him to “Follow Me.

DISCIPLE REQUIREMENTS

Mt. 8:18-22, Lk. 9:57-62 A scribe says he’ll follow Christ wherever He went, and Christ deters him with

the non-luxurious nature of those travels—Christ would never discourage salvation or, by default, encourage hell, given all he did to secure it for us; another of the “disciples” asks permission to bury his father too, and Jesus says to “Follow Me,” and let the spiritually dead physically bury cadavers. Summary: Warn that it’s not easy, but encourage it vs. lesser, earthly barriers/matters.

Lk. 10:25-37 Said to a self-righteous, testing Attorney—Inherit eternal life by fully loving God you’re your neighbor (i.e., perfect obedience to the law—impossible, though the man tried to justify himself, till Christ taught the Good Samaritan extent to how far our love must go to get there by works). Somehow, if we perfectly loved God and man we would inherit eternal life? That’s NOT what the law taught, so why would Jesus teach this? He doesn’t. He goes on to more subtly show the attorney he is very imperfect, as the Good Samaritan shows him that every human is his neighbor!?

Lk. 18:22 Christ tells the rich young ruler to follow Him, after he first divests himself of His number one idol—money. v. 18 “good” shows the ruler viewed Christ as “good,” with a works-based mentality. It doesn’t necessarily teach that this guy was one major sin away from moral perfection on his own. It shows him that getting to heaven (salvation) by works is impossible with man.

CALLS TO CHRIST’S PHYSICAL FOLLOWERS

(“Groupies”—saved or lost)

Lk. 14:25-35 Said to large crowds that were following Him (hate family by comparison, and consider the cost; Ex.: king building foundation)—i.e., they were evidencing dedication, but physical (vs. spiritual) following does not save you!? To be Christ’s disciple, you must hate everything else BY COMPASRISON—including your own life (i.e., Christ must be number one in your life). Can one commit to be a disciple—at salvation or later—then wane in that commitment and cease to be a disciple for that time? Yes, you can revert to carnality.

Principles:

1. Christ called His chosen evangelists to full commitment (though it was before they were soon after saved, for all apostles whose calls were recorded).
2. Christ called Peter to follow Him 3 years after his conversion (re-commitment?).
3. Christ cautioned of the high cost of commitment, yet also warned against rejecting it for lesser things. To live for yourself in this life is a waste and a loss of a life, spiritually.
4. Many if not most of Christ’s calls to discipleship came years after conversions, and immediately after He informed the apostles He was going to die. It apparently exhorted their continued faithfulness after He departed.
5. Physical followers of Christ on earth were occasionally called to discipleship, likely to inform them their commitment to accompany Him was not the type of spiritual commitment He was seeking from men.
6. The life of sanctification requires full commitment, but His yoke is easy and His burden light, due to faith.
7. Coming to Christ for salvation appears to be different from coming after Christ in discipleship, just as receiving a gift is different from deciding what to do with it thereafter.
8. Coming to Christ for discipleship requires putting Him above everyone else.
9. Because salvation occurs at a specific moment in time, but discipleship is a daily occurrence, for life, salvation and sanctification cannot be seen to be the same event (though the decision to commit to both can occur simultaneously, as Paul proves).
10. Proof of your discipleship takes time and effort.
11. It is the natural expectation of our new nature for Christians to (eventually if not from the outset) follow Christ.
12. All Christians are positional disciples, though their experience is possible to be quite carnal, at times.
13. Some disciples were no longer walking with Christ, but Jesus did not doubt that they were disciples, but Peter had learned Christ’s words were powerful enough to maintain his commitment. (Jn. 6:66)
14. There are consequences—some very severe—for Christians not walking with God in a disciplined life.
15. Sanctification, in the New Testament, is voluntary, with God offering many incentives, and comes from thankfulness for salvation—not because one promised God they would live it, in order to receive a free gift.

17. Just calling Christ “Lord” does not mean you’re saved or committed. (Mt. 7:15-23)
18. In prophecy, during the Tribulation, preserving your physical life will require enduring in following Christ. (Mt. 10:22, 37-39, Lk. 21:19)

Summary:

God wants all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth. God wants committed Christians, and though discipleship is voluntary, it is not optional for a believer. HOW God teaches us to bring men to a committed lifestyle is not by front-loading the Gospel invitation with false requirements. Grace, experienced, can ultimately only be understood through a true experience of God and His conviction.

Quotations of Experts

When something is stated well, accurately and is truthful, to try to re-phrase it in your own words becomes like trying to re-paint to Mona Lisa or rephrase President Kennedy’s “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. For that reason I simply quote the following:

Excerpts from G. Michael Cocoris’s Evangelism: A Biblical Approach

Introduction.

“Ask three Christian leaders to define repentance and you will probably get three different answers. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer says, ‘The word means a *change of mind*...’ Many evangelists preaching on repentance define it as a change of life. They say something like, ‘Unless you have turned from your evil ways, unless there has been a marked change in your manner of living, you have never truly repented, for repent means to change.’ Now, which leader is correct? What is repentance?” (p. 65).

Repent Definition.

“Repentance is basically a change of mind. *Metanoia*, the Greek word translated ‘repent,’ is a compound made up of two definite Greek words. The first is *meta*, ‘after,’ and the second is *noema*, ‘mind.’ Thus, the two together mean ‘afterthought,’ or ‘change of mind.’ The word describes an inward change of thinking or attitude.”

“When someone changes his mind, there may be emotions—and there may not be. And when someone changes his mind, a change in his course of action is expected. But both of these things are *results* of repentance, and not the nature of repentance. Repentance is *not* being sorry for sin. This is the popular idea of repentance. Some even insist on tears.” “...many do feel that repentance is being sorry for sin, and that is simply not the case. Paul plainly demonstrates that sorrow and repentance are two different things: ‘your sorrow led to repentance’ (II Cor. 7:9). Sorrow may lead to repentance; sorrow may accompany repentance; but sorrow is not repentance. There is another Greek word *metamelomai*, which means ‘regret,’ and that Greek word is never used in a salvation passage. There is an obvious difference between regretting and repenting. In Acts 2 the Jews regretted what they did to Christ and asked, ‘What shall we do?’ (v. 37). It was after their regret that Peter said, ‘Repent’ (v. 38).”

“One other observation: sorrow does not have to precede repentance. Paul says the goodness of God can also lead to repentance (Rom. 2:4). [It says God’s goodness does lead vs. can lead]. D.L. Moody used to say that the inquirer is not to seek sorrow, but the Savior.” (pp. 67-68).

What Repentance is NOT.

“Repentance is not turning from sin. That is another common misunderstanding. One fiery preacher may thunder, ‘Repentance which was the burden of the [John the] Baptist’s message, involves the sense of sorrow, sorrow for sin, and the severance from sin by the grace and power of God. He who repents realizes that he is a sinner, regrets his sin and resolves to forsake it. Remember: he that lacks time to mourn lacks time to mend.’ ‘Turn or burn’ is their message.” [Harsh, unloving, and no grace in that].

“The conclusive evidence that repentance does not mean to be sorry for sin or to turn from sin is this: in the Old Testament, God repents. In the King James Version, the word *repent* occurs forty-six times in the Old Testament. Thirty-seven of these times, God is the one repenting (or not repenting) [Emphasis mine]. If repentance meant sorrow for sin, God would be a sinner.” “The conclusion is clear: Repentance means a change of mind or attitude. It does not include tears or turning. It doesn’t even necessarily deal with sin. (As a matter of fact, ‘Plutarch tells of two murderers, who having spared a child, afterwards ‘repented’ and sought to slay it.’)¹³ If someone changes his mind, a change in behavior should result, but the word *repent* looks at the change of belief, not the change in behavior.” (pp. 68-69).

The Objects of Repentance.

It is commonly assumed that repentance always deals with sin. But again, that is not the case. The word means a change of mind or attitude—period. The matter one changes his mind about is not in or implied by the word. The different view held by the repentant person may concern God or man, fishing or eating, sin or sun-bathing.

What is the object of repentance in the New Testament? There are several.

1. **God** is sometimes the object (Ac. 20:21). If a person has a wrong concept of God, he must repent, that is, change his mind about God. If he believes that God is an idol, he must repent and see that the true and living God is the invisible creator of the universe. If he believes that God is a mean, arbitrary judge, he must repent and see that God is just, yet merciful; He is gracious and loving, as well as righteous.
2. Another object is **Christ**. This one is not so much stated as implied. In Acts 2 Peter preached that the Jews had the wrong view of Christ. They thought of Him as a common criminal, a boastful blasphemer. But Jesus was the sinless sovereign of the universe. He was no mere man, but was the magnificent Messiah. When they heard that message they cried out, ‘What must we do?’ Peter responded, ‘Repent’ (vv. 37-38).
3. Still another object of repentance is **works** (see Heb. 6:1; Rev. 9:20; 16:11, etc.). As a general rule, mankind is of the opinion that works save. ...Each individual is convinced that he is allowed a few miscues. The common concept is ‘If God grades on the curve, I’ll make it.’ God declares that the works of man are unable to save. Our effort is dead works; it has no life or ability to rescue us. So men must repent of their dead works, that is, change their minds about their works.
4. Finally, the Scripture talks about **repenting of sin** (Rev. 9:21). Some sinners take a light view of sin. In their minds, sin is not serious. God’s view is that sin is hideous. It separates humans from Himself. It causes destruction and death. To be saved, then, one must change his mind about his sin and see that it is his problem.

From this brief, simple study, it is obvious that repentance has several objects. In his book, *What the Bible Teaches*, R.A. Torrey said, ‘What the repentance, or change of mind, is about must always be determined by the context.’”¹⁶ (pp. 69-70).

The Marriage of Repentance and Faith.

“In order to thoroughly understand repentance, we must understand its relationship to faith. Frankly, this is a *puzzle* and a problem.” (p. 70). [A bit complex, yet understandable].

Sometimes repentance is the one and only stated requirement for salvation (Ac. 17:30, II Pet. 3:9). In light of the New Testament doctrine of faith, repentance in these passages must include faith. After all, faith involves a change of mind from unbelief to belief (cf.: Ac. 11:17-18). Many times faith is the one and only requirement for salvation. [Many more times!]. This is the case in the gospel of John and in Romans 4. A few times, repentance and faith are listed together (Mk. 1:15, Ac. 20:21, Heb. 6:1). What is one to make of these statements? The conclusion seems to be that repentance and faith are not synonymous. When repentance occurs alone it includes faith. When faith occurs alone it implies repentance. Thus, they cannot be separated, but they ought to be distinguished. In salvation repentance is an inseparable part of, but is not synonymous with faith.” (p. 71).

“The wrong version of repentance goes like this: ‘You are a sinner. Be sorry for your sin. Stop sinning! Turn from your sin.’ The person who hears this will be convicted and will think he must change his life-style.”

“On the other hand, the correct view of repentance is more like this: ‘You are a sinner. You have the wrong view of God and Christ. You have sinned, and you cannot save yourself. Only Christ can help you. Throw yourself upon Him.’ The person who hears this will be convicted of his sin; but he will also be convinced that his works cannot save him, and he will come to Christ for salvation. God then changes the person inside, with a sometimes sudden and sometimes gradual change on the outside.” (p. 72).

Faith Definition.

1. **Recognition of Truth—knowledge of some truth information.** [prerequisite knowledge within the Gospel message, the recognition of which usually occurs, by the Spirit, as they hear that message].
2. **Reception of Truth—Accepting it’s truthfulness.** [prerequisite knowledge within the Gospel message, the recognition of which usually occurs, by the Spirit, as they hear that message].
3. **Reliance on Truth—Trusting/leaning/fully relying upon.**
A truck driver may believe the bridge is safe, but he does not believe in the biblical sense until he drives onto the bridge. ...A person with his clothes on fire may believe that the swimming pool will save him, but he is not saved until he dives into the pool. Faith is acceptance plus reliance.

Simply to know about Christ will not save. To accept the facts about Him will not save. Even to acknowledge that Christ actually died for sin and literally rose from the dead will not save. One must believe *on* Christ, that is, depend on Him, trust Him. Saving faith is not believing a proposition; it is trusting a person. Only when a person trusts Christ, depends on Him who died and arose, is he saved.

Faith is accepting something as true and depending on that something. This assumes knowledge. Thus, faith is the recognition of truth, the reception of truth, and the reliance upon truth.”

Charles Hodge, the famous nineteenth-century Princeton theologian says: That faith, therefore, which is connected with salvation, includes knowledge, that is, a perception of the truth and its qualities; assent, or the persuasion of truth of the object of faith; and trust, or reliance.’ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 29. (pp. 75-76).

Illustration.

Imagine a ship filled with people crossing the Atlantic. In the middle of the ocean there is an explosion. The ship is severely damaged and slowly sinking. Most are dead, and the rest are rushing for the lifeboats. Now suppose one man doesn't know about the lifeboat, so he doesn't get aboard. He doesn't have knowledge, so he is not saved. Suppose another man knows about the lifeboat and believes it will save his life, but he is grief-stricken over seeing his wife killed, so he chooses not to get aboard and dies with his wife. He has knowledge and mental assent, but he is not saved. Others believe the lifeboat will save them, and they get into the boat. They are saved by faith, that is, they have knowledge, mental assent, and trust. However, it is not their faith that saves them—no matter how much they have. It is the boat. Saving faith trusts Christ, and Christ saves." (p. 77).

Lord Definition.

"What must I do to be saved? The simple statement of Scripture is, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31).¹ But if you listen to some saints and some speakers, you get the impression that you must do more than that." (p. 5). Ex.: Make Christ Lord of your life, give/commit your life to Christ. "This kind of preaching of salvation is commonly referred to as Lordship Salvation. Those holding to this position claim that Christ must be Lord for Him to be Savior." (p. 5). Is that true?

Excerpts from Dr. Charles Ryrie's Balancing the Christian Life

The Meaning of Lord.

"But, someone may ask, doesn't Lord mean Master, and doesn't receiving Jesus as Lord mean as Master of one's life? To be sure, Lord does mean Master, but in the New Testament it also means God (Acts 3:22), owner (Luke 19:33), sir (John 4:11), man-made idols (I Cor. 8:5), and even one's husband (I Peter 3:6). When it is used in relation to Jesus in the New Testament, it can have an ordinary meaning of a title of respect (as in John 4), but it must also have had some unusual connotation which caused some to question its validity. In other words, when someone who apparently was no more than an ordinary man from a poor carpenter's family claimed to be God, and when the title Lord, which meant 'Jehovah-God' to the Jewish mind, became attached to this Man Jesus in the preaching of the apostles, then there was division. For further discussion, See: Balancing the Christian Life, pp. 173-176, by Charles C. Ryrie (Moody Bible Institute: Chicago), 1969

"Simply stated the question is this: Must there be a commitment to Christ as Lord of one's life in order to be saved? Those who answer in the affirmative put it like this: 'Those preachers who tell sinners that they may be saved without surrendering to the Lordship of Christ are as erroneous and dangerous as others who insist that salvation is by works.'¹ Or, concerning erroneous ways of presenting the gospel to people, another writer asks: 'Or will it leave them to do is trust Christ as a sin-bearer, not realizing that they must also deny themselves and enthrone Him as their Lord (the error which we might call only-believism)?² Another supporting this same position says, 'I am suggesting, therefore, that it is as unbiblical as it is unrealistic to divorce the Lordship from the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ.'³ In other words, if one does not give over the control of his life to the Lord when he receives Him as Saviour, he cannot be saved. Recently there has been a modification of this position to say that *willingness* to be controlled by the Lord at the time of salvation is all that is required in addition to faith in order to be saved. That is, there must at the time of salvation also be a moment of willingness to commit one's life

absolutely to the Lord even though the practice of a committed life may not follow completely. But in both variations of this viewpoint then lordship of Christ over one's life becomes a condition for salvation along with faith in Him for forgiveness of sins.

The importance of this question cannot be overestimated in relation to both salvation and sanctification. The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them must be a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), and this is a very serious matter. As far as sanctification is concerned, if only committed people are saved people, then where is room for carnal Christians? Or if willingness alone is required at the moment of salvation, to what extent is this willingness necessary? Can, for instance, a man who is convinced in his mind that smoking is wrong (not necessarily for spiritual reasons but simply on medical grounds) not be saved until he is at least willing to give up his smoking? Or, what kind of dedication must be preached to people, if, in order to be saved, they have already dedicated their lives to the Lord? These are very practical questions about a subject that has important ramifications in many areas." Balancing the Christian Life, pp. 169-170, by Charles C. Ryrie (Moody Bible Institute: Chicago), 1969

Slandorous Accusations Against Saviorhooders

Often made by Lordship Salvationists

INSUFFICIENT REQUIREMENTS

- **Sandbagging/2-Step Salvation.** Holding back even more good news, till their spirit can comprehend it, experientially, and focusing solely on the issue of salvation—their need to have their sins forgiven and remove the impending threat of eternal judgment, is NOT an evil Gospel presentation.
Lordshippers allege Saviorhooders teach one can get saved and contemporaneously be committed to stay living in sin thereafter. Though the issue of salvation is NOT what you will do with the gift, once received, a person expressing such a heart attitude evidences he is Not under conviction at that moment. Forgiveness—not (yet) righteousness—is their initial need. Cure their primary problem before you address its symptoms, and with a new heart implanted with which to cure them. 2 step easing you into commitment, and only second step works? No. Conviction does it (Holy Spirit). Finally, is it “two steps” to receive a gift, then use the gift (i.e., decide what you’ll do with it)—to be born, then to live? Is the gift NOT received till it is used, or the life not real until day 2?
- **Discipleship is Optional.** For whom? It is not optional if one is to follow Christ. For believers, discipleship is necessary/essential, but you must first become a believer (or you can do it at the same time, voluntarily/spontaneously, as Paul demonstrates). Discipleship is voluntary, but not optional for believers.
- **Saviorhooders Sugar-Coat the Gospel.** They only present one (positive) side of salvation; privileges while withholding mentioning the responsibilities. Till one has the Spirit within, they cannot understand spiritual thoughts and words. It is enough for them to grasp enough of the Gospel, to, by the Spirit, respond.
- **Saviorhood Lowers God’s Standard.** If we are, I agree our converts are lost. If yours is higher than God’s standard, you have sentenced some people to hell (who were unwilling to meet your standard) and those who were willing could have a pride problem (I chose God) and have a growth that is based in total misunderstanding of grace.
- **Saviorhood Promotes Carnality.** Completely false. EVEN if, as with the thief on the cross and the Ethiopian Eunuch, no follow-up discipling occurs, God is in charge of their lives, and

can be trusted to achieve His purposes. Nevertheless, no Saviorhooder I have ever met teaches to receive Christ and ‘return to your sinful lifestyle. IT JUST DOESN’T HAPPEN, and your glee at striking down a straw man would be embarrassing if so many naive laymen didn’t believe you actually had proof of such beliefs existing in Saviorhooders.

- **Easy Believism.** It is hard, that is impossible to believe apart from the Holy Spirit, but with Him, much “easier” than the alternative—works under the law. Humanly speaking, as Dr. Ryrie has queried, how easy is it to believe on a Person who lived 2,000 years ago and is claimed to be alive, and God?
- **Mere Mental/Intellectual Assent.** No—sincere, ‘with all your heart’ heart faith/reliance upon God, and trusting Christ alone. We both agree intellectual assent won’t save
- **Cheap Grace.** It was costly and expensive to Christ. So valuable, you can’t afford to work for salvation He earned (perfection standard or eternal jail sentence in hell).
- **Eternal Fire Insurance.** It is not just that, but that is certainly the foundational issue to all spiritual growth thereafter. Fire insurance is better than enduring the fire, though it’s not all God has or wants for you/His children. Fire insurance only is bad, but the solution to carnality within the Church is NOT false doctrine.
- **Saviorhood Offers False Assurance.** Saviorhooders offer as false an assurance as Christ and the apostle John offered which is NO FALSE ASSURANCE at all! Because of your faulty theology, you believe someone who has asked Christ to forgive their sins and live within them has not yet earned the right to know that Jesus did come in and eternally seal them with His Spirit. But the Bible tells a different story, and your belief that works confirm to you later that you are saved is the most crumbly of foundations upon which to build a life of sanctification! Your focus is on man and his will, and finding any method possible to ensure people live holy. God in His grace has designed a different system, you need to learn about.
- **Faith is a Commitment.** A commitment to allow God to do all the work of saving you eternally! Lordshippers love to merge a lordship commitment and faith, as if trusting Christ to save you is the same as trusting Him to lead you the rest of your life. In Greek terms, one is punctiliar, the other linear, and though the two are organically connected, never confuse sanctification (a process) with salvation (a point-in-time experience).

EVANGELISM MOTIVES

- **Saviorhood Promotes Spiritual Abandonment.** Excellent topic. Although every convert should be disciplined, ask yourself the following questions, then get back with me on this allegation: Is it right that one person NOT hear the Gospel, if limited resources were assigned to discipleship rather than completing the Great Commission? Would most Christians more easily talk to new believers or lost strangers? Let THEM follow-up our converts, even though that never morally excuses them from needing to evangelize, as well. Until the Church faithfully disciplines all those in her care, they have zero credibility attacking the few threshing oxen who are on the front lines of the war of all wars—evangelizers. God has called us to given ministries, and we are not all Paul’s—who do both things. All Christians, however were called to evangelize. I HAVE disciplined several people, but the great need of our day—unless you’re oblivious—is to recruit more workers in the ripe fields of evangelism.

Jesus taught of the joy and value of finding the one lost sheep as superior to the joy of having 99 safe sheep. I much prefer to have everyone reached, and less saved people with great rewards in heaven for growth IF, with limited resources (due to man’s sinful unwillingness to minister much) it were an either/or choice. How selfish of us to want “quality” for the few over FIRST reaching them ALL. Now, what was it you were complaining about, for I fear you have been convicted of your role in this process, by now!?

- **Notches in Spiritual Belt.** Even if one were selfishly seeking only rewards, and had zero

concern for the lost, their evangelizing in the flesh is preferable to holy-ily doing none (Phil. 1:15-18). Plus, the Bible nowhere says that doing the right things and thereby receiving promised rewards is evil or selfish. The incentives were God's idea.

- **Rambo/Hit-and-Run Evangelism.** Have to harvest the field entirely/thoroughly, before you can use the proceeds to make bread. You want to make bread loaves off a corner of the field, and let the other stalks dry up and be burned. Trust me, you do no better discipling that Saviorhooders—we're all weak at it. Paul DID follow-up with converts, but he also FIRST made sure he could boldly, honestly and with good conscience attest that he was guilty of no lost person's eternal soul not having heard (Ac. 20:26). Not many of us are called to that broad a ministry, especially laymen.

THEOLOGICAL SLOGANIZING

- **"The Great Commandment Precedes Great Commission."** The greatest way to show love to the lost is to evangelize them! Every other deed of serving their earthly needs is vain, if they expire without Jesus. The assumption of this **rhyme theology** (such as has been used by Rev. Jesse Jackson and OJ Simpson's lawyer—"if the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit") is that direct evangelism is wrong or hateful in the way people communicate the Gospel. No Saviorhooder I have ever met evangelizes harshly or judgmentally. The lost are victims of satan, and need God's love and mercy more than anyone else!
- **"If Christ is not Lord of all he is not Lord at all."** More (nursery) **rhyme theology!** A rhyming slogan shows you thought through how to market it, but is zero indication of the merits of its content. If you cared to study your Bible more than sloganizing, you'd see that in the primary Gospel stating the Great Commission, evangelism was addressed by Christ throughout His ministry, and Mt. 4:19 (among other verses; Ex.: Jn. 4:34-36, at the beginning of His ministry)—which comes before Mt. 28:18-20 (post-resurrection), proves that you need to be more intensely obeying II Tim. 2:15 than criticizing or seeking to muzzle the threshing oxen of our world.
- **Christ is Savior and Lord.** Yes, He saves you and He is God (deity). He is Lord of all no matter if a lost person is in total rebellion to that authority. If He is not your personal Lord, as to your commitment to that authority, He is still positionally your Lord. The only issue remaining is does one have to be totally committed to His Lordship in order to be saved, and that question has been adequately answered throughout this article.

PROCEDURAL COMPLAINTS

- **Formulaic Outline and Magic Words of the "Sinner's Prayer."** There are no set words which work. NO Saviorhooder has ever taught that there were. God is looking at the heart, but the main way one expresses what resides therein is through words of prayer, and calling on the name of the Lord is NOT an evil thing, as you try to spin it.

SATANIC SLANDER

- **Saviorhood is a False Gospel.** If everything presented in this article is accurately interpreted and truthful, the severe oweness is on Lordship Salvationists to prove THEIRS is not the false Gospel (as it is).

