

What's Wrong With the Gospel Part 4

by Keith Green

The gospel has been reduced to a shallow and unbiblical formula, leading people astray with false promises and half-truths.

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Scripture: Matthew 7:21

Topics: "Discipleship", "Salvation"

Description

This sermon addresses the flaws in modern gospel practices, emphasizing the need for a return to authentic discipleship and a genuine presentation of the gospel message. It critiques man-made inventions that have diluted the gospel, such as shallow follow-up programs and distorted counseling methods. The speaker highlights the importance of allowing individuals to seek God on their own, avoiding the pressure of false conversions and emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers towards true holiness and understanding of salvation.

Transcript

Okay, welcome to the last of a four-part series on what's wrong with the gospel. We're going to be doing the second part of the second part. Okay, this is section two of what's wrong with the gospel from the track that I wrote for the last day's newsletter a year ago, and we're going to be doing the second part starting at other man-made inventions that have made the gospel very shallow and therefore unbiblical.

Before we start, as in way of review, we went over the sinner's prayer and the altar call, and I would really appreciate it. We're probably going to make cassette tapes available of this that you wouldn't listen to any of the parts out of order. I know that if you're listening to this fourth part now you're going, you know, I got to go back and listen to parts one, two, and three.

I would, if there's any way possible, I would like that people listen to it in order because it is a systematic study of what's been taken away, what's been added, and the final results of adding these things and what we need to do to correct it, the problem. More than anything else, we want to see God glorified in our crusades. We want to see God glorified even in this meeting, and some of you that are watching this might not even really be saved in the biblical sense.

That's for you to know. I can't tell you whether you are or not, but if you're not, you're going to feel a little bit uneasy as you work for God, you know. If you're really not saved, if you're really not a Christian, you're

going to be a little uneasy working for God, and there are a lot of people who work for God who, on the outside, who inside are not really yielded up to Him, and that's a shame, and it's a heartbreak, and unless they find out by the end of their life, they're going to be one of those people who Jesus said, you know, some will come and say, Lord, Lord, but I'll say, depart from me, I never knew you.

They'll say, but Lord, we cast out demons, and we healed the sick, and we did this and that. We spoke in tongues. We went to church.

We taught Sunday school. Okay, I am presuming that if you've been invited to be a counselor, and by the fourth installment of this study, after seeing a couple other studies by myself and others, that you've either become a Christian or you've become so disgusted, you don't want anything to do with this stuff, and that's what the truth does. It divides the sheep from the goats and the soul from the spirit and the truth from error, and that doesn't mean there aren't gray areas.

No, it doesn't. It just means, basically, that people are either friends of Christ or enemies of Christ, even if they walk around in the middle for a while, they can't stay there as long as the pure unadulterated truth comes forth. It's gonna smart.

It's gonna hurt them. The truth will either bless you. Remember the light, you know, it says in John 3, it says those who love the light come to the light.

They're not afraid that it's going to expose something in their lives. They look for the light. They grow toward the light, but those who hate God, who are enemies of God, they don't want to come to the light because there are things hidden in their lives they don't want to come to the surface.

Okay, before we start tonight, let's pray and ask God's blessing, his anointing, and his clarity of our minds that we might be enlightened to know him better. God, we're not looking to ourselves tonight. We're looking to your throne.

We're not looking to become bigger Christians or even better Christians. We're looking to better please you. We're not looking to get a name or to work with some big crusade or some big or to build up our own ministry or our own names, God, even myself.

We're looking to build up your kingdom and to build up the number of people and the quality of the people that are serving you, that are going to come into your kingdom through these efforts. We know that, God, nothing, nothing can be wrong if we do it for you with a sincere heart, according to the truth, and nothing will work together for bad if we really love you. You said that all things, everything works together for good, even our ignorance, even our mistakes, God.

Even our past sins, once we repent of them, can be turned around for a testimony. I mean, that's always so amazes me, God, that heroin addicts can get up, talk about their heroin addiction, and lead people to Christ. How you can redeem even the dirt clods and make them into diamonds, God, that that's the business you're in.

You buy us up when we're worthless and you make us into jewel-encrusted gems for your kingdom and your treasury. God, we're so grateful that that's the kind of God you are, that you don't buy us up and rip us off, but you buy us up when we're worthless and make us priceless objects for your possession. Holy Spirit, come and possess our souls.

We do want to be possessed of God's Holy Spirit. We want to know your truth and we want to be enlightened to follow you. Take away from us everything that's not of you tonight.

Slice the devil down in our lives. Nail us to the cross, God. Nail us to the cross so that we can have a resurrection Easter morning with you.

Any part of us that is still of sensual, earthly, selfish design, God, just destroy it tonight. Crucify it. Someone once said, God, that crucifixion is the only kind of death you can't do for yourself.

You can only nail one of your hands down, the other one somebody else has got to do. God, nail us. Put us to death.