Bottom line: if you have **never experienced salvation**, the *natural mind* can never comprehend it! (I Cor. 2:14). And if your salvation experience is SO personal you are unwilling to be objective and challenge your theological traditions' assumptions, you will NEVER move past simply parroting someone else's opinions on this most important subject.

Lordship Salvation Proof Texts—Refuted

4 Soils. Only the first person is unsaved. The other 3 “believed,” though the next two are carnal and worldly, the last one being the only “spiritual” seed. There are degrees of discipleship, and everyone decides how intensely he will serve Christ and the quality of work they will offer and be rewarded for (I Cor. 3:10-16).

Treasure Hidden in a Field. For joy in finding the treasure he sells all—NOT as a requirement for finding the treasure. Lordshippers will argue his selling all was required to own it, which is true, but we do not buy salvation, and finding it is enough to have the joy to commit all toward its experiential possession in our lifestyles, if one has ever found it in Christ.

The Lost Coin. Same analysis as the treasure hidden in a field, above.

Prodigal Son. The Father doesn’t even let him complete his pre-planned Lordship Salvation repentance speech, though Lordshippers would absolutely teach that the intention of that speech in its entirety was required for his dad to have so welcomingly received him (even though the father had been looking for and ran to him when he saw him).

Rich, Young Ruler. By his own admission (and Christ’s observation), he was seeking to earn salvation by works of the law (and was morally succeeding quite well). Christ’s point was that no one can earn salvation by works, as some sin will inevitably trip him up (here, a love of money), to which the disciples ask who can be saved? (surprised this man was not capable), to which Christ teaches clearly that salvation is only possible with God—not by man in his own works (and that it’s hard for rich people to be saved).

Calls to Discipleship. Either full commitment is required for salvation or it is not. Please see our thorough, well-researched prior analysis of this question, which should make it clear which side of the fence we’re on.

Repentance Verses. Aren’t there verses where repenting does mean feeling sorry for and turning away from sin or sins? Please see our prior thorough, well-researched analysis of repentance verses.

Paul’s Conversion. If you had a lightning-like blinding light strike you and make you blind and dumb for 3 days, I feel quite sure you’d be willing to do anything the voice told you. However, even Paul himself attributes faith as the basis of his conversion—not surrender. (II Tim. 1:12). Also, his life as a Jew was depicted by radical commitment—he merely needed a new

understanding of the Object for which his efforts were to be committed, in ministry (once saved). **Calling of the Apostles/Disciples.** See the case of Paul as representative. Christ was not just calling these men to salvation, but to leave their professions and families and literally follow Him around in His ministry travels. Have you been called with such a call (at salvation)? Plus, John 2 tells us they were saved AFTER they had responded to Christ’s call to be evangelistic leaders, though His grouping them as apostles, and telling them discipleship requirements came even AFTER that.

Faith and Works. The book of James was written to people who were already saved, and the theme of the book is how to become sanctified as a believer. Chapter two speaks of specific acts of faith—not the general trusting of Christ for forgiveness of all sins—such as if a believer sees a brother in need. This is a sanctificational decision in which one must act upon the faith given in the leading. **See:** Additions to Faith.

Evidence of the Severity of the Dispute

(hopefully non-inflammatory, though true statements)

First and foremost of the evidences is the significant problem of the extent of carnal living within the American church, of which both sides agree. What follows are paraphrased or

directly quoted statements of the opposing sides indicating how seriously they hold their proponent's doctrinal error and effect to be:

On the Seriousness of the Issue

Hodges: It is 'one of the worst distortions of the Bible in our day. (p. 25).

MacArthur: It is the greatest weakness of American evangelical Christianity today. (p. xi).

MacArthur: It is a matter of eternal consequences. (p. xiv).

On the Gospel's Content

Hodges: It is 'a radical re-writing of the gospel.' (p. 20).

MacArthur: It warps and sometimes completely destroys the gospel. (p. xii).

On its Spiritual Origins

Hodges: It is 'Satanic at its core,' and it is 'encouraged by the Enemy of souls.' (Gospel Under

Siege, pp. 6 and 122)

Hodges: It is to have faith in the powerless words of man. (p. 49).

On the Matter of Faith and Requirements for Salvation

MacArthur: It is a tragic error as it teaches that one can become a Christian without becoming a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. (p. xi).

MacArthur: It offers a salvation which involves no spiritual commitment, no turning from sin, no change in lifestyle, and no commitment to the authority of Christ. (p. 22).

MacArthur: It feeds the sinfulness of the human heart by giving the promise of eternal life without surrender to divine authority. (p. 16).

MacArthur: It offers cheap grace. (p. 16).

On Salvation

Hodges: It makes salvation a contract between God and man. (p. 27).

Hodges: It has 'turned the meaning of faith upside down.' (p. 27).

MacArthur: It exalts a faith which it destroys. (p. ix). [it destroys no such thing].

MacArthur: It makes faith a bare assent to the facts of the gospel. (pp. ix and xi). [out and out, absolute LIE].

On Sanctification, Law and Grace

Hodges: It seeks to make Christians obey by challenging them to question their salvation. (GUS, p. 97).

Hodges: It is akin to Pharisaism. (p. 183).

Hodges: Lordship salvation "is a kind of faith/works synthesis which differs only insignificantly from official Roman Catholic dogma." (p. 20).

MacArthur: It divorces the gospel from a transforming commitment to the living Christ. (p. ix).

MacArthur: It separates salvation and discipleship and applies every recorded invitation of Jesus to discipleship and not salvation. (p. 30).

MacArthur: It offers a salvation from hell but not from the bondage of iniquity. (p. 16).

MacArthur: It makes obedience optional in the Christian life. (p. 17).

On its Theology and Bad Effects/Consequences

Hodges: It is as a theology 'a complete disaster.' (p. 27).

Hodges: It is 'a theological Trojan horse.' (p. 27).

MacArthur: It will secure only false conversions. (p. ix).

MacArthur: It produces a false evangelism. (p. 15).

On Assurance of Salvation

Hodges: It destroys the ground of assurance for believers. (p. 48).
Hodges: It is so in error that it cannot possibly give true assurance of salvation to the Christian in his life.’ (GUS, p. 10).
Hodges: It drives its adherents ‘into a psychological shadowland.’ (p. 31).
MacArthur: It offers a false hope. (p. 15).
MacArthur: It promises a false peace to those not truly in God’s family. (p. xi).

On Historical and Biblical Accuracy

Hodges: Its message and doctrine would be unrecognizable by the New Testament writers. (GUS, p. 121).
MacArthur: It is a distinctly different view of salvation than the Biblical one. (p. xiv).

On Hermeneutics and Exegesis (Scriptural Interpretation)

Hodges: It is to handle the Scriptures in a manner which is ‘grotesque distortion.’ (p. 135).
Hodges: It has a resolute blindness which resists obvious conclusions. (p. 148).
Hodges: It ‘clashes with the repeated statements’ of the apostle John. (p. 26).
Hodges: Its discussion of Scripture at points wanders off ‘into a wasteland of obscuring and confusion.’ (p. 169).

“In light of the above statements, who can deny that the chief proponents of the debate consider the issue of Lordship versus non-lordship salvation a serious matter, even involving the very nature of the gospel itself.” (Layman’s Guide, p. 4). “The controversy is important and every Christian of our day needs to be informed on the subject, and needs to take a stand in the controversy. Both authors noted above are correct in one thing concerning the controversy—the nature of the gospel is at stake.” (Layman’s Guide, p. 5).

Note: Excerpts paraphrased from A Layman’s Guide to Lordship Salvation, by Richard P. Belcher, and other sources. Responses to allegations made may exist from respondents, and if they are not listed, it is only for want/lack of this author’s discovering them in print—not that they do not exist or are not possessed by the writers involved. [All MacArthur quotes and paraphrases taken from John MacArthur’s The Gospel According to Jesus; all Hodges quotes and paraphrases from Absolutely Free, unless otherwise indicated, namely The Gospel Under Siege (“GUS”).

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Application: What Have You Learned?

From A.W.A.N.A.S...

“Invitations...must be clearly and precisely conveyed. It is of utmost importance that everyone listening will understand the specifics of the invitation. Above all, the invitation must be biblically-based. ...Frequently heard as conclusions to salvation messages are the following invitations. Some are doctrinally correct, some incorrect. Others are just too confusing to understand.”

Evaluate the following invitations (as theologically true or false):

1. ___ Will you give your heart to Christ?
2. ___ Will you surrender your life to Christ?
3. ___ Will you confess your sins and ask the Lord to forgive you?
4. ___ Will you come to Christ tonight and promise to serve Him from now on?
5. ___ Will you come and “pray through” to Christ?
6. ___ Right now ask Jesus to come into your heart.
7. ___ Will you make your commitment for Christ tonight?
8. ___ Will you make Him Lord of your life?
9. ___ Will you repent of your sins to get saved?
10. ___ Just believe now and allow Jesus to touch you.
11. ___ Are you willing to forsake all your sins to obtain salvation?
12. ___ Will you accept the Lord Jesus as your own personal Savior?
13. ___ Christ died for your sins. Believe it personally. That’s all you need to get saved.
14. ___ You can be saved right now by believing that Christ died for your sins.
15. ___ Will you believe Jesus took your place on the cross?
16. ___ Right now believe that Christ paid the price in full for your sins.

The stated proper answers are numbers 12-16, yet the truth is numbers 13-16 are preparatory information one needs to know (and subconsciously assent to?), but will not, on their own, save you. In fact, not one statement mentions Christ’s resurrection—that is, that he is alive—something I Cor. 15:1-3 says is the Gospel. No answer says trust, necessarily, as believing true facts alone is not the same as relying on Jesus to save you. –J. Meroney.

Select Bibliography

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Grace Evangelical Society literature, Etc.

27B. “Relationship Evangelism” Errors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

God highly values human relationships, and we need to evangelize those we already know and love (Ex.: friends and family). However, as can be seen in the Personal Evangelism Plan section, there are many other ways we relate to people, and people from **every** type of relationship we encounter need to be evangelized! Evangelize everyone you know well immediately, and stop following the world (which only rightly teaches children not to speak to strangers) in agreeing that we are not to speak of religion or politics, lest an argument erupt. **Reach out beyond your own circle of influence**—Paul (and the other apostles) certainly did, for him to have been able to reach as many as he (and the others) did!

INTRODUCTION

This relatively new, **highly popular** philosophy is usually presented as a ‘method’ of evangelizing. By definition, it calls for Christians to relate to lost people by establishing some sort of relationship (beyond initial human rapport) **BEFORE one can share the gospel** with them, usually explained as “earning the right to be heard.” The fallacy of the theory is multi-faceted, primarily centered on the fact that evangelism is speaking a message in the power of God, corroborated by ethical behavior. *You are not* the message, nor your *imperfect* lifestyle (proof positive? Mormon and Jehovah’s witnesses’ good deeds, sometimes surpassing our own, though representing a false Gospel), and Christ earned our right to be heard—He commands us to be witnesses.

The philosophy was created to try to counter the **small numbers of Christians who ever evangelize**, by making it ‘*easier*,’ “*more natural*,’ and more *fun* and interesting to the believer by making them feel if they use their hobbies and job skills to do anything toward a lost person, they can feel like they are participating in the high and noble work of evangelism, even if they never speak the Gospel. It arose in the mid 1980’s (Ex.: Lifestyle Evangelism, by Aldrich) as a knee-jerk pseudo theological reaction to the **embarrassment** felt by many for NOT participating in direct evangelism ministries, such as Evangelism Explosion (and the SBC-versioned CWT program).

Rather than being an *improvement* to any prior efforts, the movement represents a landmark shift in the pace and breadth of evangelism reach, more akin to a **work slow-down** (as if we have all our lives and can take our time reaching every soul, with a self-righteously *alleged* increased focus on quality rather than quantity). They typically accuse people who simply start conversations with lost people about their eternity as “**confrontational**,” though there is no one who actually evangelizes who I have ever met who treats a lost person as evil, and needing a dressing down, but as a victim of satan who needs the words of life—the **good news!** Finally, the model is premised more on an analysis of the business sales process than a close or thorough examination of the word of God.

If one were to sincerely consider the following questions, answering them only from the Bible’s perspective, perhaps God would clear up their *blind obedience* to this doctrine of man, designed less for thorough Great Commission results than to **water down our call** to get more supposed evangelism participants.

Relationship vs. Direct Evangelism: The Crux of the Matter

1. Is an evangelism method which is slow and timid *fully* biblical? If by its *very nature* and society's busy pace of life, that method could **never** reach very many people for Christ per individual believer, and **could not** easily, literally and **completely** fulfill the Great Commission, could it be '*of God*'?
2. Do accusations such as: "Rambo" evangelism, "hit-and-run" evangelism, "gaining notches on one's spiritual belt," spiritual abandonment, "confrontational" evangelism and "in your face, button-holing" evangelism—spoken about those who directly and in loving attitude **SPEAK** the Gospel to lost people—come from God or the **devil**, even though *through* the mouths of "*Christians*?"
3. Does the Bible (or some other source) require and/or encourage Christians to "develop relationships" with lost individuals before the believer "has earned" some "right to be heard," because: "no one cares how much you know before they know how much you care?" Is this the reasoning of this approach found in Scripture? How could Peter and Paul have "developed relationships" with so MANY individuals which constituted their crowd of possibly millions who heard them preach the Gospel? Doing the Great Commission is the ULTIMATE way to fulfill the Great Commandment to love God and man!
4. Is it a **sin** to cater to and appease believers' old sin nature-based **timidity** in and **fear** of evangelism, so as to make them **feel like they are engaged in evangelism** (so as not to "step on their toes" over the historically **deplorably** low percentage of them which ever **speak** the Gospel to anyone; i.e., 5%)? Relational evangelists **hide behind** the *good* concept of being a friend, to hide their **timidity** at sharing the Gospel with strangers! Any "relational evangelism" activity **ultimately becomes direct** evangelism anyway, if ever one moves to the point of obedience in telling their "friend" the Gospel!
5. Is living holy, as a Christian, a *method* of evangelizing? Said another way, can any lost person understand the Gospel message because they see a believer act 'good,' and *hopefully* don't see the times when he falls short? Said another way, are YOU the message, and do your deeds **corroborate** or communicate the **contents** of the Gospel? HOW do good deeds differ from Gandhi's, and how do they **tell of a cross, a sacrifice, an eternal, divine Savior**?
6. Relatedly, **can a person evangelize without SPEAKING**? Is performing charitable deeds toward the lost biblically required, or even '*best*,' **before evangelizing** them? Don't we still have the same **power** within (i.e., the Spirit) as they had in Acts (though the manifestations—miracles and healings—likely have changed)? Maybe we don't experience it like we should.
7. Is it biblical to pass the buck of evangelism off to the professionals (i.e., pastors and Evangelists), or to ignore the injunctions to "**go and tell**" by resorting to **inviting** lost people to "**come and hear**" that same preacher at a church building? God puts no more onus on lost people than to believe. We have encrusted the Gospel with "come, then believe."
8. Does the Bible teach **urgency** and **boldness** in evangelism as virtues or sins, and is
9. **emotional bonding** with lost people, *over time*, "**the power** of God unto salvation?" People say "yes" to sales persons *all the time*, so as **not to hurt their feelings**. How much more so to 'friends,' which the statistic that only 10% of American believers are committed Christians would indicate is often going on here?

Said another way, can you justify, *biblically*, **delaying** telling ANYONE the Gospel, in order to first "get to know them" fairly well? Isn't that ungodly *procrastination*? (what

Scriptures do you cite for any claimed justification?).

10. Even if any “direct Evangelism” advocate/adherent were ever doing evangelism in the flesh—does the Bible teach **carnal evangelism** or no evangelism as the BETTER option? (given that 95% of Christians choose the ‘no evangelism’ lifestyle). (Phil. 1:18)
11. Does the Bible teach **direct** evangelism, or a subtle, ‘back-door,’ sophisticated, schmoozey type of “**befriending**”—with evangelism as the “**HIDDEN AGENDA** you MAY eventually get to?” Bringing up politics and religion in conversation can ruin social relationships, so you may risk losing this “friend” by **doing** evangelism.
12. Why do the **majority** of American churches employ this method **near their building**, but if they evangelize **anywhere else** (Ex.: **even same-city evangelism**), direct methods are OK? Certainly *cultural differences* can’t validly be the excuse (as with foreign mission trips). Could it be they are more concerned with gaining church members, and **assume** people don’t join their church after being evangelized *directly*?
13. **REAL relationships** start *naturally* (i.e., are not contrived), or when someone has moved or feels lonely, and sets out to *fill that need*. How many of your friends did you specifically and consciously set out and choose to be your friend? Relationships take time and **effort** (despite “friend” labels on Facebook), and with *busy lives*, are you really committing to be a ‘friend’ in the **biblical sense of that word?** (Pv. 17:17, Ecc. 4:12, Amos 3:3, I Cor. 15:33)

12 ISSUES FOR RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM ADHERENTS TO CONSIDER

1. **Evangelism in a Nutshell**. If God were to come to you today, put a gun to your head and say/command—“Go evangelize!,” what would you (immediately) **do**? Move your feet and open your mouth to tell someone the Gospel message! I assure you that you would **NOT** go find anyone to “build a relationship” with over time. Remember, the gun *is* to your head in this hypothetical—He’s the Holy Spirit, “evangelism” was asked/called for, and anyone who fears God would NOT be so foolish as to disobey, under this fact scenario.
2. **Tortoise-Like Pace/Non-Urgency**. If the person you are “*leveraging*” toward the Gospel (i.e., the prospect/new ‘friend,’ or evangelism ‘prospect’) **DIES** before you get to the day you would share the Gospel with him or her, MIGHT you consider using a better method? Who put molasses in our Great Commission glasses?
3. **Small Quantity Reached**. How can the relational method square with Scripture, which says both that a man of many friends comes to ruin (Pv. 18:24), and to let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you? (Pv. 25:17). The relationship method can **NEVER reach MANY people, which is contrary to Scripture** (and the Great Commission). In our busy American lives, and with most people already having an *adequate* number of friends, the time and effort required to build a decent friendship—as important as that is IF you are inclined to have them as friends “naturally” (that is, because you like them and need or want an additional friend)—does not allow a believer to reach more than PERHAPS 15 people in his/her lifetime, or so (unless you **re-define** what it means to be a biblical “FRIEND”). Perhaps the idea comes from the sales or networking disciplines.
4. **Not Used in the New Testament**. Do you really think there is any possibility that Peter, Paul and the rest of the limited number of Christians who turned the world upside down in the first century could have employed the relationship evangelism method, given that likely

millions of people heard the Gospel through their mouths in so many places in so little time?
Can you IMAGINE Paul using such a slow method, even on his **worst** day?

5. **Not Taught in Scripture.** Can you show me in Scripture, direct, clear and specific examples of the relationship evangelism method being used by anyone? It's NOT biblical, not found in Scripture, certainly is not supposed to be the main/#1 or even a **major** evangelism method, and until one has tried the methods God has revealed that **He** leads believers to use—and proven that they fail—one has no right trying to improve on God's revealed methods, and try to *out-think* or “help” God in our attempted wisdom (and knowledge of our so very unique “culture”).
6. **Hidden Agenda/Non-Transparency.** If your “friend,” over a long period of time, absolutely hardens his heart against receiving the Gospel, and tells you he is resolute against even talking about it, and never appears to *lessen his stance* no matter how kind you are to him during the process, **would you STILL continue to pursue the friendship?** Relational evangelism is a friendship with an agenda and strings attached, and is practically *manipulating* people with “friendship” to get something at the end of the process—though the thing sought to be obtained **IS** noble (and is for the “friend's” eternal benefit, not for the Christian's own edification). Paul was “**straightforward**” about the truth of the Gospel and we should be also. (**Gal. 2:14**),
7. **Timid vs. Biblically Bold.** How is relationship evangelism **urgent** or **bold**—two principles of BIBLICAL evangelism? (**Eph. 6:19-20; Lk. 12:35-40**). Contrariwise, it can cover for our timidity and fear (**II Tim. 1:7**) or shame of the Gospel (**II Tim. 1:8, Rom. 1:16**), which would constitute sinful attitudes. The method clearly does not take seriously or literally the fact that Jesus could return **any day**, and that people's last day on earth is *never known*, and could occur at **any time**, or the huge number of lost required to be reached by the small number who evangelize. Better to err on the side of obedience to God, than presumption upon God's delaying Christ's coming or that lost person's demise (**II Pet. 3:9**).
8. **Never Reprove Rejecters/Political-Correctness.** Rather than EVER shaking the dust off our feet (**Mt. 10:14, Mk. 6:11, Lk. 9:5, Ac. 13:51**) at willful Gospel rejecters, the “relationship evangelist” would NEVER be so politically incorrect, offensive or **BIBLICAL**, as they try to supersede that COMMANDMENT by “**schmoozing**” or socializing people into liking the evangelizer, through repeated social interaction, even when faced with an otherwise “pearls before swine” situation (**Mt. 7:6**). By trying to “out-smart” God, relationship evangelists believe they have circumvented ever experiencing such a “swine” encounter or any need to ever shake the dust off their feet, because we're going to “**love them into the kingdom.**” The **best way** to show love to a lost stranger is to lovingly **evangelize** him or her.
9. **Deeds Don't Tell Gospel Content and Aren't Biblically Clear.** No matter how exposed lost people are to your ‘*behavioral testimony*,’ **at best** they will see some good deeds and some sins. What sort of message are those deeds communicating, apart from the Gospel itself being spoken? **Gandhi's life might have been better lived than some believers', and his 'life's message' leads people to hell.** The Bible NEVER says that our behavior or WE ourselves are the message—our message is Jesus Christ, corroborated by our ethical behavior **for Him** (**II Cor. 6:3**), and seen by the world. NEVER is evangelism a matter of communicating by deeds or communicating anything but the **Gospel message**. As Dr. Roy Fish has stated (paraphrased) ‘it would be the height of *self-righteousness* to believe that

our deeds are so good that they can present the Gospel to people *without our having to speak* the message.’ YOU don’t “*attract*” lost people to Christ—God draws them.

10. **Can ‘Never’ COMPLETE the Great Commission.** We are told by relational evangelists that their method constitutes being ‘wise as serpents,’ becoming ‘all things to all men,’ and that “the Great Commandment precedes the Great Commission,” but HOW could such a method be biblical, which by its very nature could NEVER **complete** the Great Commission, is not implementable at the PACE of *biblical* evangelism, and expends so much time and energy for one valuable soul (**at the expense of others**) that it can NEVER **literally fulfill** or seriously attempt to **COMPLETE the Great Commission?** If something conflicts with biblical principles, it is not *biblically* “**wise**.” Finally, if one would but read the same Book they make a bold claim to asserting regarding both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, **Christ commissioned His men to DO evangelism well before teaching them about the Great Commandments!** The Great Commission was NOT Christ’s first mentioning of the subject of evangelism. (See: **Mt. 4:19** and/or **Mt. 10:5-23** and/or **Mt. 13:3-9** and/or **Mt. 19:29/Mk. 10:29-30** chronologically preceding Mt. 22:37, which *does* in fact chronologically precede **Mt. 28:18-20**). It was the ULTIMATE act of love for Christ to die for sinners, just as it is an ultimate act of love for us to TELL them about Him! Apathy or hatred procrastinates and delays giving such a *glorious* message. If that message is **true** and **beneficial**, why hide and disguise and delay lost people’s experience of it?
11. **Ambassadors Authorized to SPEAK.** We are both **Ambassadors** to men on behalf of God (II Cor. 5:20), and **heralds/messengers**, or town crier-like **speakers** for the Gospel. What herald, commissioned by the King of the universe, would take his *marching orders* to deliver the King’s edict, in love, to **every citizen** AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (before judgment comes, or Christ returns, applying this analogy to real life), and then turn around and, knowing he is under orders to tell and speak, conduct opinion polls concerning how the citizenry likes to hear and receive messages before they IMPLEMENT their job description on behalf of the King? **The Gospel is NOT 100% analogous to sales**, we are NOT to be *peddlers* or *men-pleasers* (II Cor. 2:17; Gal. 1:10), and EVEN if our presenting the *good news* of Jesus Christ “**turns off**” anyone, **they** are held accountable before God for having been offered the opportunity to hear it, and the **evangelizer is NOT responsible for that lost person’s poor rejecting decision** (unless, of course, the evangelizer spoke the Gospel NOT from love, or morally—vs. emotionally, or spiritually—offensively, II Cor. 6:3, or the WRONG Gospel). **NOWHERE in Scripture** are we taught that we have to “**earn the right to be heard!**” CHRIST earned that right, and we are *commissioned* by the King of the world and given His power and authority to **SPEAK** on His behalf and **get the job DONE**, and His last words to us were **NOT** to **make friends** of all the nations, but **DISCIPLES**—which BEGINS with **EVANGELISM**. We are expected to be hated for being believers, and you can’t avoid that *discomfort* by schmoozing someone into salvation! (**Mt. 28:18-20, Mt. 10:22, etc.**)
12. **Emotional Bonds Relied on Due to Absence of Holy Spirit POWER.** The relational method relies (more) on the *psychological influence* of friendship, and soul/emotional bonding, than on the power of the Gospel by the power of the Spirit using God’s Word both to prepare and convict a lost person’s heart. That’s a soul decision, not a spiritual one necessarily. (**Rom. 1:16, Jn. 1:12-13**) Cults “love on people” to get them into their group. It’s a message, but not just information dissemination.

Disclaimers:

Am I saying no other methods should be used but **direct** evangelism? Be as *creative* as you want AFTER you have reached **ALL** people, but still you would need a *thorough threshing/harvesting* every three years or so to *objectify* what work still needs to be done.

If you've read our Personal Evangelism Plan, after you have witnessed to *everyone* you already know, you're eventually going to have to *trust God* and have biblical courage enough to **talk to strangers**. There can be *rejection* and many people have *fears*, but relational evangelism's attempts to **eliminate** these experiences does not teach biblical faith and courage. They're not rejecting you, but Christ. And God may have set a *divine appointment* for '**ripe, low-hanging fruit**' (*hearts prepared* to receive you), but **you'll never know how few negative reactions you'll encounter** or how it's not like climbing Mount Everest until you **do it**.

On Evangelism Explosion

In the interest of full disclosure, this author disagrees with Evangelism Explosion ever having presented the Gospel as a survey (many of the first questions being a ruse to warm up the guest, plus the results were rarely tallied, as surveys do, which is deceptive), and agrees that requiring a specific outline to be memorized (or courses of knowledge being required, as with passing 'certification') is biblically unfounded as requirements. Beyond these concerns, that program (and those like it) generated the **greatest direct layman involvement in evangelism** that God's church (and a lost, dying world) has witnessed in centuries, and millions will be eternally grateful for their participation, and that of its beloved founder (God rest his soul). I am *saddened* that EE practitioners have been so **slandered** that they have virtually gone into the woodworks and may never rise to their *proper church prominence* again—just **faithfully** and more quietly doing the work of God, while being banished to the **off-prime hour** class times (Ex.: Sunday or Wednesday nights) for the supposedly spiritually elite or only those who are "interested" (vs. training in direct evangelism of strangers for every church member, whether by EE, other, or especially the **Bible itself**).

RELATED ISSUES:

ATTRACTION & INVITATIONAL EVANGELISM

The American Church having all but abandoned direct, loving evangelism, this new fad has arisen which teaches that if Christians are "salt and light," lost people will see that and may show interest in the lifestyle or ask them questions about their faith, thus, supposedly, constituting an 'opening of the door' to a gospel conversation. Or, a church engages in moral secular activities to "attract" the lost. How can this strategy be fully biblical when it can never document literal fulfillment of the Great Commission?

The Bible teaches "go and tell," not come and hear (and Christ trumps culture—despite the oft used "Fuller Brush salesman argument of it being out-of-date), and the only instances where the lost were invited to come hear the Gospel from someone else was when the inviter did not fully know the message (Cornelius, Ac. 10), the Message was here on earth, in person (Andrew), or when the evangelist had so saturated the world with the Gospel that his fame and older age (years after having done so much direct evangelism) lended itself to lost flocking to where he resided (Paul, Ac. 28:30-31).

Finally, some argue that the verse about a wife winning her husband without a word proves this theory (I Pet. 3:1-2), but **who in their right mind** would believe that that couple never discussed her being a Christian (ex.: during courtship or the earlier marriage) sometime before she is instructed to **corroborate** that claim in convincing ways toward her lost husband?

It is the height of arrogance to think that your deeds are so stupendous that as a method of evangelism, you will wait for lost people to initiate a conversation with you about why they are so exceptional. And even if your behavior exceeds that of the typical lost (and especially moral Mormons), **no deeds have ever clearly communicated a cross, a sacrifice, a divine Savior risen from the dead, or the requirement that they respond in faith.** Nothing short of speaking the Gospel with someone is true evangelism (even praying for people's salvation), unless one tries and the other party refuses to let you proceed further. Christians are to be salt and light in our world—an ethical injunction especially relevant to social change—but all of our good deeds are merely corroboration of the message we claim to believe, and are done NOT to impress the lost but to **please our Father**, out of gratitude for all he has given us with that great salvation.

SEEKER-SENSITIVE CHURCHES

This author is quite pleased that many churches have undertaken a modernization—telescreens (vs. just hymnals), modern “spiritual music” (vs. mainly hymns), business casual attire (vs. only suits and robes), and a number of other refinements. However, the philosophy prevalent in many American churches—known as the “seeker-friendly church” concept—has corrupted what the Bible teaches that the Church is and is to be—a place for believers to gather, praise and worship God and be mutually edified by fellowship and service/ministry. Instead—and mainly because so many churches have abandoned God's number one evangelism method, which is speaking directly to lost persons where they may be found—this philosophy views the church as the place where evangelism is to principally take place, by the mouths of professionals, so through laymen inviting the lost to church, or the church “attracting” them through meeting social or entertainment needs and wants, they get the chance to (hopefully) share Christ with them.

It might prove informative to the advocates of this philosophy to read that no one seeks God, to note that attending a religious gathering is contrary to the lost's only spiritual nature, to understand that the clergy's job is not to do the laymen's job, but to teach them to do the work of ministry, and to realize that having lost people drop by a church service was somewhat unusual vs. expected and planned for (Jas. 2:2, “if” vs. “when,” I Cor. 14:23, “if”).

MEGA CHURCHES

The first two churches were mega churches (Ac. 2, 4), so God is not opposed to large congregations. However, do you believe a church could become a mega church very often if they were committed to and had expectations that every member be evangelistic, have a daily Quiet Time, memorize Scripture, be disciplined, know doctrine, use their spiritual gift in ministry and be totally sold out to Christ? What compromises, and what motives (i.e., money) have caused this growing trend, and does anyone in their right mind believe the budget for the first two churches, or the salaries of its leaders, ever reached the amounts spent ON OURSELVES, as is found in America today (with some ministers so-called “earning” a million dollars a year, with no issue raised as to love of money in the heart, or how a lot of that money should have gone to evangelism and the needy poor).

Instead of being used as a huge boon to Great Commission completion, with all the thousands of members being trained and motivated to become evangelistic, too many mega churches raise millions of dollars to pay staff and entertain the crowd, pushing a required “tithe”

and barely if ever using money donated (in any impactful/significant percentages) to help the poor—especially if they are not members of our church. Can you see the self-centeredness of this use of funds, and the sick mutually beneficial relationship between prosperous ministers and entertained congregations, with neither strongly pushing the other to change to system, or especially to evangelize?

27C. Calvinism and Arminianism Errors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This author makes the *unusual* decision to place the application of this lesson before even addressing the subject, because it's application is **so much more important** than the more "heady" analysis which will follow. A discussion of Calvinism is in these materials because a wrong view of **only God** causing man's salvation, or **only man** (though his will) securing it, is a misrepresentation of Scripture, which has direct influence on proper evangelism and evangelism results.

As is often said, "it takes two to tango," and any marriage is truly a mutual decision of two parties, but the distinction in salvation is that the two are NOT co-equals—we are mere bums in the street being offered an eternal wedding feast by the King of the universe! Nor does one decision occur simultaneous with the other. God must call, we must respond (under His continued call, or conviction), and He seals us eternally upon that decision of faith.

Arminians. Arminians need to rely on God's Spirit when they evangelize, and know that only with His conviction will a true spiritual response be elicited. Too much emphasis of the role of the will of man in salvation takes the rightful focus off Christ and His great work, and makes the Gospel anthro-centric (man-centered).

Calvinists. Calvinists, on the other hand, need to recognize the MANY verses giving Christians reasons to evangelize, and showing how effective word choices, convincing biblical arguments, and a deep, sincere desire that everyone reached receive the Gospel do have an influence in the process, and that evangelism is not mere perfunctory obedience with no real effect. They also need to rid themselves of the heresy of teaching that God chose some (which is true), and therefore all those He did not choose could never be saved and are damned to hell by God's choice, totally apart from any consenting involvement of their will in response to salvation. That is, God has destined all Christ rejecters to hell, but no one is a Christ rejecter by force or "decree," as if they have zero say in the matter. As Paul admonished the rejecting Jewish nation, you have judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, so we will go to the Gentiles, for they will listen. (Ac. 13:46, paraphrased)

INTRODUCTION

A church staff member once opened a Bible Fellowship class with the question, "Did you choose God, or did God choose you?" Beware—it's false choice and a *loaded question* (but not to a Calvinist). Dr. D. James Kennedy rightly said, **"Those who go to hell have no one to blame but themselves. Those who go to heaven have no one to praise but Jesus Christ."**

God didn't choose you because He knew you'd believe (as if His choice was based on something good within you—when there is nothing but sin for us to offer), nor did He force you to get saved without requiring you to believe. He chose to save everyone who would believe, and any who have believed were sovereignly allowed and enabled so to do, by His Spirit. He chose you because of His love, mercy, kindness and grace.

No one can so no one will 'come to Christ' unless God draws/calls them (i.e., heart prepared beforehand and conviction through the Gospel message). Once under conviction, God offers a limited window of opportunity during which men are enabled to respond in faith. No one knows how long that opportunity will be allowed, and it could vary per person and their

hardening responses, but once it has vanished no salvation is possible (and even if decisions were to be made, they would be unspiritual and therefore ineffective toward securing salvation—Jn. 1:13).

The believer's responsibility is to present the Gospel accurately and with God's power, trusting Him for the results (having prayed beforehand that God would prepare them for the encounter). Man's skills at presenting the Gospel can be improved, and some are more skilled and gifted, but practice makes perfect, and training can help people not make blatant verbal mistakes which can interfere with man's responding to God's calling.

Does God specifically call every person? In some way or the other (i.e., where no Christians ever evangelize them, other methods must be used), I believe the answer, consistent with God's character and nature, is "yes." This does not mean He has to, is obligated to do so toward anyone, or cannot do whatever He chooses. Plus, the ability of lost people to properly respond to God is totally subject to God's sovereign call—without which he stands no hope.

Calvinism and Arminianism: The Crux of the Matter

1. Does God specifically call every human being to salvation in Jesus Christ? If so, and not all respond, is His call ineffective and weak, even though stemming from an all-powerful God?
2. Does God calling someone to salvation *guarantee* they will positively respond in faith? Does the Bible teach that God has a general and specific salvation call, the former to the "non-elect" and the latter to the "elect?"
3. Is man's faith response to the Gospel "free willed," forced, or **free willed if under the (sovereign) conviction of the Holy Spirit?**
4. Is faith something God gives to man (through the Scriptures) or man works up within his flesh and will? Can a totally depraved human make any spiritual (as opposed to simply moral) choice *in and of himself?* Is there any "good" in lost people, by God's definition of "good?"
5. Is God sovereign in the area of salvation, or can man dictate how God must act toward him? Did you initiate salvation and "choose God" or did He initiate your salvation and choose you, or were there **TWO CHOICES** made?
6. Does man's choosing under the Spirit's wooing/conviction make salvation "of" man, by his will's doing, or a work from man's ethical initiation? Is man's will involved in the miracle of salvation *at all*, or, or does God **force** salvation on people without requiring their responding in faith? If God causes one's salvation, without forcing it, and man's will is involved, does that concept confuse you too biblically?
7. Is evangelism truly an (eternally) life-changing activity for those whom Christians minister the Gospel to, or is it performed *perfunctorily*—simply and **solely** to be obedient to God?
8. Does God **make** anyone go to hell (or heaven, for that matter) without their having any say in the matter? Does God damn some people to hell with their never having any chance or opportunity to not go there?
9. Did Christ die for ALL men or just for some? If He died for all, but not all go to heaven, does this make His death to no avail or ineffective?
10. Does requiring men to respond to the Gospel, by faith, contradict the verses that speak of

“the elect” being “*chosen from the foundation of the world*” (in Christ)?

CALVINISM VS. ARMINIANISM: IS EITHER VIEW TRUE?

Calvinism (T.U.L.I.P.)

Total Depravity. Man is a sinner, and can't save himself (Yes)

Unconditional Election. God decided in eternity past to save just some select people by His sovereign choice (No) (Yes, if those people were all who'd believe once He enabled them to)

Limited Atonement. Christ's death was only for select people (No)

Irresistible Grace. Subjective call cannot be resisted (No)

Perseverance of the Saints. All saved are saved forever (Yes)

Arminianism (F.C.U.R.F.)

Free will. (No—you can't choose God by your own initiative)

Conditional Election. God didn't choose you pre-knowing you'd believe. (No—He chose that anyone who'd believe would get saved, and knew that wouldn't be all, and that they could only believe if He called, specifically; Chosen means He specifically called, you responded and He sealed. Nothing short of all 3 steps.

General (or “Universal”) Atonement. Cross didn't secure anyone's salvation (without faith) (Yes)

Resistible Grace. (effectually) (Yes—No NT evidence whether he specifically calls everyone)

Falling From Grace. (i.e., lose salvation) (No)

IN DEFENSE OF COMPATIBILISM

Traditional 5-Point Calvinism (“T.U.L.I.P.”)

(“Traditional” beliefs presented do not necessarily fully represent the views of their named founders, but many adherents)

Total Depravity of Man: Man is a sinner, completely unable to save himself, even by exercising ‘saving faith.’ There is no good or meritorious thing within man that he can offer God at/for salvation.

Unconditional Election: In eternity past, God chose to save certain individuals, solely based on His sovereign choice/will.

Limited (or “Particular”) Atonement: Christ's death was intended to save the elect only, and secured their salvation.

Irresistible (or “Efficacious”) Grace: In addition to the general, outward call to salvation made to everyone, the Holy Spirit extends a special, specific inner call to the elect, which inevitably brings them to salvation.

Perseverance of the Saints (or “Eternal Security”): All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved.

Traditional 5-Point Arminianism

Free Will: Man suffered greatly as a result of the Fall, but God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so in such a way as not to interfere with man's freedom.

Conditional Election: God's choice of certain individuals was based on His foreseeing that they would respond to His call.

General (or "Universal") Atonement: Christ's redeeming work on the cross made it possible for everyone to be saved, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone (i.e., apart from their personal faith response).

Resistible Grace (i.e., effectually): The Spirit inwardly calls all those who are outwardly called by the gospel invitation. God has done and does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation.

Falling From Grace (i.e., lose salvation): Those who believe (i.e., are truly saved) can lose their salvation by failing to maintain/keep up that faith, or by some level/extent of serious, continued lifestyle of sinning/sinfulness.

Paraphrased from The Doctrine of Salvation, p. 9, by Gary D. Long, Copyright 1978, G.A.M. Printers, Sterling, VA.).

A Proposed Refinement and Alternative View—"Compatibalism"

*Total Depravity of Man: Man is totally sinful, and cannot save himself. Even "saving" faith does not intrinsically, by nature, reside within man. However, if God chooses to specifically, personally convict a person toward salvation, under that gracious, loving and powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, God thereby enables (but does not guarantee) man to exercise the faith which originated in God.

*Conditional Election: God has graciously and legitimately offered salvation through Christ to all who, in faith, trust His Son for salvation/as their Savior. I reject the beliefs that such "saving faith" is a work of man he produces of himself, or that God so elected some that their will is not involved, though it is in a minor way, energized totally by and all glory going to God/the Spirit.

*General Atonement: Christ died for the sins of all men. Salvation is a potentiality for all, but reality only for those who personally appropriate it. The benefit of Christ's work on the cross only helps believers (i.e., since the time of the cross, believers in Christ are "the elect"), because one who does not take advantage of God's gracious offer can never receive the benefits of that great offer. I am not saying that those who believe do so because they were chosen/elected to do so.

*Resistible Grace: Though I would hope, and consider it "natural" (i.e., expected) that a person who hears and understands the good news ("gospel") message, and is under the Spirit's conviction, would (choose to) respond, I tentatively believe Scripture is not perfectly clear as to when rejecters in the Bible were under or not under such a specific call, so it is certainly possible that men can reject the call of God.

*Perseverance of the Saints: Once saved, always saved, and being sanctified and guaranteed to be glorified" (that is, 3 tenses of salvation all resident in the one gift of salvation). At the same time, *as necessary*, warning Christians to test themselves to ensure they are saved, and warning wayward believers of the dangers of living a life without the fear of God before their eyes.

FURTHER CLARIFYING ASPECTS TO COMPATIBALISM CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

*Total Depravity of Man: Man is totally sinful, and cannot save himself.

- There is no deed man can perform to merit God’s saving grace.
- Man cannot seek God, therefore...
- Man will not seek God.
- These facts pertain to every man ever born—except Christ.
- Man also will not choose God on his own—that is, own initiative or coming up with the concept himself.

Man does not initiate the salvation “transaction,” and has nothing to offer God, either as a work, or a moral or an asset to use as leverage to trade or barter with to get salvation—it is a free gift of God’s grace, though faith. God is not obligated to or beholden to our wills to respond to us—we are the creature—however, He has promised to save all who (will) believe—and we must. Secularly (i.e., psychologically and physically—NOT spiritually) our wills are somewhat “free” (within constraints of God-ordained government, societal morays of morality, psychologically felt “goodness”—which is of no value before God toward merit/credit in heaven—and the Spirit’s general restraining presence in this world. Spiritually, no man can make a decision “for” God, unless and until God sovereignly and specifically and initiatoryly allows him to, at which time, or at least before such time has passed, he must do (that is, believe), in order to be saved. Salvation, therefore, is the first spiritual decision (and even then, of a reactionary/responsive vs. initiatory type) any man has or could ever make—and his ability to and reasons for so doing are totally and legitimately creditable only to God (not just for the sake of trying to be humble).

There should be no intrinsic pride problem associated with this view, as the true recipient of that favor from God will know within himself that the faith was not of his own doing (I Cor. 1:30, 4:7)—he will simply be thankful, and hopefully live a life which shows his gratitude, through moral living.

If one ends up in hell, it is totally his fault (of course, with action and influence of the evil one influencing that decision), but if one goes to heaven, it is totally credited and attributable solely to God. If you understand this concept, especially from Bible-based personal experience—information without application never saved anyone—I would conclude that you are on the right-track in your thinking concerning the concepts of the sovereignty of God and the role of man’s will in salvation.

*General Atonement: As defined by the “Alternative View,” this term does not mean that all men will be saved (i.e., Universalism), because personal appropriation of that salvific potentiality is required (of course, as the Holy Spirit convicts, vs. on our own or in ourselves). Though Christ died for all humans, His sacrificial death is especially relevant and beneficial to, and only personally beneficial believers in Christ. Why? Because they are the only ones who personally receive and experience the offer and it’s blessings/benefits. It would mean very little for a cancer patient that a given scientist had found a cure for cancer, if they never used the breakthrough drug themselves. The cure has been provided (better, discovered) for them, but that fact does not help them until applied to their life situation.

Christ’s heart, which led Him to die for men, was not limited in it’s love, to just a few “elect” people. Though many, possibly the historical majority, will go to hell (Mt. 7:13-14), it is not because Christ has not died for them. He agonized over man’s sin and the calamity it has

caused all mankind. However, His death is not effective for or impactful to all men, not because they were not selected for salvation way in the past, but because they have not done the one thing He chose to require them to do (once and if He enables them). And even that “act”—faith—is not a human act of will power or inner goodness, or any sort of meritorious good work. Faith is the one “act” in life that is, indeed and in fact, a “non-deed,” for it is the relying of man upon Him to do all the saving work for him, not them doing anything themselves, or having any self-reliance. And, as I have said before, and will not feel bound to repeat every time I reference faith, faith itself is given from God (Ex.: “I have faith to believe so and so)—But one must believe, and cannot be saved if they do not.

That does not mean, as Calvinists may be quick to attack, that “our” faith saves us—Christ saved us, by grace, through faith, and God is not a weak Party limited by or needily waiting for our response, as if our response is something He does not want, did not allow and promise and provide for us to have, or that He has any man-dependent needs, such as fellowship with man. That having been said, the opposite is also true, and such Calvinists would do well to equally acknowledge that God is no prideful ego-maniac, or human-dependently needy Party craving (though deserving, desiring and worthy of) our praise, so that for Him to have chosen the plan to involve man in salvation is no affront to anything within His character—either His power, dignity, sovereignty or freedom of decision. God is certainly totally deserving of and will someday receive all the glory man can give, but I think a more accurate understanding of God’s revealed truth (the Bible) will demonstrate that man being involved in salvation (vs. waking up one day, having been saved, as if he caught a cold overnight, totally with his non-involvement) is not in tension for God, or contrary to but fully in support of the awesome plan He—not we—has designed for His creatures (Rom. 11:33-36)

*Conditional Election: I would not teach this to lost people, but even “saving faith” is not of/from/originated in or by man, though, if the Spirit illumines and opens his heart to believe (better, gives him faith to believe/convicts Him, through the gospel), he is then and only at that point able and empowered to believe—and he must/must believe/must do so, or he will not be saved (as this is God’s plan and conditions, not humanly conceived). This event occurs as one movement of God’s Spirit, sustaining all three aspects/factors of the salvation event/transaction/miracle, in an “instant” in duration yet contiguous and chronological, those three “factors” being: 1) conviction, 2) faith, 3) sealing. This is, however, not to say that the Spirit guarantees that men will respond, if convicted, and that lack of guarantee is not due to any deference by God to man as God’s superior, but as to state clearly that it is not my contention that God forces men’s Spirit-empowered wills. I reject both the belief that man can choose God on his own, or that God forces His choice on men. It may be above un-renewed logic so to think, but a suitable alternative to these two positions is that God can enable a man to respond to Him, and if the man does, it is totally and exclusively creditable to God.

Man never exercises his humbly minor and totally God-allowed and empowered and initiated faith reliance, apart from the Spirit, so it can never be legitimately accused that man causes or initiates or helps God save him—God does all the saving, when sincere faith in Christ is exercised, that faith following God’s having inspired, enabled/empowered and initiated it. Also, “saving faith,” that is, God-wrought faith, is not an “act” or “deed” per se, which man (i.e., man by himself) does for (i.e., to earn or merit) salvation. It coming from God through the gospel, is a gift (that is, for God to convict you/give you faith is a gift), yet one which must be exercised toward it’s Giver, immediately at which time salvation is sealed, by the Spirit.

If you understand what faith is (Ex.: biblically and through a Biblical experience of salvation), you will know that faith is the only so-called deed which is in fact not a deed at all. That is, you are not DO-ing anything for God (pride)—you are letting God do it all (humble and total dependent reliance); and even your letting Him work is God inspired—not God forced nor man generated or initiated.

These fine distinctions are not word wrangling or theological hair-splitting, or any attempt to avoid implications of the concepts labeled as “free will” or “total depravity.” They are an attempt to make biblical sense out of it’s full record, knowing that the Bible is harmonious, non-contradictory, and that man can, to some extent, understand or make conclusions consistent with what has been revealed therein.

Man totally cannot do it (i.e., trust Christ) on his own/in himself, nor does God force such decision out of man (better, the “elect”). The truth, as I see it, is clearly and peacefully residing distinctly separate from these two alternatives, described above. I have this conviction not only from having personally experienced God’s call to salvation, but, more importantly, because these beliefs are the only accurate way I have come to understand the many verses describing different facets of the salvation miracle/event. You are free to examine my scant Appendix evidence which shows verses or passages which focus on the sovereignty aspect, the will aspect, both factors, and possibly either one, if implications are presupposed or allowed.

Should we put blinders on, and only look at verses supporting our presuppositions? Even having thus somewhat described the salvation experience (about as far as I can, given what I see to be revealed in Scripture), and admittedly not having explained it in full, one can never biblically conclude that there is no mystery in the salvation occurrence.

How God convicts and how the Spirit’s work accomplishes our willingness to believe, without forcing us nor with our choosing it totally by our own will (i.e., apart from the Spirit), when and if He chooses to convict, etc. still remain, in part, mystery (i.e., as to full understanding), and for these truths to ever to cease to have an element of mystery about them (Ex.: Jn. 3:8), would tell me that the one claiming to understand it fully has over-analyzed a love relationship and a miracle, and in so doing, likely missed it, or at least tried to diminish things too indescribable for words!—not that their actions can damage or lessen the event, but that the understanding and explanation has missed the mark of accurately describing that real event. Faith is man’s response-ability not his “responsibility,” as if man is capable of believing and must just be urged or cajoled by pushy Christians to do so, unless and until the spirit convicts, through his hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Generally, he is called to believe, but

Scripture also teaches that it is the Spirit who gives life. However, that same verse indicates that the Spirit gives life through the words Christ spoke. You—apparently—need both the gospel and the Holy Spirit, despite the fact that the gospel is the power of God for salvation—not that it is not such power, in and of itself, but that the Spirit and the word work hand in hand, and to try to dissect them appears ludicrous, save possibly for trying to identify or distinguish between a general or specific call of God unto salvation. If there is no Holy Spirit present, all man is left with is flesh/sin (Jn. 6:63-64), and flesh cannot submit to God’s law, nor exercise genuine faith (Ex.: Jn. 1:13, Rom. 8:7). At the same time, I do not shy away from, and do affirm God’s heart in a matter of major import to Him, that He truly wants all men to have faith in His Son, so as to be saved (II Pet. 3:9, etc.). These desires of God, expressed in promises

which lost men can rely on, based on His faithfulness and faithful word, are no mere sham—requiring an act which is impossible to perform. Salvation IS impossible for man to achieve on his own, but “with God,” all things are possible, and I am solely advocating the reality of God working in the situation so as to bring about the result, though not by force, thus allowing and enabling saving faith, which is then (to be) placed in Christ, from Whom it came, by the convicted person, who is thereafter eternally saved.

***Resistible Grace:** The Bible doesn’t always provide details concerning whether a given evangelism encounter recorded in the Bible involved a general vs. a specific call, by which we may authoritatively say that a given gospel rejection was a rejection of one or the other call types. Our seeing such events as one or the other, often, are more implications of how to understand given passages—not necessarily wrong, but thereby not extremely helpful in identifying who in Scripture rejected under conviction vs. rejected a message through which the Spirit was not working at all.

The “Alternative View’s” perspective on “resistible Grace” is not to teach that a given individual does not experience God’s call to salvation as compellingly irresistible to him, in a subjective way (as was my testimony). Only that, objectively speaking, the ability to decline was there, though he likely was not told that (and wisely wasn’t, by the evangelizer), and may never have thought about that option, thankfully, as his attention had been focused and brought upon Christ and His good news—information (spirit and truth) which, by its very nature, does not naturally lend itself to one of contemplating rejecting, though some people obviously do. That is to say, “Resistible” does not imply that it does not seem irresistible to many if not most who are thus called. It is more a technical argument, that resist-able (un-able to resist), by definition, requires force, vs. magnetism or “magic”-like (I use the term ONLY by analogy) persuasive power which causes the man to change his mind so as to believe and be saved.

***Perseverance of the Saints:** Every born again believer (there are no other types!) will remain in the condition of being saved, throughout his life on earth, and into eternity. He cannot and will not ever lose his salvation. Those adhering to this doctrine have undergone criticism for not equally teaching that this statement does not intend to imply, or mean that a Christian can continually live in a lifestyle of sinning and “get away with it” forever, without God disciplining him. I appreciate this counterbalancing or limiting influence to an abuse of full expression of biblical freedom and grace, which would turn grace into licentiousness. The New Testament is replete with positive promises and motivations to get a believer to live a morally set apart life unto God. However, where needed, it does not lack for up in prophetic judgment the deeds not wrought in Him by believers, so some could, at least initially, be sad or shamed at Christ’s coming. There is at least one “sin unto death,” and in many other ways God can and often does punish/reprove and correct His children, as an expression of His love. A healthy fear of God is necessary in the Christian life. Although there are a few verses which, on the surface, can tend to appear to teach a loss of salvation, that existence of so-called “problem passages” does not negate the truth that a true believer in Jesus Christ is eternally saved, because God gave him a gift which is eternal by nature, as it is of God, Whose nature is eternal, and that Christian can rest assured of his eternal salvation (if he has “tested himself” and seen that he is in the faith vs. out of it—that is, never having been saved—or whether he simply had an ecstatic and/or emotional experience, with no conscious understanding of the gospel, and personal appropriation). The degree to which a believer can sin, and “get away with it” in this life, or the degree of goodness his life must display before others can legitimately question whether he is saved can and is often debated. Suffice it to say that Ghandi was likely not saved, but a really “good” guy, while the

man in I Cor., sleeping with his father's wife (mother or step mother) was obviously not very experientially sanctified. Could you tell the difference between believer and unbeliever, in this case, if they were to dine with you at the same meal? God knows for sure—we can discern, by the witness of the Spirit within, and mutual witness of our spirits, as fellow believers, and especially by the testimony of their mouth concerning what they believe concerning Christ and their salvation experience. Works are no iron clad proof of anything, but the indwelling Spirit, appropriated by faith, is.

IMPORTANCE

- 1. Is evangelism necessary and does it serve any useful and effective purpose?**
- 2. Can man possibly arrogantly believe he caused his own salvation with little to no actions of God?**

Truth

1. Man is sin-FULL, and can't save himself
2. God decided to save whoever will believe.
3. Christ died for all men, especially believers.
4. The Spirit's conviction is powerful and necessary for salvation.
5. Every believer will remain saved forever.

Error

1. Man is sinful, but still has free will. [Not in spiritual matters]
2. Man decides who will be saved. God didn't foreknow who'd be saved. God predetermined certain ones to be saved.
3. Christ only died for certain people.
4. The Spirit's call cannot be resisted.
5. You can lose your salvation.

POSITIVE (AND A FEW NEGATIVE) ELEMENTS OF BOTH TRADITIONAL VIEWS

Arminianism

- Taking (Hebrews etc.) warning passages seriously, and denouncing licentiousness.
- Rightfully pointing out “problem passages” for the eternal security doctrine.
- Expecting sanctifying “effort” (though only in cooperation with the Spirit, working through you—Gal. 2:20, Phil. 2:12-13) as opposed to hands-in-the-lap, bench-warmer/spectator passivity in sanctification.
- Acknowledging that man's will, in a very minor and humbling way, is engaged, activated and allowed, enabled and required to go along with God's “wooing” to salvation
- Even that willingness and “decision” is God-wrought, at least in the proposed “Alternative view”.
- Realizing that verses about Christ dying for all, God wanting all to be saved, and Christ as the Savior of the world are in the Bible, and therefore true—without glossing over or re-interpreting them to fit a preconceived system.

Calvinism

- Following the Bible's lead, de-emphasizing man's role in salvation (though, in my opinion, often taking that too far), so as to totally glorify God for man's salvation
- (something the “Alternative view” supports—total glory and credit going to God for salvation). Acknowledging that man is utterly helpless without God, and totally sinful in

his true, inner self (nature).

- Affirming that there is no goodness in man at all. No one seeks God, can or ever will.
- We (men) contribute nothing to salvation, have no merit before God, even if before men we appear morally better than Hitler, and
- God must intervene in our lives for us not to end up in hell.
- Acknowledging that God is all powerful, all sovereign, all knowing, is the One in charge not man.
- Acknowledging that any pride in man is not a conducive attitude toward salvation (i.e., teaching humility).
- Acknowledging that God can do whatever He chooses, and we have no right to question His choices or accuse Him of behaving immorally—as He does not.
- Affirming that salvation is totally the work of God
- (though the “Alternative view” holds that if allowed and empowered, man “passively” (as opposed to initiatorally or self-contrived) but consciously, by the Spirit, allows, and indeed asks God to do all the saving, which He has promised to do and therefore does).
- Affirming the eternal security of the believer, not letting our confidence and certainty of eternal saved-ness rest on any human work, either at salvation, or post-salvation, such as any claimed need of maintaining a faith we never mustered up from within ourselves in the first place.
- At least addressing verses and concepts in Scripture regarding the words “elect, sovereign, and choice” (though the
- “Alternative view” differs and fairly strongly disagrees with the beliefs that decisions in the past guarantee effects in the present in a pre-determined, automatic and forced/programmed way, or that God only loves a few in a specific sense, and the allegation that the loving act of the cross was only intended for a few—not the few who believe, but the few God chose, to the exclusion of all others).

THINGS WE HOLD IN COMMON

1. Christ is the answer to man’s sin.
2. Pride—either that you’re special because you were in the chosen elect, or because you were ‘good enough’ to decide to receive Christ, is reprehensible in both type’s hearts.
3. The subject of salvation is extremely and eternally important and should be studied seriously and accurately. That is, neither side desires to present a view that is unbiblical.

AN APPEAL

Though we will likely never fully agree, if we are saved, we need to love one another, be united as a family, and at peace with one another, “as much as is in our power,” and we certainly can (and should!) unite in the great work of world evangelization. I encourage us all to PLEASE spend more time personally evangelizing the lost than debating difficult, and somewhat philosophical or “intellectual” analyses of all that is or might be or have been in God’s mind, and for sure do not live in or try to box God into living exclusively in, or over-emphasize the “eternity past” anymore than the Scripture does, or make authoritative statements where the Bible is not as clear as you make it out to be. That would be dishonest. In the final analysis, some aspects of mystery must remain such, though that frustrates our human intellect. I pray that this small study has been of some help in clarifying issues that are admittedly difficult, and, as always, be sure to test all that you believe or are taught by the inerrant word of God!

SUMMARY

<u>T</u> otal Depravity	<u>T</u> otal Depravity	<u>F</u> ree Will*
<u>U</u> nconditional Election* (def)	<u>C</u> onditional Election	<u>C</u> onditional Election
<u>L</u> imited Atonement*	<u>G</u> eneral Atonement	<u>G</u> eneral Atonement
<u>I</u> rresistible Grace*	<u>R</u> esistible (and Irresistible?) Grace	<u>R</u> esistible Grace
<u>P</u> erseverance of the Saints	<u>P</u> erseverance	<u>F</u> alling from Grace* (lose Salvation)

Sovereignty of God

Mt. 13:11-13, 19:11, 24:22, 31, **Lk.** 10:22, 18:7, 24:16, 45, **Jn.** 6:65, 70, 15:16 (emphasis/comparison), **Ac.** 2:23, 47, 3:18, 26, 28 (event predestined), 30, 5:32, 38-39, 7:49-50, 13:48, (15:7), **Rom.** 8:29-30, 33, 9:11, 15-20, 11:5, 8, **I Cor.** 1:1, 24-31, 2:7, 11-14, 6:11, 20, 22-24, 8:6, 9:16-18, 10:22, 11:12, 12:13, (18), 14:36, 15:45, **II Cor.** 3:3, (5), 6, 4:6-7, 5:5, 18, 5:20, 8:9, 9:10, 13:8?, **Gal.** 1:4, 12, 15 (not eternity past), (16), 2:2, (7, 9), 3:13, 21, 28, 5:(17), **Eph.** 1:3-5 (in Him), 9, 3:11, **Phil.** 1:6, 11, 29, 2:13, 3:15, 21, 4:3, 13, **Col.** 1:12-13, 16-17, (18), 19, 21-22, 26-27, 2:(3, 10), 11, 13, (14), 3:3-4, **II Th.** 2:13, **I Tim.** 6:15-16, **II Tim.** 1:9-10, 18?, 2:10, 13, 4:7?, 16?, 18, **Tit.** 2:14, 3:3-7, 8, **I Pet.** 1:1-3, 18-20, 21, 23, 2:9-10, (21), **II Pet.** 1:3-5, 9, 11, 2:4-5, 13, 3:5, 9, 11, 20, 4:6, 16, 21, 5:1, 6, 25, 26, **Phm.** 1:15-16, **Heb.** 1:3, 14, 2:(4), 10, (11), 14, 3:1, 4:3, 6:17-18, 25, 8:10-12, 9:15, 24, 26, 28, 10:10, (12), 14, 16, (18), 32, 12:8, 23, 13:20-21, **Jude** 1:1, (3-4), 24-25, **Rev.** 13:10,

Will of Man

Mt. 18:7, 22:2-14, **Lk.** 10:13, 13:23?, **Ac.** 2:21, 36-37, 41, 44, 3:14-17, 19, 23, 4:4, (11), 12, 17, 26, 32, 5:(9), [20], 31, 40, (42), 6:7, 51-54, 10:43, 13:46, **Rom.** 3:22, 11:32, **I Cor.** 1:17-18, 21, 6:(6), 16-17, 7:32, 34, 37, 8:3, 9:19-27, 10:33, (14:22), 25, 15:1, 2, 11, 19, 22, 58, 16:13, 22, **II Cor.** 1:10, 2:(9), 14-17, 3:16, (17), 4:2-5, 5:7, 10-16, 19, 20, 6:2-4, 16-18, 7:(1), 10, 8:(5, 12), 9:6-7, (13), 11:(2), 4, 16-33 (Paul's reasons to believe), 13:4-6, **Gal.** 1:8, 16, 17?, 19, (23), 3:2, 5-6, 7-8, 9, 11, (14), 17-22, 24-26, 4:5, (19), 29, 5:4?, (6, 17), 21, 6:(7-8), 10, **Eph.** 1:13, 15, 19, 2:15-17, 3:8, 10, 12, (17), 4:15, 18-19, 5:(1), 5, (6), 6:(4?), 8-9, (19-20, 24), **Phil.** 1:5, 10, 13-14, 25, 2:10-11, 12, (16), 3:3, 7-9, 13-14, 16, 4:10, **Col.** 1:4-5, 7, 20, (23, 25), 27, 28, 2:5, 12, 3:5, 6-7, 9-10, 24-25, 4:(3), 4, 5-6, **I Tim.** 1:4-5, 9-11, (14?), 15-16, (19), <20>, 2:1, 4, 5-8, 3:9, 13, 16, 4:(1-2), 3, 6, 4:10, 12, (16), 5:(8), 16, (25), 6:2, (13), 20-21, **II Tim.** 1:5, 12, (14), 18, 2:20, 3:8, 14-15, 4:8, (10), 14, 17, **Tit.** 1:(16), 10 (influence the lost), 11, 3:2, 8, **I Pet.** 1:1-2, (9, 12), 22, 2:6-8, 25, 3:1, 7, 12, 18, 21, 4:(1), 5, (17), 18, 5:2-3, 5-6, 9, **II Pet.** 3:9, **Heb.** 1:2, 14, 2:1-3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17?, 3:6, 8-14, 15-19, 4:1-2, 6-7, 9, 11, (14), 16, 5:4, 5, 7, 9, (12), 14, 6:1, (5-6, 8, 11), 12, 15, 18-19, 9:7, (14), 26-28, 10:12, 14, 20-31, 38, (39), 11:1, 6, 8-10, 17-19, 39, 12:14, 25-29, 13:5-6, 12?, 16, 22, **Phm.** 1:5, 6-8, 14, 21, **I Jn.** 2:22-24, 3:23 (commanded), 4:2-4, 15-16, 5:5, 9-13, **Jude** 1:4-7, 14-15

Sovereignty and Will (both/and)

Mt. 22:14?, **Lk.** 10:13, 22, **Jn.** 6:44 & 64-65, **Ac.** 2:39, 5:14, (33?), 13:46-48, **Rom.** 8:28-31, 9:16-17 & 31-32, 10:16-21, 11:2, 7?; **I Cor.** 1:2, 3:5-9, 18, 21, 24, 27, 28-30, 31, 2:4-5, 8, 10, 14, 3:5-8, 18, 4:1-7, 6:11, 16-17, 19, 7:5, 14, 16, 23, 37, 8:2, 11, 9:16-18, 22, 10:22, 12:11, 18, 28, 15:2, 10-11, 17, 21-22, 29, 57; **II Cor.** 1:9-12, 17, 22, 2:15, 3:1-3, 6, 14-16, 18, 4:3, 6-7, 13, 5:5, 11, 14-21, 6:1-2, 7:1, 9, 10, 8:16, (17), 9:7, 10, 10:7, 13, 17-18, 11:2, 4-5, 12:7, (11), 13:(3); **Gal.** 1:1, 4, 12, 15, 20?, 2:8, 16, 20-21, 3:2-3, 5-9, 11, 14, 16-18, 21-24, 26-28, 29?, 4:4-5, 9, 23, 5:1, 24, 6:10, 14, 15-16, 13; **Eph.** 1:4-7, 9, 11-13, 18-19, 2:1-10, 13, 15, 18, 3:7, 11-12, 16, 20, 4:1, 11, 21, 32, 5:2, 5-6, 8, 25-26, 6:12; **Phil.** 1:6, 9-10, 19, 29, 2:8-9, 12-13, 16, 24, 3:3, 7-12, 4:5-7; **Col.** 1:4-6, 13-14, 20-23, 27-29, 2:6, 10-12, 14, 19, 3:1, 7-10, 12, <13>, 18-19, 4:17; **I Th.** 1:2-4, 2:13, 3:9; **II Th.** 1:8-11, 2:6, 9-12, 13-14, 3:2-5, 13; **I Tim.** 1:13-14, 16, 3:9, 4:10, 16, 6:5?; **II**

Tim. 1:9-12, 2:4, 10, 19, 25-26, 3:8, 15, 6:24-26; **Tit.** 1:1, 14-16, 2:11, 14, 3:5-8, 12; **Phm.** 1:1-2, 14-15, 22; **Heb.** 2:12-13, 3:7-8, (9-11), 4:3, 10, 6:9, 10:19-23, 12:1-2, 13:7-9, 12-13, 15; **Jas.** 18, 2:1, 5:11; **I Pet.** 1:1-2, 4-5, 8, 12, 20-21, 23, 2:3-25, 3:20-21, 4:6, 17, (19), 5:2, 6, 10, (12), 13; **II Pet.** 1:1-3-15, 19, 21 2:1-9, 14-15, 17, 3:5, 7-9, 11, 13, 15; **I Jn.** 1:3, 7, 2:1-2, 23, 25, 3:1, 5, 16, 23, 4:10, 14, 16, 19-20, 5:4, 9-13, 20; **II Jn.** 1:1; **Jude** 1:1, 4-7, 13, (17?), 19, **21?**;

27D. Charismatic Theology Errors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Positives:

Christians considering themselves “Charismatic,” “Pentecostal,” or “full Gospel” usually have an excellent and refreshing (elsewhere too often absent) zeal for God. They are great belief in trusting God, learning one’s identity in Christ, the reality of (some) spiritual gifts and the reality of power in the Christian life, reliance on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the need to do evangelism, and belief that Jesus can still heal and do miracles. They often write wonderful upward-looking spiritual songs. However, those assets do not negate their need to correct the following abuses...

ISSUES

100% Health (i.e., guaranteed in the atonement)

God has NOT promised perfect health to the Christian! (Ex.: Phil. 2:25-28, I Tim. 5:23, II Tim. 4:20)

Let the Charismatic believer consider the following paraphrased challenges from **John MacArthur’s** work, The Charismatics...

- If someone claims to have the gift of healing, like Jesus with the sick, they should clear out Hospital floors.
- As with the public and corroborated nature of Jesus’ miracles, anyone claiming divine healings should be willing to have those ‘healings’ corroborated and examined by doctors and medical science.
- Why are claimed miraculous healings so often performed in cloistered, closed-TV sets with evangelist-supporting followers?

Pastor **John R. Bisagno** has said (paraphrased)...

- We all die of something, and,
- We should never teach (as do Baptists, often) that laying hands and anointing with oil should only occur in obscure, Wednesday night meetings, or only in small group meetings **after** worship, removed from the worshipping public (Jas. 5:13-18).

Consider as well...

- True miracles would make web site or newspaper headlines, as did news spreading about Jesus and His miracles.
- Jesus’ death on the cross secured spiritual vs. physical healing for every believer (Isa. 53, I Pet. 2:21-25).
- Some illness can **bring glory to God** (Jn. 11:4; Ex.: Joni, Evangelist Tim Lee), just as some illness is judgment on sin (I Cor. 11:30)
- Our ultimate healing—the glorification of our body—is guaranteed by our salvation (II Cor. 4:16-5:2).
- Contrary to father Abraham (Rom. 4:16-22), some Charismatics deny reality and their physical symptoms in order to hold to their version of “faith.” **Faith is not the denial of reality** but a greater belief in God’s word—accurately interpreted.

- Why are today's televangelist miracle workers able to do some "miracles," but **they never** resurrect from the dead, walk on water, calm the sea, turn water into wine, multiply food, drink poison or handle snakes and be unharmed?
- God often uses His own natural laws to bring about healing over time (Ex.: a cut usually heals 'of its own accord'), as with His general witness to His creation, such as rain and sunshine (Ac. 14:17).

100% Wealth (i.e., guaranteed in the atonement)

God has NOT promised perfect wealth to the Christian! (Ex.: Mt. 8:20, Ac. 3:6, II Cor. 6:10, Phil. 4:10-13)

- The overall tone/tenor or **attitude of the Bible** on money is NOT for acquiring or prioritizing gaining great wealth (I Tim. 6:7-10, Lk. 12:15, Pv. 23:4-5, Heb. 13:5, Pv. 16:16, Lk. 6:20, II Th. 3:10, Ii Tim. 3:2, Jas. 1:9-11, 4:13-16, etc.). It is not innately sinful to have wealth (Ex.: Abraham, Solomon, David and the parable of the talents; Cf.: Lk. 23:50-51, Jn. 19:38), but God entrusts such to qualified people who gain it rightly (Mt. 6:19-21), use it rightly (Ac. 20:35, I Tim. 6:17-19), and prioritize it rightly (Mt. 6:24, I Tim. 6:1-11, Jas. 4:13-17)—something perhaps the majority of U.S. rich people could not honestly claim. After a certain amount, one is by definition selfish (Phil. 2:3-4), if all they ever do is keep all of it for their family.
- Remember, also, the devil can (and often does) make people rich (Lk. 12:15-21, 16;19-31, Jas 5:1-6, etc.).
- It is the nature of the flesh to crave wealth, perfect health, and a selfish/me-first, all good things come my way lifestyle (I Jn. 2:15-17). Parents—especially fathers—are to provide for their family, but there is nothing extra noble about loving or seeking to have 100% health and wealth—**every lost person** desires these things too! (Lk. 12:29-31)
- Why is it that, traditionally, it was the *televangelists* who **reaped the promises** of riches in the atonement by fleeing the poor and less educated, through demanded tithes and 'seed faith' pledges?

Tongues

- The gift of tongues is not for every Christian, and can't be later received by "*learning*" it, by every Christian. (I Cor. 12:30)
- Tongues were known, unlearned languages miraculously given, whose content glorified God to that languages' speakers (Ac. 2:6, 11, I Cor. 14:10-11).
- Tongues were a sign to the lost people—especially the Jewish nation—(I Cor. 14:21-22), and among the spiritual gifts which corroborated the word of God (New Testament portion), before it was canonized as Scripture (Heb. 2:1-4).
- Tongues were NOT the norm in the first century (See all evangelism events in the book of Acts—FEW involve tongues following, and those 4 incidences were to specific groups of people receiving the Spirit after they believed, with such manifestation).
- As Rev. John MacArthur has asked (paraphrased), when tongues are interpreted in church, what authority do they hold? Ought we add another book to the New Testament? For that matter, if the procedures listed in I Cor. 14 are not followed, how do we consider their interpretation valid as opposed to counterfeit?

- The evidence for tongues used as a “private prayer language” is minimal at best, and such use would contradict all spiritual gifts’ intended use—to bless (“**edify**”) other Christians/ the Church (vs. self edification—I Cor. 14:3-5, 12-20).

OTHER

Miracles

- Charismatics often fail to distinguish between two different definitions of miracles—subjective and objective. God answering one’s prayer with a parking lot opening (or, more clearly a sought-for job) is no less the work of God, but could not reasonably be placed on the same level of authenticity to outsiders as the types of identity-confirming miracles Christ performed (such as violations of scientific, physics and physical laws).

Women Preachers

- Women are not to be head pastors, or teaching spiritual things to adult males/men. (I Tim, 2:11-14 (clear enough), 3:1-7 (man, vv. 1, 5-6, husband, v. 2, he, vv.4, 6), 11 (deacon’s wife, in context of make deacon requirements, Tit. 1:5-9, man, v. 6, husband, v. 6, he, v. 9)

“Charismatic”

- Just because one calls their faith “Charismatic” does not ensure they have any more of the Spirit, or any more of charisma or influential personality than any other believers.

Slain in the Spirit

- God’s clearly revealed character and gentle nature of conviction would never “slay” a believer “in the Spirit.” Jesus’ word WILL slay lost people to death at Armageddon, however, in judgment.

Barking in the Spirit

- It is beneath the dignity of our to-be-feared God to lead a child of God to “bark in the Spirit.”

Holy Spirit

- Having full access to the ministry of the Spirit does NOT negate our responsibility to be avid students of God’s word, and the more and better one knows the latter, the more forcefully they can claim the position of representing the former. Our “anointing” in Christ does not negate this (I Jn. 2:21-22, 27).
- Experience and emotion are NEVER superior authorities to a properly-interpreted word of God. Scripture never contradicts itself, and the more obscure passages should always be interpreted by the more clear ones.
- The Holy Spirit is NOT the same as emotion. Anyone claiming God told/led me to do so and so had better have Scripture (properly interpreted) backing them up.
- There is no formal “second blessing” experience where one has the Spirit fall on or poured out on them, separated from salvation, ever since His original coming to earth in the first century. We experience many re-fillings, and perhaps a delay in experienced power, if we are committed sometime after conversion, but a theology that teaches as normative a later experience of indwelling is errant.
- The Holy Spirit never seeks a position in men’s minds or lives of a higher prominence than that of Jesus.
- While our relationship with God should become intensely intimate (over time), he is never just our Buddy, without a counter-balanced reverence for Him as Abba and Father, both at

the same time. Ultimately, ones deeds and theology evidence their closeness, more so than any easily-made claims to such.

- The Spirit is neither female nor an impersonal “it,” and to refer to Him as a “Ghost” often denotes a more ghastly or spooky image than is proper for this revered Third Person of the Trinity.

Praise

- To say “praise the Lord” does not always equate to your having done so, nor is it proof that one is spiritual, any more so than saying “Lord, Lord” will prove such for false believers.

Fasting

- Nowhere in Scripture is physical fasting taught as a quicker way to spirituality.

Faith

- Faith is not a magic force or power we control to seek God as a mystical Santa Claus who will give us whatever is on our ticket with God or wish list.
- Faith in faith is not the same as faith in God, and even mountain-moving faith has biblical boundaries. No one has actually ever been known to move a literal mountain, though it could happen if God led you to believe for such (if within His will, or word). All things raved for must fall within it’s bounds.

APPLICATION

Since pleasing our Lord is our primary objective, given what the Bible teaches on these matters, this author encourages every “charismatic” believer (and especially their leaders) to:

- a) Renounce any teaching that health and wealth are in the atonement;
- b) Cease seeking to get every believer to speak with tongues;
- c) As is taught in the Bible, value education, knowledge and wisdom, and cease making fools of oneself (vs. being willing to be fools for Christ) by doing things claimed as God having told you to do so, and,
- d) Each side of this issue (i.e., traditional vs. Charismatic) stop hating the other side of our one family in Christ.

CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 500 million “Charismatic” Christians in the world today, and their denominational labels come in various forms (Ex.: Four Square, Charismatics, ‘Holy Rollers,’ Full Gospel, Azusa Street, Pentecostal, Spirit-Filled, Word of Faith, Church of God, and *some* Community Churches, etc., <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism>). I have met and associated with many of them and believe them to be very sincere, quite zealous and committed, and sincerely saved and generally striving to please their Lord. The problems I raise is not with the people themselves, but with the identified unbiblical beliefs they continue to espouse, and appear unwilling to do away with. These beliefs can affect evangelism, in a more general way, by giving Christianity an undeservedly bad name, mainly because they are inconsistent with the word of God. I would not fail to minister with such brethren, feel unity with them or recommend that all their leaders be abandoned or their churches never visited. However, when any Christian group or denomination starts having too many large issues inconsistent with the Bible, it can be a

wiser decision to find a place where you will encounter less challenges being fully supportive of their practices and beliefs.

CHRISTIAN “CHARISMATIC” POSITIVES

In general, “Charismatic” Christians are often open, transparent, honestly emotional, zealous, committed, want abundant vs. “normal” life, ethical, faithful to church, exercise their *faith* more than many (vs. mind only), promote the Holy Spirit (previously more ignored), believe in and claim God’s promises, teach victory in Christ, believe in being Spirit-led, seek God’s will, don’t doubt God can heal, support spiritual power, teach Christians’ identity in Christ, realize the devil really does war with us to defeat us, fairly evangelistic.

INTRODUCTION

Charismatic theology essentially glorifies ignorance or selective Bible knowledge, sometimes confusing felt emotions with the Holy Spirit’s leading. Prayer and internal leading by God too often replaces serious study of the Bible, except for what the minister espouses in sermons (usually focused on repetition and reinforcement of select topics).

The resulting problems include. False doctrine, which can cause false behavior (Ex.: healing always available to everyone all the time, riches promised to all believer by God, tongues are for all, subjective “miracles” confused as objective miracles found in the Bible, holy rollers, barking in the Spirit, slain in the Spirit, and sometimes sin justified as holy by a special perspective given by “the Spirit”/word from the Lord, etc.

The positive aspects of the charismatic movement, achieved by the grace of God despite their false methodology, include: zeal, commitment, evangelism, body life, spiritual gifts not ignored, etc.

Charismatic and Traditional Theology: The Crux of the Matter

1. Do Christians have *at least one* spiritual gift? If so, is it important for them to identify and use them in biblical ministries?
2. Are tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, healings and words of wisdom and knowledge still actively and NORMALLY present supernatural spiritual gifts in our age/day? Have “sign gifts” completely ceased? If so, when and why, and if no, are they ‘NORMATIVE?’
3. Does God promise all (or any, for that matter) believers **perfect health** and wealth in this life? Is it wrong for Charismatic leaders to be **quite wealthy** off the hard-work and earnings donated by congregants who are strongly exhorted to “tithes” so those souls can GET or receive from their “investment” with God? (especially when MANY are poor and uneducated). Does God or the devil manipulate the poor for financial gain?
4. Does the Holy Spirit draw attention to Himself greater than to that of God and Christ? Does He interact with God’s children in any fashion contrary to or separate from the **Bible** and decisions consistent with it?
5. Does God continue to and **regularly** do miracles, like the almost always instant always miraculous and complete healings of the New Testament (which medical doctors could prove and newspapers today would headline)? Were New Testament miracles any different from what is often claimed today (i.e., subjective vs. objective)?

6. Is faith given to us by God to confidently ask for **anything** and EVERYTHING we want? Are there any limitations, boundaries or biblical restrictions? Can you “write your own ticket with God” (in a Santa-like role)?
7. Is the Holy Spirit synonymous with heightened emotional experience? Would He ever lead someone to poo poo thorough Bible research, Greek studies, seminary degrees and other intellectual exercises, and would He ever consider such activities **contrary** to His ministry within us as our ultimate Teacher (as some Charismatics feel)?
8. Can a person be led by God’s Spirit today? [**YES!**] If so, does that occur accurately without adequate **knowledge of Scripture** (i.e., with senses, impressions **REPLACING** much of the need for Bible study)
9. Has the universal Church historically been, overall, too dead, unexcited, drab, boring and non-zealous about God and Christianity, thus creating a vacuum which the Charismatic movement has filled? [**YES!**]
10. Does willingness to do **whatever God asks** and to be a *‘fool for Christ’* justify such practices as slain in the Spirit, barking in the Spirit, snake-handling, drinking poison, chaotic corporate tongues expression (i.e., all speaking over one another with different utterances, and contrary to I Corinthians 14’s orderly process), in today’s church? Grammatically, at least, is being a ‘fool for Christ’ (I Cor. 4:10) the same thing as behaving foolishly? (Pv. 13:16)

TOP CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY ERRORS

1. **Wealth.** God wants all of His children (Christians) to be financially wealthy in this life.
2. **Health.** Every Christian can always claim divine healing in the name of the Lord.
3. **Miracles.** Objective miracles are the norm today (or you don’t have faith), for all believers.
4. **Tongues.** Every Christian can have the gift of tongues, available for private use, simply by asking for it.
- (5) **Second Blessing.** The ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit’ is a second anointing for power and miraculous gifts, received after salvation, and always evidenced by speaking in tongues.

1. WEALTH.

Christian ministers and laymen who believe, teach or advocate that God wants every Christian to be financially wealthy—rich—in this life engage in biblical error, by assuming and presuming upon God’s plan for individuals’ lives, thereby promoting a false doctrine. In the Bible, God has made some of His children rich, even very rich (Solomon, David, etc.), but at least equally representative are the examples of God’s greatest servants being poor (Christ, Paul, Peter, etc.). The range of available incomes within God’s will stems from quite wealthy (in Old Testament standards), to so poor Christ had no place to lay His head and Peter had no silver or gold. However, we can draw the line by saying that God is not the one making people rich in any evil, greedy or selfish ways, nor will He ever lead His children to be so poor as to beg for bread.

The common denominator between these teachings is that if God has a specific income level for a particular Christian, that is where that believer should be living, and to not do so would be to live outside His will—in sin. Our flesh (and maybe the desire of every human being) wants God’s will to always involve our being financially wealthy—there is nothing innately noble in that aspiration. As well, how one achieves their wealth—especially their heart attitude in how

highly they aspire to it (priority, emotional involvement) and why they want that objective (motive—selfish greed or otherwise) are all factors to consider in determining the level God wants one at. Paul was able to have peace and contentment with much and with little. Can that be said of most American Christians?

And do we ever serve Him so greatly that wealth might need to be restricted, by an old-fashioned ethic called self-restraint? The apostles certainly were led to that lifestyle, and they completely out-achieved most modern-day laymen and ministers in evangelism and discipleship, and were not distracted or deterred by the search to be wealthy. The overall tenor (or tone) of the Bible is for moderation, diligence, compassion for the poor, and warning against the evil rich. The following three verses seem never to have been found by Charismatic ministers, who are usually the primary ones who benefit from teaching a gospel of wealth and mandatory tithing: Pv. 23:4-5, Ecc. 9:11, Mt. 6:19-24, I Tim. 6:7-10, Lk. 12:15, Heb. 13:5, Pv. 10:4.

2. HEALTH.

Christian ministers and laymen who believe, teach or advocate that God wants every Christian to never be sick, as if 100% health is guaranteed “in the atonement,” engage in biblical error, and wrongly focus only on verses where Jesus did heal completely. They often extrapolate those experiences using Heb. 13:8 to say Christ’s behavior on this issue never changes either (as if healing miracles have happened regularly, everywhere, for every generation of man). Christ did heal, Christ does heal, but He heals sovereignly, and He has not guaranteed that every Christian will always live in perfect health. As with wealth, there is nothing innately noble about human beings desiring this experience of perfect health—the flesh and probably every lost person aspires to this end.

Christ died to pay for our sins—not to pay for our diseases, and in the oft-quoted I Pet. 2:24-25, spiritual healing (of sins) is obviously the context. Even in its Old Testament predecessor, Isa. 53:5, Christ did prove His divinity and ability to forgive sins as such, by His many physical healings while on earth. In short, Christians can and should look to God in prayer and faith to heal them, but unless He sovereignly gives the faith to believe that a miraculous physical miracle (such as growing an arm back, replacing a failed heart, resurrections, or other such organic miraculous cures), we are wise to avoid the false doctrine that God always will heal everything every time because we are Christians.

In fact, the biblical evidence is that God does not always heal. Paul was unable to do so late in his ministry (II Tim. 4:20), and encouraged I Tim. 5:23 to use wine to help his frequent stomach ailments. Also, God uses His own laws of nature to cure up cuts over a few day’s time (“naturally”), thankfully, and He is not opposed to utilizing doctors. Finally, some sickness can bring glory to God (Ex.: the paralyzed Christian singer Joni; ~Cf.: Jn. 11:4), and some sickness is due to our own sinfulness (I Cor. 11:27-30). Rather than more selfishly seeking perfect health all the time, seek God’s specific will for you. Do teach that God can and does heal, but also realize that, as John MacArthur has noted, we all die of something and those claiming to have a gift of healing ought to use that claimed gift to clear out hospital floors, and not always in cloistered, staged sets with admiring followers (even among which not everyone in wheel chairs or scientifically diagnosed as ill always leave long- or short-term “cured”).

3. MIRACLES.

Closely related to claimed miracles of healing, Christian ministers and laymen who believe, teach or advocate that objective miracles are the norm in the Christian life engage in biblical error, again by attributing the manifestations of 3 years of Christ’s life to all times thereafter. Obviously, Christ performed many amazing miracles, seemingly at will. He walked on water,

calmed the sea, resurrected the dead, turned water into wine, and many other awe-inspiring signs. But are these feats expected of today's believer, and to be part of our everyday experience? Were there reasons why Christ demonstrated such powers while on earth?

Most Charismatics I am aware of do not claim to have resurrected the dead, walked on water or calmed any ocean. So by their own admission, their belief in miracles is already limited from that which Christ demonstrated. The real issue seems to focus around two different definitions we can attribute to the word "miracle." Is it a miracle when God answers a Christian's prayer, when He empowers them in evangelism and the hearer responds, when He leads us and all of the sudden there is a parking space where we felt led to drive, when He gives us wisdom (as He promised—Jas. 1:5-8) in a situation where we are making a tough decision? YES to all of the above. But these "subjective" miracles—which ARE "normative" of a healthy Christian life—cannot validly be equated with science-violating, laws of nature and physics breaking objective miracles—the type which would make modern-day headlines. Nor can they be validly minimized as anything other than a miracle themselves.

Are there two types of miracles which God produces? No, but there are some of extraordinary nature, and those intended to bring about a response from observers of the miracle, which seem to differ in intent from those essentially benefitting God's children more directly and personally. They all require the miraculous intervention of God, and any miracle is to be received with gratitude and amazement. But the Charismatic errs in making lost people believe that Christianity teaches that science-violating extraordinary miracles occur everyday in every Christian's life, simply because they have faith.

The Christian life is abundant and amazing, but unless you are able to outwardly demonstrate an activity which has no human explanation, no rational lost person is going to believe that you are sane or intelligent, if you claim science-violating miracles and have no evidence or proof which that lost observer is incapable of refuting (as with Christ's miracles). Be careful how you refer to answers to prayer, do believe that God can and does do miracles, but never harm the reputation of Christ by associating yourself with claims of things which are either not true, or cannot be adequately substantiated by independent (i.e., unbiased), intelligent persons—Christian or not.

We do not minimize the greatness of God by admitting that the three brief times in Bible history when miracles were the norm were for a specific purpose, nor do we minimize belief in His ability to do miracles by acknowledging that in our day and time, the "objective" type miracles do not seem to be nearly as prevalent across the earth as those other 3 times in biblical history.

4. TONGUES.

Christian ministers and laymen who believe, teach or advocate that God wants every Christian to speak tongues engage in biblical error, by ignoring clear biblical evidence. If it is not patently obvious in the English, I Cor. 12:28-30 is very clearly indicating that the answer to the questions, "All do not speak in tongues, do they?" is clearly No! (Cf.: I Cor. 12:7-11). If a Charismatic teaches that the gift of tongue is available to anyone who desires or seeks it, they are plain wrong. Not all believers are arms to the body, nor are they its tongue, for what sort of body would that look like if all had the same gift? (I Cor. 12:12-27).

Worse than this mistaken teaching, Charismatics often teach, using I Cor. 14:2, that "tongues" is a private prayer (or worship) language, unintelligible to their human mind, to be used to bless God. Strangely, God's word does not teach this view, but in fact teaches that every spiritual gift is given for edification of the body of believers—corporately—not for self-

edification (I Cor. 14:1-2, 12, 26). Tongues were never used in private, to enhance one's spiritual walk. Even when in church settings, they were to be interpreted so all could be edified, and when used in public, among lost observers, the gift was used to validate the message of the speaker to those ungifted who were present, and usually being evangelized. For the Jewish nation, this gift clearly demonstrated that God had judged the nation and moved forward with his plan of taking His eternal gospel also to the Gentiles, as they would listen (Ac. 2, etc.; Cf.: I Cor. 14:22, where tongues are a "sign" gift to unbelievers in general).

In modern times, and given the injunction "forbid not to speak in tongues" (I Cor. 14:39) it is quite reasonable to believe that God might manifest this gift on the mission field, where language barriers during evangelism are more prevalent (or in such cases as a non-English speaker enters a typical American church and that language barrier arises, as an example).

Tongues were, by definition, a "sign" gift—one which had an associated message to people by its manifestation—and, more importantly for us, tongues were (and are) an unlearned real human language, the miracle being that we are able to effectively communicate spiritual information to people in their language, never having naturally learned it (Ex.: Ac. 2:1-11).

5. BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Christian ministers and laymen who believe, teach or advocate that there is a special "Second Blessing" called being "baptized in the Spirit," post-salvation, which all Christians should seek, engage in a slightly less serious biblical error, at the least by simply mis-naming Spirit-filling, or at worst, by claiming an experience the Bible does not reference in the same way as they teach.

It is clear from I Cor. 12:13 that at salvation, God baptizes every believer into the body of Christ. Jesus spoke of His disciples being later baptized with power, after He ascended and the Spirit fell. But just what did that mean? Until Christ sat down at God's right hand, in heaven, the era of the Church age and Holy Spirit did not officially arrive. Once that feat occurred, Acts (a historical and often transitional book) records four "fallings" of the Spirit, which symbolized and manifested God's message that all types of humanity were now capable of directly receiving God and His power upon faith in Christ—not at a later date (as the apostles and others in Christ's days had to patiently wait for). Dr. John Bisagno has accurately identified these 4 fallings as representing the four spiritual people groups of that day—Jews (Ac. 2), half Jews (Samaritans, Ac. 8), Gentiles (Ac. 10), and Gentiles with half knowledge (Ac. 19). The clarity of the message to all men was not missed on that generation—the Holy Spirit was hereafter received directly upon salvation—and he was.

Charismatics generally teach a "second blessing" of power (and usually miracles) they often call the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit." This issue is listed last of their top errors, as it may constitute only a mis-naming of an experience. Biblically, all Christians are baptized into the body of Christ (Church) at salvation by the Spirit, and likely what Charismatics are referencing is their first real experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit upon their first full surrender to Christ's Lordship, post-salvation. Guaranteeing miracles will be associated with that commitment is an error, but they certainly have biblical basis for believing subjective type miracles—answered prayers, God's leading, manifest spiritual power and influence in evangelism and favor among men—will accompany any believer fully committed and thereby fully empowered by God (which happens to many people years after their initial salvation).

If Charismatic believers could simply recognize these truths, and properly name their first Spirit-filled experience (especially if their being fully committed to Christ and being contemporaneously filled with the Spirit occurs some time after they get saved), much confusion

and division could be avoided, which would not only help the cause of Christ in rightly representing His word, but also promote an ever closer unity between true Christians on both sides of this issue. At the same time, traditionalists, who fear miracles, essentially disbelieve in spiritual gifts of any kind (or never talk about or use them), who are too proud to be willing to go out on a limb for Christ, or who derive pleasure justifying their mundane Christian lives by slandering Charismatics, need to also make the appropriate moral changes to allow this unity (and cooperative evangelistic endeavors) occur.

On a personal note, the very best church I have ever attended and been a member of was able to quite accurately merge the best of both worlds in being a conservative Southern Baptist church that was mildly “charismatic.” I have never seen another church so closely emulating the New Testament model, while avoiding biblical errors on either side, and I am saddened that modern pastors either don’t try harder to achieve such a church practice, or don’t know how. Follow Scripture, accurately, and even without knowing that church’s name you will arrive at a very similar church practice. Not doing so is a major reason myself (and I trust others) cannot get fully excited about being fully loyal to any modern church, as I have ‘tasted’ much better, and refuse to become a “charismatic” or to deny the legitimate emphases that denomination (and, more importantly, the Bible) affords us.

Finally, this matter is labeled “(5)” because this author considers it as not necessarily a substantive theological error, but possibly simply a mis-naming of a legitimate Christian experience (except when people insist that miracles, tongues or other unusual manifestations are normatively associated with it).

CONCLUSION

There is no intention in this lesson to slander, minimize or offend the sincere people of the Charismatic movement, as this author believes most if not all of them are truly saved believers, simply misled in their beliefs by a less than thorough reading and synthesis of all god’s words teaches. The harm, and the reason these issues is raised, is that any false doctrine actually harms the adherent, as well as giving our joint Christian faith a name it does not deserve, among any lost people who attribute mistakes to Christ Himself. Great unity toward evangelism, fellowship and brotherly love can be had as biblical denominations interact with each other—as the Bible does not teach denominations—and this can be more effectively achieved as we all seek the purest of doctrine and practice.

On “Dispensationalism”

In the interest of full disclosure, if the materials on this web site cause readers to consider this author “**Dispensationalist**, that label would generally agreed to, with gratitude for the many wonderful teachings their experts have given. However, the following examples are some of the few errors of that movement this author disagrees with, and should show the reader the independence and fidelity to Scripture that this web site strives to adhere to, in the spirit of (I Cor. 1:12-17 and Gal. 1:10):

1. Academics.

- a) An over-emphasis on academics
- b) Less emotionally in-tune, friendly or gregarious and joyous church services
- c) Any displayed intellectual arrogance lodged against the many godly, zealous and sincere if not misguided laymen in the Charismatic movement

2. Prophecy.

- a) An over-emphasis on Bible prophecy.

- b) Little explanation of their reasoning for when they take prophetic passages figuratively or literally, when a passage is more ambiguous.
- c) An almost knee-jerk reaction to the word “kingdom” as almost always being taken as synonymous with the millennium.
- d) A biased refusal to see the many similarities between Israel and the Church, and their spiritual connection, much like cousins.

3. **Miracles.**

- a) An almost total rejection of any supernatural or **miraculous** functioning of God in believers’ lives (Ex.: God does still heal, and still can do so miraculously)
- b) A near negation of teaching on the true spiritual gifts and their need to be utilized in church gatherings (i.e., “Body Life”)

4. **Evangelism.**

- a) A lack of **evangelism**, perhaps by their belief that the number one purpose of man is to glorify God (which can be done in so many other ways than saving souls).

28. BIBLICAL VS. AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

It has been said, if you never aim at something, you're sure to miss it. Our American church leaders have been lulled into believing that if a person attends church once a week, and "tithes," that is Christianity. However, the Bible gives so many more definitions of our walk with Christ, and even what it means for the Church to be biblical church! Please consider the following (Josh. 1:8):

A MODEL CHURCH VISION

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18

Is your church "successful?" The Church in America prides itself in aspiring to be or being "successful," which typically is defined, in part, as having large, beautiful buildings, many church members, and lots of money. If Christ were here, as He spoke in Revelation chapters 2-3, do you think He would give us a very good report, given the following ideals as to what a church is truly to be?

How is it that a handful of simple, fairly uneducated, brand-new Christians—2,000 years ago—were able to "turn the world upside down," and we, with our claimed millions of believers, great learning, technology and capital, with 2,000 years of "progress" can hardly make any noticeable impact on our society? (Ac. 17:6, 24:5).

Principles of what a Church is Truly to Be:

1. **PRAYER.** Church known by outsiders for its praying—not from public demonstrations of such (Ex.: prayer walks, etc.), but because of the lost world witnessing the results and impact of our praying. Most American churches are known principally for their preaching eloquence and music quality. (Mt. 6:1-6; Mk. 11:17; Ac. 12:5, 12) **Not advertising our prayer room, a token corp prayer, etc**
2. **EVANGELISM.** Daily or "regular" evangelism (by most believers—biblically, **all** believers!) as an outgrowth of corporate fellowship, edification and spiritual relationships. Also, warning gospel rejecters of the consequences of their decision. (Ac. 5:42, 13:51, 16:5, 34, 18:6, 19:9-10, 20, 20:7). Graciously and gently, but certainly addressing with lost people (in evangelism), the fact that there is a Hell, and that it is fiery and forever (i.e., not a myth, or a lost/abandoned doctrine). (Rev. 20:15)
3. **DISCIPLESHIP.** Relationship-based discipleship of the majority (biblically, **all**) of claiming Christians, personally training, teaching and motivating them to allow God to mature them up in the faith both spiritually and morally (i.e., "sanctification"/the Christian life), through sharing the essentials God has taught us with anywhere from one to possibly ten other believers, and training them to, in turn, do the same. Biblical responsibility and accountability for this, and all other church ministries, rests and begins with the pastor. Even the best sermons often fall short of changing lives for permanent impact, as God has designed spiritual relationships, through personal discipleship (not necessarily one-on-one, but personal contact), as the way Christian lives can be daily changed, as believers are led by the Holy Spirit and are enjoined to practice the discipline of a daily Quiet Time (i.e., prayer and meditation). (I Th. 2:8; II Tim. 2:2, 3:10-11b; I Cor. 11:1; Ac. 11:23, 26, 14:22, 28, 15:41, 16:5, 15, 40, 18:11, 23, 19:18, 20:2, 23:1, 26:32)
4. **WORSHIP.** "Body life" church services (See in part the book by the same name, by Ray Stedman), which, according to I Cor. 14, Ac. 2, 4, 19 and Jas. 5:___ appears to have been the *normal* Sunday worship mode, rather than a service for elitely-committed believers! Example activities include time enough in the service to allow for congregational involvement in such activities as: prayer requests, ministering remaining spiritual gifts praises voiced, needs expressed and met, testimonies given, group conversational prayer, Quiet Time lessons shared by lay persons, etc.). These are also services in which the non-sign spiritual gifts are properly used to edify the brethren (and not assigning these service types to Wed. or Sun. evenings, due to their less popularity—they **ARE** what the Christian

Church gathered acts like, biblically, and it is not up to our preferences or desires to decide what type of services we are to aspire to, or accept). Also, based on I Cor. 14, it appears that these services were both normative and on Sunday morning—not relegated to smaller groups or the more committed member’s other attendance times. (Ac. 1:14, 16, 2:7, 12, 42-44, 46-47, 3:1, 4-5, 11-12, 4:23-39, 31-37, 5:1-9, 6:1, 9:19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 31, 38, 10:23, 11:29-30, 12:16-17, 13:3, 11, 30-31, 52, 14:22-23, 27, 15:3, 35, 40, 16:34, 19:1, 27, 31, 38-39, 20:7, 17-38, 21:4, 7-8; I Cor. Chs. 12-14; II Cor. 13:11; Eph. 2:20-22, 4:2-3, 11-16; I Pet. 4:10; the corporate church ethics/the “one another’s”—Rom. 12:10, 16, 14:13, 19, 15:7; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25, 32, 5:21; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:13; Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25; Jas. 4:11, 5:9; I Pet. 4:9, 5:5d-g; I Jn. 5:11, 13b, 15.

5. GENUINE AND BIBLICAL UNITY. The Church known to the lost world for its love and oneness of heart and mind (vs. divisions, denominational pride—though not the kind of pseudo “unity” which compromises or avoids doctrine, or which links up with doctrinally errant, or even lost-but-religious. (Jn. 13:35; I Pet. 1:22; I Th. 3:12, 4:9; Rom. 13:8; I Jn. 2:11, 3:18, 4:7, 11-12, 5:2; Jn. 13:35, 17:22-23; Eph. 4:3; I Cor. 1:10, 3:3; Ac. 1:14, 2:46; Jas. 4:1-4; I Cor. 13:4-8a; Eph. 2:11-22; Ac. 1:14, 2:46, 15:25).
6. BIBLICAL PREACHING. Churches where the Bible is preached (rather than most church-goers hearing less than 1/50th of the Bible, if they attended every Sunday, for life), preached/taught expositorally as well as topically, and preached/taught in a way where the Bible is not used as a springboard for many illustrations, poems, statistics, stories, jokes, news articles and other anecdotes used to “color”/beef up three alliterated points and one main theme (to the distraction of Christians hearing and learning God’s life-giving book). Our congregations are smarter than we give them credit for, but our sermon styles may aid in their remaining Biblically ignorant, and entertainment and impressing them with our knowledge is NOT what biblical preaching is supposed to be. (II Tim. 4:2-4)
7. BIBLICAL TEACHING. Church leaders/pastors working hard at both preaching and teaching (vs. primarily preaching), and honored/rewarded accordingly by the flock. (I Tim. 5:17; Ac. 15:35, 28:31)
8. DAILY QUIET TIMES. Christians (why not all of them?) having daily quiet times (prayer and Bible meditation), and moment-by-moment walking in the Spirit, as they are committed to Christ, though morally imperfect. (Mt. 14:23; Gal. 5:16; Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:1-3)
9. SCRIPTURE MEMORY. Much more Scripture memory, and lay persons possessing some understanding of doctrine, and some ability to defend our beliefs and address the apologetic issues of lost people.
10. BIBLICAL MUSICAL TYPES. Music which incorporates all three biblical musical types—psalms, hymns and spiritual songs—rather than following what is popular in society, or what particular groups within the local church want to hear or sing. Worship is not up to our desires, whether for “traditional” or “contemporary” preferences of worship style. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) It is not ours to second guess God’s program or to follow church trends which do not match up with Scripture, such as letting the majority of our membership’s musical preferences decide the matter, or appeasing lost visitor’s musical tastes at the expense of biblical modes of music.
11. GIVING. Grace-based financial giving, as led by the Spirit (as opposed to “law”-based, guilt- and peer pressure-based giving, or “tithing” being lorded over at a set amount—a concept originally for Jewish taxes, and often exceeding 10%). If we will grow up our people to maturity, we can and rightfully should expect increases in gifts (rather than allowing our congregations to be content with not evangelizing, not discipling or being discipled and not being very committed to Christ, and our insisting that they owe us our 10%). (II Cor. 9:6-8; Ac. 13:52).
12. CHURCH DISCIPLINE. Biblical church discipline and loving reproof (vs. American churches rarely doing so, even when needed—avoiding our responsibility under the guise of a false sense of what it means not to “judge,” or, more likely, the fear of losing members to church hopping, and their associated financial gifts). (Mt. 18:15-17; I Tim. 5:19-20; Jas. 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1; Tit. 1:9, 11, 2:15)
13. CORRECTING FALSE DOCTRINE. Addressing and refuting/correcting false doctrine and false teachers, vs. apathetically ignoring them as “harmless,” turning a blind eye or thinking such activity invariably constitutes sinful “judging.” (I Tim. 4:1-2,6; II Jn. 1:9-10; II Tim. 2:24-26)

14. OPENNESS TO SUFFERING. Suffering persecution (something American Christians hardly need to fear as our lifestyles too often mimic the world's, and our lack of evangelizing is certainly to their liking, and to the temporal victory of their spiritual father). (I Th. 3:3; Ac. 5:41, 8:4; Jn. 8:44; Eph. 2:2)
15. POWER. Power, amazement and the fear of God, as the environment in which we are to live, and as evidence the Holy Spirit is working in the midst of our churches. Having the New Testament, can we expect true, provable/verifiable miracles, which helped produce this environment? Churches disagree on this. (I Th. 1:5; Ac. 2:43a, 4:13, 9:21, 31, 13:12, 19:17)
16. FELLOWSHIP. "Church" gatherings occasionally meeting spontaneously (either corporately or in small groups), from a dynamic fellowship life, rather than such meetings being calendared in. Christianity, after all, is more than going to church two hours on Sunday, and we need fellowship (not necessarily the gathered together type) throughout the week. (Ac. 2:46, 20:20; Rom. 16:5)
17. SOCIAL MINISTRY. Social concern placed as third priority to evangelism and discipleship (worship and quiet time not being considered as a ministry, in that sense), but emphasized and encouraged, especially as expressions of individuals' ministries, using their gifts and talents to show love to the lost and dying world, especially the "down-and-out" (as the Old Testament emphasizes).
18. OTHER. Principles practiced in the following, non-exhaustive list of New Testament verses: Jas. 5:13-16, II Cor. 11:28, I Tim. 2:1-4, 8-12, I Tim. 3:1-13 & Jas. 3:1 (Elder, Teachers and deacon qualifications/roles vs. badge of honor to friends or large contributors), Jas. 2:1-4 (clothing/attire in church, and equitable treatment of poor and rich people vs. teaching God always wants Christians rich, or favoring large contributors and giving them more power or status in church), praise and true, sincere, heart-felt worship (Ac. 16:25; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 12:1-2), public confession of sins (where appropriate, vs. airing dirty laundry without discretion or finger-pointing/judging) (Jas. 5:16), taking care of widows in the church (I Tim. 5:3-14), meeting the loneliness and other needs suffered by the orphans and poor (Jas. 1:27, Gal. 2:10), meaningful (vs. rote, archaic, removed) confessions expressing our beliefs from our hearts in our own words (~I Tim. 3:16), public hearing of the word of God (I Tim. 4:13), commitment to the point of being willing to be martyrs, if required (Ac. 7:55-60, 9:29, 20:24), leaders devoted to the Bible, evangelism, and the highest spiritual priorities (Ac. 6:4, 18:5), Spirit-initiated fasting (as opposed to it being seen as a spiritual "fast track" to success) and commissioning of ministers and short-term mission trips (Ac. 13:2-3, 14:23, 15:40), laymen aware of what ministry work is being done across the world and places nearer to home, through testimonies before them (Ac. 14:26-27), meeting believers' needs (Ac. 11:28-30, 16:33; Tit. 3:14), intra-church (not just denominational) financial helping/sharing (all but unheard of in hoardish America) (II Cor. 8:13-15), intra-church (not just denominational) greetings (Ac. 18:22, Phil. 4:21, II Cor. 16:19-20), spiritual and moral authority/respect in society (Mt. 16:18-19), personal Bible meditation (in church?); (Body Life exemplary verses: Eph. 4:11-16, 5:19-21, Rom. 12:3-21, Col. 3:12-17, Rom. 12:10, 16, 14:13, 19, 15:7; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25, 32, 5:21; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:13; Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25; Jas. 4:11, 5:9; I Pet. 4:9, 5:5d-g; I Jn. 5:11, 13b, 15, I Cor. 14:23 (not a normative gift for today, except perhaps on the mission field, but evidence that normative gifts are to be used in Sunday's main service)

If your church is aspiring to and increasingly achieving these ideals, through faith in God, keep doing the right! You needn't necessarily continue reading the following materials!

A MODEL PASTOR VISION

Many American churches, under the leadership of their pastors, have wonderful, worshipful music and eloquent, interesting and intelligent sermons. In these two functions of “church” we Americans seem to excel. Many of our churches minister to a lot of Christians, have nice buildings, do good social ministries and accomplish some evangelistic undertakings. Whatever experience we have had with our individual pastors, whether good or bad, we can all agree that there is no perfect pastor, and that we should never even require or expect such from our leaders. We also know that many pastors are sincerely trying to serve God, and want to lead in and do the right things.

The issue under consideration is, for whatever reasons and under whatever vocational or cultural pressures, is your pastor at least aspiring and trying to become a “biblical” pastor? It is so easy to determine what a pastor’s job description and priorities are to be by looking to other churches or historical tradition, but God has laid out principles for both what His leaders are to do, and how they are to lead His Church to behave as the gathered body—the Church. The question, in evaluating the following criterion, is whether we are succeeding at being biblical, or, contrariwise, “Babylon” preachers?

Is your church’s membership “successful,” by God’s standards? Please consider the following...

Biblical Pastors

(Sample Listing only)

1. Loves God, and loves men with biblical, agape love
2. Shepherds (leads, guides, trains) the flock God has placed under his under-shepherd care
3. Is a male
4. As to activities, is devoted, above all, to the word of God and prayer
5. Is hard-working, and prioritizes the urgent from the important, priority matters
6. Is biblically qualified to hold his position (I Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1: 6-9)
7. Leads by moral example, rather than by lording over, or grudgingly
8. Lives at a moral level which is measured against a higher standard than the average lay person
9. Stands up for morality within his community/society
10. Preaches the Bible
11. Works hard at both preaching and teaching (and the church rewards him accordingly)
12. Seeks the profit derived by the giver more than the gift itself (not greedy for “filthy lucre”)
13. Relies on God to supply his needs, and does not compromise His word to get income
14. Leads as a role model in evangelism and relationship discipleship (disciples church members)
15. Trains the lay persons to do the work of ministry
16. Is willing to undertake church discipline, when necessary
17. Has concern for the poor
18. Etc.

A MODEL CHURCH MEMBER VISION

(Tests of True Spiritual leadership and Church “Success”—the aspirational ideals)

Is your church’s membership “successful,” by God’s standards? Please consider the following... 100% of church members—

1. **Quiet Time.** Have a daily Power-/Quiet Time (meditation and prayer)—Christ’s example of getting away by Himself to pray, and Josh. 1:8, etc.
2. **Discipleship.** Are being discipled (or have been and are discipling others)—II Tim. 2:1-2, Mt. 28:18-20, Col. 1:28 (and Christ’s example with the 11-12).
3. **Body Life.**** Are involved in “Body Life” (i.e., implementing the N.T. “one anothers,” ministering to the brethren and involved in the Sunday morning service—**See verses below**)
4. **Memorize Scripture.** Ps. 119:9-11, I Pet. 2:2, Jas. 1:21-22
5. **Regularly Evangelize.** Ac. 16:5, 19:9, Mk. 1:17
6. **Gifts in Ministry.** Know their spiritual gift and use it in a ministry (Eph. 4:7,
7. **Committed to Christ.** Are committed to Christ and daily walk in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:17-18, Rom. 8:1-18, Gal. 5:16-26, I Cor. 7:35, Mk. 8:34-35, Mt. 10:37-39, Mt. 16:24-27).

Body Life Exemplary Verses: Eph. 4:11-16, 5:19-21, Rom. 12:3-21, Col. 3:12-17, Rom. 12:10, 16, 14:13, 19, 15:7; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25, 32, 5:21; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:13; Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25; Jas. 4:11, 5:9; I Pet. 4:9, 5:5d-g; I Jn. 5:11, 13b, 15, I Cor. 14:23 (not a normative gift for today, except perhaps on the mission field, but evidence that normative gifts are to be used in Sunday’s main service).

On “Church Growth” (and Mega Churches)

(See also: How To Grow a Church (vs. Church Growth Gone Amuck), on YouTube)

Pastors and parishioners often want to know, **how can their church grow?** In this day when big box businesses have swallowed up many ma and pa shops, the same trends has seemingly happened in the church world. *Bi-vocationalism* and *expecting a lower salary* than in private business has given way to **mega church mania** and **millionaire celebrity pastors**, and one has to wonder if these are those described in prophetic texts as “ministers” in it for the money? As I once asked in a *Dallas Theological Seminary* class, **could a mega church be built not in an affluent neighborhood, if the pastor’s expectations were that:** members had a daily quiet time, regularly evangelized, were zealously committed to Christ and holiness, being Spirit-filled and led 24/7, using their spiritual gift(s) in ministry and knew the Bible well?

In short, church has now become **big business**. Aspiring “pastors” have to learn “what works” in business (one famous one reportedly reads *Management books* all the time and fires one or two staffers each year to keep the rest on their toes), and *imitate* “successful” churches. **Balance** is always in order, be it traditional or contemporary music, or hugeness and intimacy (Ex.: having small groups available in otherwise *anonymity-inducing* mega churches), but **biblicality** is **much** more important.

If you criticize any part of it, you’re a *killjoy*, at BEST. The excuse that will KEEP THIS TREND FROM STOPPING is that **the other guy is doing it**. For instance, Second Baptist seeks 10 Houston venues, while Lakewood purchased and refurbished an NBA stadium. In DFW, Second Baptist’s son started sprouting multiple sites, so Prestonwood built in the neverlands where “demographic” research indicates growth is expected, and Gateway church started branching out in many venues directions. I’m sure the case exists in other states where keeping up with the Jones’ to **not lose market share** has also infected *otherwise* godly (or even false) ministers.

Jesus twice scourging people treating His institution as a BUSINESS seems to be Bible verses these men fail to find in the book they know all too *infrequently*. As I have said before, if they were **doing the first things well**, their size is not an issue. The first two churches were mega churches. But when EGO, LOVE OF MONEY and SPIRITUAL COMPETITION rear their ugly heads, “**success**” **can also come from satan**, as we see in the church of Laodicea. Failing to address the 5/10/13 problem, refusing to evangelize everyone near their church, change the 5% who ever evangelize, relationally disciple (to change the only 10% who are committed believers and the only 13% who regularly reading God’s word) and engage in social ministry—especially helping the poor—and having “Body Life” in their main worship services (as well as the ego, apparent love of money from the lifestyle of the minister—mansions, expensive cars, **never capping their salaries** and no concern about ‘sheep stealing,’ but everything focused on THEIR church growing) are **biblical ‘litmus tests’** I use to determine whether a given mega church is *credible* or much less so. Their response, as I was told to my face once, is “*it works.*” (Ex.: a million dollars a week raked in at one of these corrupt places). The Bible be danged, as there is no fear of God before their eyes, because, everything is done for the stated motive of promoting ‘Christ.’!

If anyone did mega church the right way, take it from an **MBA**, there are business advantages to a large church. I would **love** to see a *godly* pastor with a million members, if he did the top priorities well! Some of these advantages include:

- Economies of scale in purchasing power (Ex.: Prestonwood negotiates Wed. night Hawaiian Falls rental).
- Opening new campuses indicates **growth** and that people **like** what they’re offering.

- Big, modern, nice buildings *attract the curious* who might otherwise have no interest.
- The wealthy are more inclined to attend a “successful” church, so *more money* in the budget.
- Also, potentially better salaries, able to hire top talent for cheap (status working at named company), the media will give you more credence, celebrities are more inclined to speak there, Christians like feeling there’s something “big” and of quality they can be proud to be part of (vs. social low esteem), it is more able to ride out a bad economy, members don’t have to feel that everyone knows there every business, etc.

Smaller churches and larger ones with old buildings must decide their **strategy of survival**, because, just like Blockbuster got eaten up by Red Box and NetFlix, we **do need more competition in mega churches**, but remaining small or “old” is somewhat like holding onto a *typewrite, 8-track* or *horseshoeing* business—“progress” has *somewhat* passed you by (*at least* in the big cities). Fortunately, there will always be people who like the homey atmosphere of a smaller church, but you have to know where they are and how to get them to join your church (and mega churches can *emulate* this with small groups)

If a church is committed to:

- 1) Evangelizing every lost person near their building ASAP,
- 2) Discipling every willing saved church member,
- 3) Training and incentivizing their members to evangelize, and
- 4) Implementing the “one anothers” of Scripture (including during the main worship service),

I see nothing wrong with SOME the following strategies I have observed a handful of the largest mega churches in America using:

- Combining churches (business analogy: merger and acquisition trend of the 1990’s). Most churches whose buildings are **small** or **old** should at least consider combining many like-minded, like-situated churches to form a competing mega church (perhaps existing structures as satellites), and perhaps with head pastors **alternating Sundays** or **worship hours**, some taking on other needed functions (and some staffers may need to be *relieved of duty*, as usually happens in corporate mergers)—**just to survive**, longer-term, because multi-campused and “**franchised big box churches**” are legally stealing sheep without conscience. My concern (and God’s mercy) is for the hurting churches, where God says there is to be “**no lack**,” but greedy millionaire mega church pastors get rich literally off the backs and budgets of smaller church pastors! Judgment day will *settle* the matter, but the *smaller* or *older* churches **may go bankrupt** before it transpires, and established pastors’ careers can be on the line (with few *skills* or *interest* in other employment).
- Considering a building remodeling/update/facelift (if appropriate to neighborhood conditions).
- Housing multi-lingual churches in the same facility for off hour service times (sharing rent).
- Multi-campus churches, including video tele-screened messages of central campus sermons (business analogy: franchised location convenience).
- Multi-state (and city) church campus venues, with local pastor, or tele-screened sermons.
- Huge central venues (Ex.: Mr. Osteen’s Houston church and Pastor Cho in S. Korea).

Specific Church Growth Strategies (in no particular order)—
not all of which I *morally* approve include:

Church Growth Strategies

Addiction recover classes. Always building your church building in rich areas of town. At least two tele-screens to film the sermon and allow the audience a closer viewing (now in HD). Auto-depositing one’s financial contribution. Automatic-dial phone messages of upcoming church events. State that you minister in the richest zip code or county in America (Second Baptist, Houston; Grace Community

Church, Plano, TX). Business men's "power lunches" (Wednesdays, downtown, to attract the business class). Buying out declining churches for a new satellite location. Café and coffee bars in church foyers, with casual lounge areas. Calling "Sunday School" "Bible Fellowship" classes. Christmas musical concerts with live animals and actors (First Baptist, Houston). Church advertising by radio, direct mail and mall kiosk ads. Church architecture that is warm, inviting, green and fairly modern, compatible with community standards. Church billboards. Church buses. Church-owned businesses (Ex.: retirement high rise, First Baptist, Houston; Retail strip center and restaurant building, Tallowood Baptist, Houston). Classes helping with teen pregnancy. Considering a "Six Flags Over ____ (church name)"—I once sarcastically proposed in a Evangelism Minister job interview at a church that bragged it ministered in the wealthiest zip code in America, so my direct evangelism methods "would not work" (though they worked effectively on many occasions)—name withheld to protect the guilty. Divorce recover classes. Doilie-backdrop to pulpit (for art-based tele-screen viewing). Easter egg hunt for the neighborhood with catered food. Emails to parishioners from the pastor (including video clips). Emotional stories Excellent soloists and choir presentations. Famous celebrity testimonies for evangelism. Flat screen HD TV's all over the church to look professional/business-like and project a quality image (with church event announcements on them with modern Christian music in the background, or not). Fourth of July community parties (with fireworks). Free childcare for Sunday School class meals. Free wills and trusts seminars to attract non church-goers and get some to donate estates to the church. Friday or Saturday night (casual) church. Getting as many potential church customers to attend any moral way they can—lost, saved, or church-ed elsewhere. Glossy, four color church bulletins. Golf carts for getting around large church campuses. Group-discounted weekly Hawaiian Falls rental. Having a built-in 3 story slide or play area in the children's area. Having a church gym, to attract non church-goers. Having a church logo and slogan/motto. (Ex.: The Oasis of Love). Having a private school (a popular way for a church to make money). Having a professional church web site. Having Architects mock up the future church building site plan so members can envision what they are being asked to pay for. Having contemporary Christian music in the background before worship services. Having only "yes men" in one's inner circle of head pastor's advisors. Having public art work or a lake as part of the church's external 'ambiance.' Having services available in other languages. Helicoptering between church campuses (reportedly trial ballooned and rejected at Second Baptist, Houston). Hiding a church's denominational affiliation. Hiring a famous or "inspiring" speaker, his preaching ability being the main qualification. Hosting Presidential candidates but disallowing them to speak about politics. Imitating the stage and service format of mega churches (I recently attended a church which 4 years ago looked nothing like the mega church I have been a member of, but now looks almost exactly like it). International TV and radio ministries. "Joash Box" public presentation of pledges to building programs (in sealed envelopes). Job search and help classes. Kiosks in church advertising sermon series. Labeling parking lot areas (for easier locating one's car). Less use of evangelistic crusades with Evangelists (as these rarely pay for themselves, a morally bankrupt staffer recently told me). Less use of robes and hymns (or modernizing their music). Less use of Wednesday night church services. Less use of wooden bench pews. Mother's Day Out. Men's and women's conferences. Mission trips. Music lyrics projected on the tele-screen (sometimes omitting hymnals). Naming buildings after the rich after large contributions. Naming Sunday School classes other than by age, number or teacher last names. Never asking what Church is (in the Bible) but what do men say it is or want it to be. New Christians' class (preparing them for baptism, with doctrinal overview). Only and over-positivity. Parade of Lights at Christmas (Second Baptist, Houston). Parenting classes. Passing out Voter Information cards (essentially telling members their views on abortion and gay marriage). Pastor having his own motif and signature art for correspondence. Petting zoo. Placing the church's web site address on the building or as the church's name. Police directing traffic, and members guiding church parking. Praise teams, with professional musicians (or not), speakers, glass enclosed drums and a scenic backdrop. Promoting pastors and their ministry in the media (local newspaper, TV stations, etc.). Public testimonies of amounts pledged by the richer members, challenging other rich to do the same. Pushing 'heavy' subjects to off-hour time slots. Requiring a tithe for church membership. Retreats. Saddleback Hawaiian shirts. Schmoozing famous rich people (lost or not) to come to your church to get their tithe, using one's undisclosed Hawaiian condo as bait (less work raising funds from a handful of rich people). Scripture verses projected on tele-screen (and sermon points). Securing the rich's 'tithe' by making them deacons. Security systems for monitored access in children's area (with scan-in temporary badge-making machines). Selecting members as church "greeters" (as Wal-Mart does upon entry). Soup kitchens. Specialty courses members can take (like university or seminary electives) Staff members always available by smart phone text or email capability (and Facebook and Twitter accounts). Streaming church signs with catchy sermon titles. Subway Sandwich shops within churches. Super Bowl (and other famous sports event) watch party at the church. Targeting the youth as a future money source. Theme Parks (Ex.: James and Tammy Faye Baker, of old). Topical sermons with video clips, alliterations, sermon note handouts, jokes, stories, illustrations, poems, history and business facts, news items, etc. Translucent plastic stage screens with adjusting lights (See: Prestonwood.org). Using a gym as a temporary sanctuary, until the building program can cost-justify a larger sanctuary. Using carnivals to "attract" the lost (with jump houses, face painting, juggling, games, etc.). Using off-site parking with church vans to shuttle attendees. Using props during sermons (Fellowship Church, Grapevine, TX), and the pastor stretching into more entertaining skills. Using the "if you build it they will come" philosophy to erect a mini mega church where growth is projected and land is still cheap. Using the "tithe" as a rule for Christians (despite the New Testament being Spirit and grace-led—II Cor.8-9, etc.)—one church reportedly requiring a tithe in the past in order to become a church member. Vacation Bible School. Videos of church announcements. Visitor parking spaces nearest the entry (as Wal-Mart and others do for expectant mothers). Youth ministry with live rock band, video games, laser tag, camps, contests (with prizes), food (free pizza), sports events.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLING (and belief in **Matthew 6:33**)?

Let's take this movement to it's logical conclusion:

Consider having: TV show clips during sermons, all pop music songs “Christianized,” history events on video as sermon analogies (Ex.: NASA), art on walls of church hallways (perhaps electronic), modernize Bible stories (Ex.: one two church spoke of the prodigal son being a Michigan prostitute who sought to return home after tiring of her lifestyle, and another analogized the gal John the Baptist reproved a king over as being like us going to strip clubs with her dancing pleasing him), visitor cards filled out electronically on I-phones, a graffiti wall on the church, technology give-aways (promoted to reward members by the Calvinist I helped run off at FBC, Katy), strobe lights, disco balls, bubble-making machines, swimming pool or spas in the sanctuary, the greatest play area to “attract” youth, scents in church, hand out energy drinks (even in the Lord’s Supper?), robots hand out collection baskets, Neon suit and Elton John costumes for pastor, America’s Got Talent acts with testimonies afterwards (weight lifters already have the “Power Team”), promote a church committing to a week of sex (Fellowship Grapevine already did this), get prominent people as members to up the church’s status, heated, massaging pews, church bumper stickers, T-shirts reading ‘I had fun at church Sunday, did you? (already done), using your laptop on stage for sermon notes (First Baptist Church, Houston—a godly church), seeking media attention for the pastor (only positive USA Today article on Osteen, April 2011, likely pushed by a former colleague at Second Baptist, who saw this trend and switched denominations to conduct media ministry at Lakewood in the mid-1990’s—Duncan Dodds), teleprompter, children’s hands-on museum, hiring under-qualified youth for leadership (to attract youth—the new money, as was recently done at Prestonwood, Dallas, for head pastor—**See:** Church Conflicts II video on YouTube), fog-making machines, stage curtain, sell or give away hot dogs and pop corn, hammocks and lounge chairs in the sanctuary, stand up comedy, puppets, ventriloquists (don’t believe this is real? Google Southern Baptist Evangelists and the SBC North American Mission Board’s “God’s Plan for Sharing” event types), Punk pink Mohawk pastor (with tattoos?), wine bar, let crowd use technology to take church votes live, buy one of the best organs in the world (Tallowood Baptist, Houston), most unique architecture (to lure one-time visitors and get media attention—Ex.: my floating building design from U of I graduate architecture program), stage projects out into the crowd (like rock concerts), three dimensional holographing technology of Dr. Young to 10 Houston campuses (sought in ‘silicon valley’ in 1996, when I interviewed with them as Evangelism Minister—just wait till this gets to a re-built Jerusalem temple!), give presents to visitors, pay people to fill pews till the church grows, brag that you stood in line to be one of the first I-Pad owners (as was done at Prestonwood, to seem “cool”/‘relevant’), speak of P Diddy, a CEO, Tiger Woods (as with Easter 2011’s sermon at Grace Community, Plano), have a trampoline, spider man swing onto stage, trap door, spinning circular stage with seating in all directions, elevatable stage, British phone booth prop, brag on how great Easter is at your church (so visitors will want to return and be glad they came, as with Prestonwood, Easter 2011), do the wave, have a mosh pit, bic lighter service in the dark, drum solos, guitar licks, brag on the audience as a “good looking group” (The Met, Cypress, Texas), have camera persons and videographers film the service to make it look important, take marketing surveys to see what the community wants (Ex.: Saddleback Church), let the pastor drop in from the ceiling (or the baptismal, as was done at Baraka Church, Houston), golf course, secular counseling center, motivational speakers, joint professional sports arena, etc.

WHY NOT? Most of these activities and schemes are already being done. **It’s ALL about a one hour presentation a week** (or, as Dr. Graham said at Prestonwood, “*church is all week long*”). Church is? **Jesus is**, but Jesus is not synonymous with *church* (and is often outside the door, knocking).

Is the reader beginning to get a clue that **things are out of hand** (or are you so biblically ignorant that you think all these things are **great** ideas?). And **don’t use** the argument from extreme, *thinking* I’m advocating churches going **BACK** to pews, hymns, hymnals, robes, responsive readings, stained glass, steeples and boring sermons. Also, if you *feel* my “tone” is undignified, unbiblical or not of a *pastoral demeanor*, learn that **every one of God’s leaders** in Scripture—including **Jesus Himself**—reproved, decried moral lapses and spoke against God’s institutions being used for man’s selfish ego and financial gain (i.e., “Church-as-a-business”).

Church Conflicts: Naming Names (See also: “Church Conflicts,” on YouTube)

The following experiences form the experiential backdrop to this web site. Apart from the last two churches (where I dropped in simply *seeking advice* on how to fulfill my calling to affect the universal Church in the matters of **thorough evangelism** and **discipleship**), **every other event came to me**—I never sought out any of the negative “conflicts,” but I do expose them to warn believers *not to always trust what you see displayed in public for but 2-3 hours a week*. Pastors have to live out in private what they portray at the worship service, or they are often **biblically unqualified**.

First Baptist Church (Deer Park, TX, 1986)—My first and *only* paid staff position as Youth Pastor. A deacon raised questions with myself about my beliefs about the Gospel’s requirements on two private occasions (his being a **Lordshipper** and myself a **Saviorhooder**). Then, from my office, I saw him in several private meetings with the head Pastor. Soon after, that gentleman preached a sermon **directly attacking** Saviorhood, and **completely different** from the topic printed in the church bulletin. God gave me the boldness to stand up, tell the congregation the change in sermon topic was a result of Bob Sebesta’s private meetings with Ernest Weedon, and **challenged him to a public debate** on what it takes to get to heaven. He had used the “bully pulpit” to undermine my effective ministering to the youth, and I was *not going to let him get away with it*. He continued preaching **as if nothing had happened**, so I walked out and *ended* any further association.

Second Baptist Church (Houston, TX, ~1997—more than a decade later, for any accusing me of being a purposeful “trouble-maker”)—A staff member, Doug Page, contacted me to go through the interview process, because he knew me to be **one of the most evangelistic people** he knew (his own words). During that process, the following things were *said* (by four staffers):

Teacher-Coach: If you become the Evangelism Minister here, **will you make all church leaders evangelize**, because I’m a coach and a teacher? Reply: If the mother duck won’t lead by example, how do we expect the ducklings to ever evangelize?

Doug Page (friend, at that time): **We minister in the richest zip code** in America (77057), and **direct evangelism** (i.e., person to person, where they live) **doesn’t work here**—a claim my own friend and “discipleship trainee” at the time can tell you is false, as we effectively witnessed to several people several times prior to this meeting.

Doug Page (friend, at that time): Why did you leave Second Baptist for FBC Katy? Reply: Because the church has become *too commercialized*, with rich professionals **bragging** in the (then) Summit that they have pledged \$50,000, and others can do the same (contrary to Mt. 6:1-4), and using the “Joash Box” to put **peer pressure** on “tithers,” publically parading them before all to deposit their sealed envelopes at the front of the church (contrary to that same passage).

Doug Page: Well, **it ‘works,’** and black churches do it.

Doug Page (friend, at that time): Your job as Evangelism Minister is “just to get people to the church campus... Dr. Young’s *charisma* will take over from there.” What ego, *audacity*, misunderstanding of evangelism and **theological error**!

Second in Command & Music Minister (in his office): After recounting their *human Christmas tree* and *parade of lights*, JM asked: **Would you consider having a Six Flags Over Second Baptist?** Reply: You know, that’s not a bad idea.

Second in Command & Music Minister (in his office): Dr. Young and I envision 10 Second Baptist campuses across Houston, and we’re presently pursuing (in Silicone Valley, CA) the rights to be the **first church to have the rights to use three dimensional holographing**

technology to project his *image* to every other satellite. **JM**: Are you raising up ministers to take over those churches? **Reply**: Dr. Young and I *will retire* in about 10 years, and that will be their problem.

I suggest any interested readers also inquire of honest staffers or deacons about the “**John Baugh**” incident, business meeting microphone shut downs, and how Second Baptist of Katy really got funded—*against* the donor’s intentions. These and *many other* allegations were sent to the “**Bible Answer Man**” of Christian Research Institute (CA), at the time, but since he was offered a speaking engagement at the church, **his show only exposed allegations I had sent about Joel Osteen** (at the time), but not Second Baptist—anything wrong with double standards (or *not biting the hand that feeds you?*). So, when the church hosted Hank Hannegraff, per the Christian radio station I worked for, I anonymously left four fliers with allegations and Bible verses, hoping someone *responsible* in the church would learn the inside truth—and do something about it (David vs. Goliath all over again).

Un-shockingly, they *rejected* my candidacy, using the ruse of a “**hiring freeze**” as a lie and *excuse*—the church **raked in \$1 million a week** at the time (according to a retailer operating just behind their South entrance—a client of mine at the time).

Cypress Bible Church (Cypress, TX)—The then *head Pastor* was reputed as being the **equivalent of the denominational head**—if Bible Church were a denomination. I asked him in his office if he’d be willing to go evangelize with me. I pointed to a neighbor 3 houses away from the church who was mowing his lawn. He proceeded to drive me to a *new neighborhood* more removed from the premises, where he witnessed **perfect responses**... 2 people we met were preparing for their rehearsal dinner that night, so we moved on. One person we met was already a believer, and the other two we met got saved. On the drive back he said, “Jim, God’s obviously gifted you and laid a burden on your heart, but I don’t want that taught in my church,” to which I replied, “then I guess this is no longer my family’s church.” **Hypocritically**, he resigned within 1.5 years to accept a VP of missionary training position where missionaries do just what I did—direct evangelism! (East-West Ministries--**Joe Wall** is his name).

Metropolitan Baptist Church (Spring, TX)—a hefty staffer literally **ambushed** a good friend of mine’s Sunday School class, and as he was teaching, installed a new teacher in front of the class, for *unexplained* reasons (to shut down the heavy Bible study to make the class more fellowship-oriented and **the lessons more watered down** for visitors). The respected **David Strawn** was the first (vs. installed) teacher’s name. The name of the *less* respected staffer—whom we debated openly—has *long sense been forgotten* (probably by more than just myself).

College of Biblical Studies (Houston, TX)—The school withdrew a prior offer to teach a second **Evangelism class**, by stating that a full-time staffer would handle it, but in the context of their official policy being “relational evangelism” (which I exposed as much less biblical than direct evangelism—**See**: Appendix, which I taught from) after students **asked me if I would say the same things** I did to them in the next session which was made up of pastors (regarding moral culpability for the 5% statistic of Christians who ever evangelize **resting squarely on the shoulders** of pastors more than three years in ministry). You can’t speak the truth if it hurts your donors, can you? *Never bite the hand that feeds you*—the ‘ol Hitler S.S. salary reasoning.

First Baptist Church (Katy, TX)—I was grilled for 2 hours in a private meeting between a staffer and *millionaire* member who didn’t appreciate my criticizing his proposing to donate \$4

million for a gym “**for evangelism,**” because evangelism is free (except for paid professionals and Missionaries). He could have just been honest and admitted that the gym would be a nice amenity for members, and may ‘attract’ *some* non-members. This man I’ll call **Mr. “feel good son,”** bragged that he owned four successful businesses—one a trucking/transportation company in West Houston (2 miles west of Highway 6’s Sam’s Club), where I dropped off a pamphlet from Fuller Seminary’s Missions Department that really tells how his filthy lucre **truly** could have been used for evangelism (highlighted in yellow, named Be A Part of It). In the sovereignty of God, he and another pastor arrived on my doorstep 3 months later (after my family had visited that pastor’s church), doing *church visitation*. When the pastor introduced us, I said “Oh, yes, I know him—we’ve met at First Baptist’s staff office.” The man was speechless the entire visit (but I assume that church now has a *pretty nice gym*, “**for evangelism,**” of course).

Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church (Houston, TX; where I was married). I assume my voice mail instructing the Pastor that much of his millions about to be spent on a building expansion could be much more greatly used hiring **full-time Evangelists in the 10/40 Window** went unheeded. I didn’t receive a call back, but if you’re ever there visiting, the *Northern most* (and likely newest) wing came at the expense of many lost souls who have yet to hear the Gospel there.

Jesus Video Project (Houston, TX). I was being considered for the *head position* of this ministry getting the Campus Crusade “**Jesus video**” to churches, “for evangelism.” **If any Houston pastor bought several and thought you were being a wise steward of God’s money, YOU GOT RIPPED OFF for “Jesus”!** They charged between \$18 and \$24 per DVD, and **their cost was well under \$3** a tape. *I made this clear* to the board members, and **pushed for a much lower price**, as well as not solely relying on just one tool to get the Great Commission done, but when I mentioned at a meeting in a Fleetwood neighborhood home that “**no one should hear the Gospel more than once so long as some have never heard,**” the board members took over the meeting (I had arranged of several evangelism ministries), and I was treated as if I had stated a heresy thereafter. The lead board member was later discovered to be a prominent member of Cypress Bible Church, which I also write about.

Prestonwood Baptist Church (Plano, TX)—Where do I begin with this one? The events are **so numerous**. I joined 4 years ago, and sought to *volunteer* to teach evangelism and discipleship (and when I say “teach” it is rarely just informing, but actions). On **eight separate occasions** I met with staff underlings (never allowed access to those with the power), which ALWAYS led to a **dead end**. I had started positive that first year, but the answer always ended with a “**no.**” At each meeting, I asked every staffer to **look outside their glass wall windows** and consider *going to evangelize* those homes—none ever did. I was content to let it drop, but God was not.

The next 2-3 years I was led to use more forceful methods—as **I will not let this message be squelched** (including taking my “Go Evangelize” sign to the Sunday parking lot exit, wearing my web site shirt to church often, and handing out a Sunday School leader letter exhorting them to reach all near the church with the Gospel, since the leadership seems not inclined to do so, and private emails to the top 2 preachers). These techniques brought about many external changes (sermons on evangelism, from my web site materials specifically tailored to the subject), but likely little impact of actual evangelism. They preached sermons galore, quoted my materials (un-cited, which I gave them permission to do in my emails), had annual campaigns 2 out of 4 years (Live to Tell, and 10 for 10) even my own Bible Fellowship teacher thought should satisfy

“me.” They had an evangelist hold a crusade (even though **Dave Shivers** told me they don’t do them often, because they rarely pay for themselves), invited Probe ministries to have a booth in the foyer (often quoted in my apologetics section), hosted 4 door to door Wednesday night “evangelism” events (where 3 of the 4 times they went to church visitors, and 4 out of 4 times they handed out **sacks with church marketing materials**). My son and I did go door-to-door across the street, and took the name of the **one lady who got saved** to the staffer who initiated my being “*silenced*” by the church (details below—“Lumpy”), telling him we took **no materials**—just a memorized knowledge of the Gospel and the Spirit’s power, email showing the head Pastor with Billy Graham (which I emailed him about, saying associating with greatness is no substitute for evangelizing, and *discovering* whether your own church suffers from the 5% who ever evangelize problem). **We’ll never know if the 5% ever changed** as a result, because, as a deacon Sunday School teacher emailed me earlier this year, “**they will never agree to the things you are proposing**,” and “things are just going to get worse for you here so you ought to consider another church,” referencing my proposed 3-mile plan, objectively identifying whether we suffer from the 5% and 13% problem, and instituting a church-wide relational discipleship push to help resolve the problems (including Multiplication Discipleship and Evangelism).

Stumpy and Lumpy: Lumpy, as I will call him (I don’t memorize names of people I don’t respect much) filled in a Sunday School lesson, and told a class of believers that we needed a *completely new root*—we needed our trees to be uprooted. He was using some Old Testament passage, out of context to a Christian setting. I asked him if he was evangelizing the class, because everyone I knew in there was saved, and we were **new creatures in Christ**. His *ego could not stand* showing his false doctrine (as a staff member), so 2 weeks later the minister he replaced (or vice versa—what their position is *means nothing* to myself), Stumpy arranged the following event:

Ross Perot Wannabe: My Sunday School teacher had reportedly a reputation for being more objective about things going on in the church (which is often labeled not being a “team player”). I obviously was *more outspoken* than he, so he had to make a decision. For 3 years I had asked him and other leaders to simply have a class where we actually did a **Quiet Time** (to get people started on the habit) and **went out evangelizing** as a class. They excused inability to do so on following curriculum (which they violated on several other occasions—a session on prophecy, before my *push* for prophecy, which got approved and a lesson on **how to become a Management Consultant**, etc.) and being “*submissive*” to authority (the old **Hitler’s S.S. excuse**, which never assesses the morality of what is being submitted to). After 3 years, and after being *wined and dined* by the top church echelon in Arizona (a Ranger’s pre-season event, meeting some famous Christian player, etc.) he phoned me long distance to say he wanted to speak to me about the direction of the class. I asked if this meant **using my materials** (i.e., to do a Quiet Time and evangelism project), and he said “**yes**.” When I arrived at big box church, he was there, but suddenly 2 other unannounced persons walked up, and for 30 minutes I was grilled about the untenability of my correcting the teacher’s *false doctrine*, asking questions of it or making comments in class about it. Stumpy (who now will head the Dallas franchise) literally told me **I was no longer allowed “to speak**, make comments or ask any questions.” I asked if that pertained to the changes God had used me for in the top dog’s sermons, and he referenced only Sunday School. I answered, ‘no problem. I have already been scouting out more biblical and evangelistic classes,’ to which stumpy said “**I mean in ANY Sunday School class**.” This is the same person who told me in that ambush meeting, “perception is reality,” which is the *exact opposite* of the Bible—**we walk by faith**, and whatever is contrary to what it says is **not** spiritual reality (his authority is obviously idioms, not *Scripture*).

25 minutes later, stumpy, lumpy and another staffer were joking and chit chatting—**being paid to stand around**—so after finishing some work on my book, I went up to them and asked if they wanted to go evangelize the homes across the street. To a man they said they were *short on time*, but I informed them **we all had 40-45 minutes** before the service started, but exposing their hypocrisy was about all I could do with them there—they were typically obstinate. And before the service I ran into the Perot wanna be (his LinkedIn.com profile is where that nic name comes from—where his face is hardly visible, and Perot is prominent, because he worked for EDS and must think the shot shows him knowing Ross), and **asked him why he ambushed me**, hadn't he ever read of that as a sinful act in Proverbs, and told him he ought to read and live out more of that book he was so clingingly holding under his arm. He raced to the elevator with cowardice silence. To his credit, he allowed me to speak in class *several times* afterwards, but the day a lady who sat in front of me **GLARED** at me when I had extolled the class to **not be in the 95%** who never evangelize, and she said “I am nice to my neighbors all the time,” to which I replied, “that's not evangelism,” I decided not to return, and haven't for over 9 months. Sometimes, the fight is just not worth it—dust off your shoes and move on to more fertile pastures!

Much less qualified than many other staffers, the YOUNG Stumpy is now rewarded with heading up their third (Dallas) campus, likely **to attract youth** (future dollars, as the elderly die off, as church growth texts teach, because some other mega church nearby is successfully reaching them—competitors!). Even Ross Perot wanna be had suggested the *main campus instituting rock concerts*, to attract the youth (when I had suggested **discipling** people). They had instituted the Saturday night service to try to attract youth, but it really hasn't done that well at achieving that purpose. Stumpy, on one occasion, saw my prophecy chart and mocked to Perot-wanna be, “have y'all got it all figured and mapped out?,” when Stumpy attended *Southwestern Seminary* (**not famous for** eschatology—when I was there, the Professor said, “here's our lesson on prophecy—Jesus is coming back soon”), and hardly knows much about the subject. He also said the church has a **neutral position** on prophecy, yet Dr. Graham now sends out **money-solicitation envelopes** for his TV show with a ten sermon series on prophecy. There's no hypocrisy going on anywhere, is there?

And just recently a staffer told that Sunday School class that **they might need to disband**, as *attendance* was not very large. **The same people who lured my teacher into ambushing me would turn on him for church growth!** Isn't it great to be schmoozed into being a team player, seeing how loyal they aren't to you once you join the team, *Phil*. I know these things because my wife and son still attend—I withdrew being a class member the week after I was *supposedly* silenced by Stumpy (but we must obey God, and not man, and we cannot stop speaking the things we have experienced!—Acts references).

By the way and for the record, “Lumpy” has been nothing but polite in saying hello to my wife—by name—and myself, apparently unwilling to address hypocrisy, just “moving on,” or maybe seeking to heap coals on my head, but I feel none, and I did not do the morally wrong thing in that incident, by the grace of God.

Dave Shivers: The reputed “**most evangelistic staff member**,” Dave Shivers, on THREE OCCASIONS *agreed* to do witnessing with myself, and **thrice stood me up** with no contact, apology or even explanation. The teaching Pastor on Saturday nights, **Jarrett Stephens**, did the **exact same thing** regarding simply meeting for a lunch some time. His email literally said to *give him 3 dates*, and he would “*make it happen*.” Every date passed, with no contact, apology or even explanation. Sort of like Peter—**emphasizing their failure** three times! Then he proceeded to preach a sermon on forgiveness, saying not to just “move on,” but *initiate* forgiveness—whether the offender or offeree, and saying some in our church needed to

implement this sermon. So I emailed him and asked if he wanted to remedy his standing me up three times, even though I had moved on from it with no input from him. Zero response.

Hypocrisy is an ugly thing, especially among God's so-called leaders, but **THEY GET AWAY WITH IT** so long as people like myself remain politely quiet—which I am no longer doing (if *ever* I did).

Dr. Graham: The ONLY official correspondence acknowledgement I ever received (despite many sermons from reading my web site materials) was his secretary saying he was **very encouraged**, after I informed them I used 4 quotes of his on my web site, and referring to him as my “**former pastor**,” as I *ceased* being a member the day after he announced spending **\$18 million to open a new Dallas campus** (where the under-qualified youth-attractor who ‘silenced’ me would be the preacher—I learned days later). His sermon the week before used between **4 and 6 quotes** based on my web site, and was exhorting national and international evangelism, then he said he had a *very exciting* announcement to make the next week. Needless to say, trying to butter up your opposition, then **completely abandoning any great news for the Great Commission** for a new building (with no revealing or capping of his total compensation) is not the way to silence me—and he knows my history at FBC Deer Park that I will speak out against wrongdoing, as one of my *closest youth disciples* at that church is now a deacon at Prestonwood.

Even a Dallas seminary *friend* who got to know me decently warned me not to “name names” when I was speaking with a layman about the evangelism emphasis, and thrice being *stood up* by Mr. ‘shiver-me-timbers,’ and a young staffer I spoke with 2 weeks before the Dallas campus announcement said “Pastor Graham has **very few nay sayers** in his inner circle, so it’s going to happen.” Same **authoritarian iron fist** as some of my Second Baptist allegations (disclosed to CRI) detailed (perhaps the material for another YouTube video in the future).

RELATED NOTE TO MEGA CHURCH PASTORS: Fully reveal and cap your total compensation, and your aspirations will not seem as *culpable*—but only if you also do thorough evangelism and discipling! The Bible teaches that **God wants no lack among churches**, but your autonomous retail business unit only serves your business, and often sheep steals, hurting godly *smaller* church pastors!

July 2011 Update: Sadly, unless I **retract** this section on Prestonwood, I am no longer allowed to go to any Bible Fellowship class. If I had lied, said something **untrue**, I would have considered at least a *revision* to what has been written.

Fellowship Church (Grapevine, TX). The Sunday nearest the **ABC report** of Ed Young Junior’s (Second Baptist Houston transported to Dallas, with props) undisclosed **\$4 million French-made lear jet** (and 10,000 square foot home on Lake Grapevine), I felt led to take my “**Go Evangelize!**” signs (See: Appendix) to that building. After 2 security guards addressed myself, and a cop finally arrived, and I asked to *speak with his supervisor* (as I was on **public property**, and, being a lawyer, I know my Constitutional rights), he confirmed that town has a local ordinance requiring a permit. So I left (after many members saw the sign), but I **walked SO SLOWLY**, all the stragglers saw it too (including the ignorant BMW owner who gave me a *thumb’s down* sign)—thumb’s down on exhorting evangelism? Get your facts straight before you make *assumptions*, naive “brother.”

Water’s Edge Church (Frisco, TX)—When asked, ‘**how would you evangelize that home** across the field?’, the response was “I am not targeting people for the Gospel—God is; and in His sovereignty, if He leads our paths to cross, I’ll pray for an open door of opportunity to share

the Gospel with them... But we share the same Great Commission goal.” Of course you do. Our actions execute it and yours only has **wishful thinking**, spiritualized as something better. Needless to say I chalked that church off as a possible next home, after leaving Prestonwood!

Grace Community Church (Plano, TX)—Sermon (paraphrased): “Your life is good (living in the richest county in the country—mentioned *three* times); Easter (i.e., the Gospel) is about **making your life better**.” Really? What if they are *content* with their luxurious lifestyle? And are men really “**good**,” when God says to commit one sin makes us guilty of all and facing hell at any unknown moment? Does the Bible say a good life consists of having possessions, or does it say just the opposite? (Lk. 12:15) Amazing what people will do (and say) to *draw a crowd* of lost people to **grow their church**. An interesting seminary study would be to watch films of this church 4 years ago, see how things have changed, and to identify what facets were likely copied from Joel Osteen, Prestonwood and Fellowship Grapevine. I have already done so for my own curiosity. (Hint: props, backdrops, purple haze, and Gospel positivity). I had the privilege of a private meeting with Pastor George, who seems like a **truly good man**, but once I emailed him details on my proposed **billboard campaign**, the dialogue has seemingly ended.

A Baptist Church in Texarkana. My next door neighbor is it’s *ex*-Pastor, and **we got along splendidly**, until he READ the beginnings of this web site. We’re still polite and cordial, and I have nothing *against* him, but his wife said he wanted to discuss the site with me but his **complete silence** on the subject with many opportunities tells me it *didn’t go down well* (I suspect because that church used many methods I denounce).

First Baptist Church (Grand Prairie, TX—a College *friend*)—Response: Because you aren’t a pastor, I question (and will likely **never implement**) your teachings (even though they’re biblical, I have been a pastor and have *seen and been a part of all* these things occurring—thorough evangelism, relational discipling and body life). In other words, **you haven’t (yet) experienced** why I **choose to not obey God** on these priority matters. Since when did *experience* trump the word of God—whether a good or (more often) bad experience?

First Baptist Church (Prosper, TX). My conversation with this man tells me **a lie detector alone will prove** who’s telling the truth about *Prestonwood*. He accused me of *slander* (truth is always a defense to slander, under our U.S. civil law) “vinegar” causticness, being very close to **sinful rebellion** against God (for simply telling the truth), and *not trusting the Spirit* to discipline His bride, unsubmitiveness, and warned me of the 2-3 witnesses verse in allegations against Pastors (of which **I have two to three**—though they would never risk their cherished deaconship to testify to the truth, without a subpoena’d lie detector; plus, these experiences WERE kept private by myself, so there are few witnesses available!). The lie detector would not lie! Simply **exposing the 5/10/13 problem** REALLY RILES these men, as their *deeds are exposed* (and I don’t mean the common *imperfections* we all have—glaring top priority omissions). I am glad for this pastor seeking to raise a BIBLICAL objection, though his objection, *sadly*, loses credibility by thinking there are not 2-3 witnesses. As to **unsubmitiveness** and not trusting the Spirit, I trust the Spirit alone to guide me in this difficult reprovng endeavor, and I **don’t have to submit to stubbornness in unbiblical attitudes** by God’s so-called “leaders,” as *no one* should! That’s the old Hitler Secret Service excuse, **abusing submitiveness** and hiding behind the 2-3 witnesses verse so Pastors are never held accountable!

Other—2000 Emails sent. exhorting the highest priorities were thoroughly ignored by **500 of the largest Mega churches**—except for 2 laymen replies, one positive and one inviting me to a

mission trip—and similar emails to 40 Southern Baptist State Conventions—one positive reply from the North American Mission Board.

If you ever wonder **why Billy Graham** is reported as saying he would not return to host a Houston crusade any longer, *because of the condition of the pastors* (i.e., **fighting for his converts**, to win their membership loyalty—and coveted “**tithe**”), you should *wonder no longer!* If you think that churches growing large is always a good thing, or that I have been **too critical** of abuses in the American Church, perhaps now you know the backdrop from whence I speak. These may be *anecdotal*, but I venture to say **most** American churches have drunk the same **Kool Aid**.

A few notable exceptions to the rule are the following great ministries:

First Baptist Church, Houston, TX

Highland Baptist Church, Waco, TX

Don Anderson Ministries, Tyler, TX

MinistryCatalyst.com, Ft. Worth, TX.

Evangelism Explosion, Campus Crusade for Christ and the Navigators. The few good men *are* around, but, sadly, are **few and far between**.

I have a **26 year history** of fighting moral corruption in church leaders, and less than the highest Bible priorities in church practice, so I am no Johnny come lately on the issue, though, just like Paul for his over 18 years, I have done this ministering in obscurity (Gal. 1). I pray that the reader of this web site will **use all means necessary** to allow my story—and, more importantly—these Bible-based teachings—to rid the Church of her **un-prioritized and 90%** (in America) **carnal condition!** If you want to see my teaching about these experiences in *video* form, be looking for our upcoming YouTube video entitled “Church Conflicts,” or search YouTube for my name. Thanks.

29a. APPENDIX B: Free Materials For Evangelism

Feel free to use any of the following web site materials for your personal evangelism campaign:

1. Prioritized Pastor's Pledge (sent to many large countries' major denominations, seminaries, churches and ministries—April 2011)
2. Billboard Campaign (slogans)
3. The Gospel (printable tract)
4. On Hell (Sunday School/Bible Fellowship or sermon material)
5. Church-Wide Evangelism Survey
6. About Us/Ministry Experience (author's resume you can send anywhere)
7. The following two letters, sent most in all U.S. states' Southern Baptist associations (and the Home Mission Board). Feel free to send them to appropriate 'leaders'--only changing Addressees—and if done this way, you can attribute it to myself to take any heat. Do realize, however, they trash these convicting letters, so send them to several people and underlings (in separate emails, so they don't know who to collude with to ignore them), so they're more apt to be held accountable for arrogantly dismissing them.

29b. APPENDIX B: Free Materials For Evangelism Exhortation

SUBMITTED TO CHRISTIANITY TODAY AND CHARISMA MAGAZINE (APRIL 2011):

TOWARD A MORE BIBLICAL MODEL OF CHURCH IN AMERICA

Three *dirty little secrets* in American Christianity are that only **5%** of believers *ever* actually tell one lost person the Gospel their *whole lifetime*, **10%** of us are fully committed to Christ and only **13%** *regularly* read their Bible. This “**5/10/13**” **problem** forms a huge *white elephant* in our sanctuaries which most are “*too polite*” to speak (or know) about. With the advent of mega churches (expanding with the “Church Growth Movement of the early 1980's) and living in a Politically Correct culture where many truthful things are suppressed if they're *negative*, if we have church members attending and “tithing” (which allows buildings and budgets to be paid for) our churches are perceived by men as “*successful*.” But God is not satisfied, nor does continuation of this 5/10/13 problem match His definition of “success” (Rev. 3:15-19; Josh. 1:8)

We Americans *used* to pray for national “revival,” but with churches becoming more autonomous business units, that cry has lessened recently. Plus, the analogous II Chron. 7:14 requires **4 things** of believers—not just praying for revival—and the implications of that oft-quoted verse are that our “5/10/13” problem is *largely* responsible for the declining moral condition of our country.

With status quo “Churchianity” *working* (i.e., going to church 2 hours a week to hear a sermon, music and give some money) what's likely to change, and what *should* it change to and why? Please permit me to elicit the following list of things needing changing immediately:

1. Every Church in America Should Reach *Every* Lost Soul Near Their Building with the Gospel in the Next Three Years—their “Jerusalem,” which they are *most* responsible before God to reach. America has not been *thoroughly harvested* in over **30 years**, and unless a church records the spiritual condition existing at all actual street addresses (if not recording names), they can **NEVER** say they have *objectively* fulfilled the first of three stages of the *Great Commission*—evangelism (baptism and discipleship following). (Mt. 28:18-20)

2. Pastors Should Enlist Church Members to Go with Them, Observing How They Share the Gospel and Emulating Their Actions (perhaps video recording these events for viewing in worship services). **Leaders lead by example**, and tacking on an evangelistic *invitation* at the end of a sermon should never be a pastor’s **primary** evangelism activity for the week. Jas. 2:1-4 and I Cor. 14:23 indicate that lost visitors were welcome at church, but **not all that expected** (note the word, “*if*,” not “*when*,” *regardless* of the tongues reference)—as the first century Church understood that their instructions were to **leave** their gathering and go tell the message.

And what of the **millions** of lost who will never be “*attracted*” to or attend your church? **Do they go to hell** because we’re too *scared* or *lazy* to **obey God** and speak to them? Funny, the apostles and their colleagues never had jump houses, carnivals or face painting to “attract” anyone to their message, but what they *did* have—**spiritual power**—turned the world upside down in only a few short years, and allowed Paul to testify that he was innocent of the blood of all men. (Ac. 17:6, 20:26).

3. Jesus (and Others) Taught Us by Example That Maturing Up Believers is Not Just Preaching Sermons to the Masses, but requires spending time with a small group of learners—getting them into a habit of **feeding on His word daily** (*personally* and *deeply*)—and pouring one’s life into those persons so they are trained up to be able to replicate that process in others. (II Tim. 2:2; I Th. 2:8; Mk. 4:34; Ac. 4:13). This “multiplication” model can enable a church of **any size** to reach all church members (for discipleship and evangelism—evangelism being a more expected outcome of maturing believers) in **4 to 5 sessions** (if all participants are faithful and if an approximately 1:12 ratio is maintained), so a church being “too large” is **no biblical excuse**.

4. Finally, What Some Used to Call “Body Life” IS the New Testament Norm for What Church Is and what our Sunday morning worship services are to *entail*. Never was “church” intended to be a spectator sport led only by professionals with **no interaction between or involvement of** the laity, except *giving* and occasional *singing*. Where else might believers as a family (or body) act on the “**one anothers**” of Scripture, and how were those more rare *visitors* in the first century to SEE believers’ love of one another than when they happened by our **main church gatherings**? (Jn. 13:34-35)

America has seen some resurgence in church attendance, with more entertaining sermons (rarely expository, often topical) and *upgraded ambiance* and *amenities* which have caused more believers to *return home*, but when you have your **God glasses** on—life’s perspective viewed from His Book—you soon see that we have accepted a **much lesser form of Christianity** than was ever intended, due to tradition, expediency and what ‘works’ to bring in the numbers. After all, the Church is **God’s organization**—**not** man’s business, and even if our American form of Christianity *works* for laymen and pastors, it does not fully conform to what **God** has said.

Solutions exist, but only if they’re implemented. These priorities may not be the average church’s “*business model*” but they are certainly the *best way* to achieve God’s priorities, so your

leaders' "business model" may need a *scouring* revisiting. I know that Pastors are not often trained in these concepts in seminary, but any minister more than three years into his career is biblically responsible for the 5/10/13 condition being hardly addressed or changed, as the human heads of their churches (Eph. 4:11-13; I Pet. 5:2-3).

Pastor, be a **true leader**—even if *none* of your co-laborers (who are *not* competitors, biblically) do the same, and believe again (as you likely did earlier) that **God rewards obedience** to His priorities, even if what He calls you to do does not always *directly* or *immediately* increase your church's membership or contributions. There are rewards in heaven, not just on earth, and always remember that, **1)** People die unexpectedly and 'prematurely' all the time, **2)** Christ could return at any time, and, **3)** There is a huge *numbers gap* between evangelistic Christians and lost people that will not be bridged if we only maintain our **less-biblical status quo** American church model.

This author, as *but one* of many *quieter* believers, HAS experienced all these things through real-life para church organizations and one unique church in College, and is unwilling to settle for **second best**. This is NOT Pollyanna idealism or wishful thinking, but the actual prescription for what ails us. The problem is, we are deluded that there is nothing ailing us, because it's all we *see* and therefore all we know. Ingest God's word more, and take a look around. Sadly, **para church organizations are dominating the American Church of God in these most vital and priority ministries!** God will judge His people and there are heavenly rewards to be had (or lost), depending on how we *respond* to God's revealed priorities. (Ps. 135:14; Heb. 10:30; I Cor. 3:5-8; Jn. 4:35-36)

Don't shoot the messenger if he speaks the truth, as *unpalatable* as the message may be. (Gal. 4:16) And as I have told many resistant pastors who sought to discredit this message by attacking the mouthpiece, **even if I were Hitler himself**, Titus 1:12-13 teaches us to **heed** truthful messages (especially if they are of such high priorities) even if the one making the statements were a false prophet, or, as III Jn. 1:5-8 teaches, even if you don't and may never know me—just a *stranger* hopefully not just *crying in the wind*.

There is no money being sought nor any organization being promoted by this word of exhortation, which may be why it's not standard fare. However, if you want more biblical information on these matters—**FREE of charge**—with *full* Bible justification, please join us at our web site, www.WillYouLiveForever.org. *More importantly*, read God's word for yourself, and implement it more in your practice of "church." *What lost person* would not be spiritually attracted to that type of Christian community (as they *were* in the first century)?

James Meroney, M.Div., JD (further graduate studies at Dallas Theological Seminary)

SENT TO EVERY POSSIBLE SBC STATE ASSOCIATION DIRECTOR (APRIL 2011)

Dear Director:

As Southern Baptists, we believe in the Great Commission. We even do Great Commission work. But **have we completed** the first step of the Great Commission—*evangelism*—in our Associational area and **can we prove it?** Certainly we can always *re-evangelize* people, but unless we are sure all methods we use have *specifically affected* every lost

person in our area of Texas, we cannot tell God we **did our job** and hear “*well done, thou good and faithful servant*” on this matter. After all, it’s the Great Commission—not the *Pretty Good Commission*.

This task is **NOT impossible**. In fact, ensuring we have reached every lost person is not that difficult if we enlist every willing believer and start **documenting** all we know to claim to be born again. Then just *reach the remainder* at least once with the Gospel.

There is a biblical urgency to completing this task. People die *everyday*, die ‘*prematurely*’ and *unexpectedly* all the time, there are *huge numbers* of lost and Christ could return at any time. It **should not take more than three years**, and America has not been thoroughly harvested in about 30 years. We never know how many hearts have been *prepared by God* in our own fields until we thresh.

If I am able to help you *complete* this task, based on my credentials and materials on www.WillYouLiveForever.org, though I am no longer a full-time Evangelist, I still have the burden to **get the job completed**—not just drips, drabs and pats on our backs for drop-in-the-bucket attempts. **I have yet to find one church** in America that claims they have reached all lost people near their church, and this condition is appalling and very easily remedied.

We do so many activities, even surrounding evangelism. *When will we see* our need to be **objective** in determining how successful all our efforts are at reaching ALL people. Jesus died for them all! **God bless you** as you consider this urgent appeal, and hopefully send it out to the pastors in your Association. **I am soliciting no funds** from anyone, but do not lightly take no for an answer, as there is **nothing else** we are to be about higher than this task, and it is so doable.

Thank you.

James Meroney, JD, M.Div., MBA, BBA

P.S.: Please **don’t disregard** this email because you *don’t know* the messenger, because though I am a stranger and even if I were a *whacko* or Hitler himself, **III Jn. 1:5-8** and **Titus 1:10-13** indicate it is *incumbent* to implement **prioritized, Bible-consistent messages**, and you are on record as having received the message.

**SENT TO THE NAMB, WITH POSITIVE REPLY ABOUT THE SBC’S GPS PROGRAM (SEEKING TO SOLICIT EVERY BELIEVER TO REACH EVERY LOST PERSON WITH THE GOSPEL BY 2020)
(APRIL 2011)**

Dear North American Mission Board staff:

I wrote *over three years ago* that we Southern Baptists need to have a national plan to ensure every lost person has heard the Gospel in the next three years, and received a politely-worded brush-off. Now, three years later, we still have this need.

America has not been thoroughly threshed in *30 years* (though I am not advocating any particular methods, such as EE and CWT, which were used when it was last harvested). Perhaps

a bit of Scripture referencing will answer your objections (unless they would be deemed legalistic or “bibliolatry”):

The Great Commission is to a person—not people groups, not access to the Gospel, not just attempts to reach all, but literal success... Taking the Gospel to every soul—in your case, every American (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15). Nowhere in Scripture does God command us to *attract* anyone to our buildings, but only to go and tell.

Christ was not joking or asking the impossible, and the job would *not be real difficult* if every SBC church simply 1) identifies who claims salvation among their membership, 2) identifies who is currently being selected by members to reach for the Gospel, and 3) reaching the remainder on a community residency list (especially if we even more biblically cooperate with other denominations). Even with just the 5% of believers who ever evangelize, each church can objectively prove they have completed the first stage of the Great Commission, then just monitor move-ins, coming of age children, and re-evangelism, discipleship and other social needs.

We Baptists love slogans and programs, so perhaps you could call it the “**just doin’ my job**” campaign (Lk. 17:10). Not sexy—but *accurate*. As a denomination, we do more than the rest, but we never objectively prove whether we have *completed* the job. Every Christian lay person is to do evangelism (Ac. 8:2, 4, 10:19), and every minister/pastor is to do evangelism (II Tim. 4:5—a “pastoral” epistle!).

It took Jesus three years to mentor His men, and took them and a few others just a little longer to turn the world upside down for Christ (Ac. 17:6). We have much *more manpower*, for a county *teeming* with Christians. Several times delay over a period of time is *rebuked* in Scripture (Lk. 13:6-9; Eph. 5:16; Heb. 5:12-14; I Pet. 4:1-5).

Our urgency is based on the fact that Christ can return at any time, people die every day, ‘prematurely’ and unexpectedly (see your local obituary for proof), the huge disparity between the numbers of lost and 5% of believers ever speaking the Gospel to the lost, and the value of being “in Christ” vs. lost for yet another day.

If you’re inclined to dismiss this letter as the work of a *whacko extremist* or even an *evil person* (due to my tone), please realize even if I am a stranger to you (III Jn. 1:5-8), **or Hitler himself** (Tit. 1:10-13), if the message conforms to Scripture, and is highly prioritized, you do well to heed (vs. dismiss) it.

Finally, to *not* do our job, when it’s *clearly the Scripturally right thing to do* is wrong (Jas. 4:17; Rom. 14:23). If you reject the message because of my *tone*, please review the following reproof and exhortation examples—*when needed*—even by Christ Himself: Mt. 3:7, 12:34, 21:12-13, 13:57, 23:33, Lk. 6:26, Ac. 5:31, Gal. 1:8-10, 2:11-13, II Tim. 3:16-17, 4:1-5, Tit. 1:12-13. Fear the Lord—He will judge us for failing to do what was very doable (Heb. 10:30; Ps. 135:14), just *less-prioritized*.

Let me know how I can help. Thank you.

James Meroney (www.WillYouLiveForever.org), JD, M.Div., MBA, BBA

Business Card/Tract

If ever you're evangelizing, and get '*stumped*' with a *tough* question, forward them to this **web site** address to hopefully lead them to an experts' answer to that '*apologetic*' question—then you can simply continue with your Gospel message). Feel **free** to print the following *business card* on your home computer and keep it in your purse or wallet for such times (or consider ordering **free business cards** through vistaprint.com, to hand to questioning lost people. They certainly can access what I believe to be, by God's grace, the *best Bible information* they will need as **new Christians** thereafter, by knowing a central place from which to **grow, quickly!**).

Tract Example:

Will You Live Forever?

YES!

In Heaven or Hell?

PRAY TO RECEIVE JESUS FOR FORGIVENESS OF ALL YOUR SINS!

WillYouLiveForever.org

30. Giving

30A. Giving to This Ministry

NOTE: We are Not a 501 (C)-3 (i.e., tax-deductible non-profit status) organization, or member of the ECFA YET. Sorry to all who would lose a tax deduction for their donations presently!

Any experienced lawyer volunteers who can make that happen?

Donation Alternatives

- General Ministry Support (i.e., continued writing, speaking, emailing pastors, door-to-door evangelism, Gospel Signs, ‘world events coordination,’ etc.)
See: ministry activity list in **About Us**.
- New York Times Full Backside Page Prime-Time Ad “**Open Letter**” fund.
(Between \$53,000 and \$82,000 I’ve been told by the NYT).
- \$375 per American Church **10-40 Window fund**. (**See:** Details, below, at **28B**)
- I might be interested in purchasing either a copy of your discipleship and evangelism materials (or Commentary and Topication, or both, when finished).

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

All correspondence can be sent to: 4404 Caledonia Creek Lane, Plano, TX 75024

(Unofficially “EDB Ministries” (i.e., Evangelism—Discipleship—Body Life))

It is *envisioned* the following laymen-oriented ministry would rise up to **complete** the Great Commission, *possibly* with the cooperation of godly prioritized evangelists and pastors.

30B. Giving \$375 per American Church To The Great Commission Completion “*Financial Warehouse*”

World Evangelism COMPLETION statistics (as of **1996**) show:

“[There is an] ...uneven distribution of nearly 650 million **active evangelical believers**. [Statistics for] ...**nominal Christians**. These 1.3 billion professing Christians are not active in their faith. [Statistics for] ...**non-Christians within reached people groups**. These 1.8 billion live within reach of an evangelizing church movement. [Statistics for the unreached] ...**10,000 unreached people groups**, containing 2.2 billion people.

Each of the 10,000 unreached peoples needs a team of at least 4 missionaries to enable a church movement to be planted among them—so a total of 40,000 missionaries are needed. Each of these missionaries would need an average of \$15,000 per year to support their work. This means that \$300,000 million more is needed annually. Worldwide, believers earn \$4 trillion a year in disposable income. We only give \$10 billion of this to missions; about ¼ of 1%—or about

\$1500 a year per church. To make up the additional \$300 million needed would require only \$50 more per year from each church! That's only about 50 cents more a year per person! (Once again, if the U.S. had to supply all this money, it's still only about \$375 more per church)." Be A Part of It, pp. 14, 36, by Robby and Jackie Butler, (U.S. Center for World Mission: Pasadena, CA), 1996

We are *extremely interested* in making sure the Church of Jesus Christ actually raises \$375 per American church annually—the amount estimated to be needed to **COMPLETE the Great Commission** (needing adjustment upward for **INFLATION** from these **1996** figures!). Such funds would be “warehoused” and overseen **SOLELY to fund indigenous evangelists in the least evangelized areas of the world** (and only so long as it takes them to raise their own support).

If you are interested in giving to this **most worthy cause**, please let us know and, with *enough interest*, a 501(c)3 non-profit entity will be established to make it **tax deductible** for you. Whether through *this* ministry, or others, **PLEASE ensure that the Great Commission gets completed** and fully **funded**, and earmark your gifts to such ministries specifically for that purpose!—

31. Bibliography

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32. Topical Index

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33. Gospel Signs

GOSPEL SIGNS

Though I have not spoken much about the various methods I have been led to use in evangelism, the following pictures document the progression of thought in more clearly communicating the Gospel in public places (i.e., the small and excessively wordy signs rarely get used anymore). Thousand have seen the Gospel through these professionally-created metal signs, and friends and relatives have taken them to about wherever 3,000 or more are expected to gather. Thanks to John Chalker of Houston Arbor Care (now in San Antonio) for his gracious gifts!

Some of the many venues these signs have been seen at include the only vehicular access to the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Show (only one ‘forced’ entrance, with commuter buses entering every 30 seconds), the public opening to the then-new Mormon Tabernacle in North Houston, downtown Houston and 3 Freeway shoulders the day after 9-11, just outside the main entrance to the Houston Intercontinental Airport the busiest day of the Thanksgiving weekend, on the I-10 Freeway shoulder as traffic from San Antonio slowed to a crawl the weekend before Christmas, the Houston Marathon (right behind a news famous reporter who glared at the message, and mumbled, ‘not that’), the BP 300 (and MS 150) Bike “race” from Houston to Austin, and other select venues.

The signs exhorting Christians to evangelize have been to the Promise Keepers Convention, and 4 mega churches in Houston (including Lakewood Church, among three others), the global Day of Prayer meeting in Dallas, Fellowship Church (Second Baptist Houston’s son’s main campus after ABC revealed financial improprieties), and possibly the largest church in Dallas/Fort Worth.

I HOPE the reader will be convicted to do at least the same thing in your own town or city. Suggested venues include such events as finding the largest 10-25 churches in your vicinity, YOUR own version of my DFW events such as the 2011 Super Bowl, Byron Nelson golf classic, Plano Hot Air Balloon Festival, Christian Day at 6 flags, Texas Motor Speedway races, Dallas Cowboys’ first season game, Global Day of Prayer, Ft. Worth Livestock and Rodeo, Texas State Fair, July 4th events, pastor conferences, national denomination annual meetings, Christian rock concerts, evangelistic crusades, etc. (I trust you to be smart enough to decipher which events are for evangelizing vs. exhorting Christians to evangelize!).

P.S.: As a PERFECT illustration of how YOU can evangelize, I just learned my digital camera—how to use and download from it. I had feared it would be complicated and really didn’t care to learn, but just as these photos appear here (though primitively), if you’ll but do evangelism, you’ll probably learn—as did I with digital photos—that it’s not that difficult, and certainly my fears were unjustified.

God bless you as you join the fight of the ages. –Jim Meroney

To Have Eternal Life...

✝ PRAY TO ❤️
RECEIVE JESUS

FOR FORGIVENESS
OF *ALL* YOUR SINS!

--The BIBLE, **John 3:16**