Please, God, so that we might live. Every misconception, let it be destroyed. In Jesus' name, we love you, Lord.

Amen. And amen doesn't mean goodbye. It means we don't talk to God directly anymore.

We're going to talk to him through our hearts until the next prayer, inward prayer. Okay, we've talked about the altar call, the sinner's prayer, some terms that have been cheaply used. Tonight, we're going to talk about some physical things that people have done and then get down to the brass tacks of what this whole study and series of counselor training programs is for.

And that is, what is discipleship? I mean, what is a counselor but a discipler? And what is discipleship? Okay. Now, it's hard to talk about certain things without mentioning names. It's hard to talk about malaria without mentioning the disease's name or where it was used or whatever.

I mean, where it's gone forth to say there's a breakout of malaria, but we want to... we don't want to mention any names, so it's broken out somewhere that way, you know. It's hard not to. We're going to just... I'm not going to use names.

I don't want to offend anybody. I just want to offend the devil. I want to offend lies and I want to offend half-truths.

And I want to offend myself if I'm wrong too. Anyway, one of the things is quick and easy one-two-three-steps-to-salvation booklets. Now, you notice I didn't count to four.

Now, I can certainly not fault the intentions nor the integrity of the men and organizations responsible for these little tools. One of the best known of these booklets has been printed in over 30 languages and has over 100 million copies in circulation. Sounds like charades, doesn't it? Sounds like.

With that in view, it is even more urgent for me to say that unless these or any other gospel booklets contain the same message that our Lord preached and commanded his disciples to spread to every kindred nation, then they are worse than inadequate tools. They're wicked. Boy, did I get mail on that one.

Wicked, they said. These little things, I got saved reading that book. I got, my brother-in-law got saved.

I gave it to him. He checked the little thing in the back. Well, like I said before, if he got saved using any un- or quasi-biblical method, it's because his heart had the right biblical attitude and desires.

And God used Balaam's donkey. And if God can use Balaam's donkey, he can use the Saturday evening post or the Sunday funnies to lead someone to Christ. And I'm not comparing this book to that.

This is worse. It's worse only because it belittles God in the gospel. And I'm not going to tear the book apart.

I'm going to tear the concept apart, because the concept is not wickedly designed, but it has wicked results. People come into the kingdom, so-called, and some of them do get saved, like I said, because they just jumped out and bid on anything, and they got pulled into the ship. Some of them do get saved, but they immediately swallow the wrong bill of goods.

Now, why is it wicked? It says in Proverbs that, like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the unfaithful messenger to him who sends them. Now, unfaithful messenger, that's what this book is, or these booklets. Paul said that if we are really Christians, then we are ambassadors of Christ, living epistles, he calls us.

We are God's sole representatives in this foreign land called the world. Now, with that analogy in mind, consider what a president would think of an ambassador to a foreign country, say Russia, who is told to deliver an extremely urgent message that will involve the peace of the whole world. And that ambassador, even with the best intentions, gives only a small part of the message in such a way as to make a very different impression, in fact, the exact opposite impression, than what the president wanted him to make.

What do you think that president will do to the ambassador when he finds out the damage done? Now, most follow-up programs in the United States use booklets like these. Most of them use the one that I was referring to. They use booklets like these.

Here's the easy one, two, three steps that you need to know, and then you can get saved if you understand that. None of these concepts, not one of them, is presented in the way the Bible presents them. In fact, one or two of them are presented exactly the opposite.

And not intentionally, and I'm sure the authors and perpetrators of this literature and the users of it have bought the bill of goods so much in this theological way of thinking about God as the goody-goody ice cream man that's just waiting to bless everybody, that they want to perpetrate that, and that's what they think has been blessing them in their lives, and so on. Now, God is a merciful, loving God, and I'll never put down anyone who says that. I'll never put down saying that.

But there's a lot of difference between merciful and loving and just waiting to pour out abundant blessing on the earthly plane to everybody. Every one of the disciples, with the exception of Judas who killed himself, were martyred. Now, John was martyred.

They say he was boiled in oil and it didn't burn him, so they had to throw him off into the Isle of Patmos because God wasn't done writing the Bible through him yet. The other guys, you know, James was beheaded in the Bible. They say Paul was beheaded, and Peter was crucified upside down, and Bartholomew, church history tells us, was skinned alive in Rome.

Had a skin pulled off him while he was alive. Now, if they would have given Bartholomew that little booklet when he got saved, he wouldn't have been ready for that, but Jesus turned to Peter and says, when you're older, men will gird you and take you to a place where you do not wish to go. And it says, literally in John, he was saying this to indicate what kind of death with which he would glorify God.

Can you imagine getting one of these booklets and say, here's a little prophecy of the death in which you're going to glorify God with? People turn right around and say, wait a minute, you told me that God had a wonderful plan for my life. That don't sound too wonderful. We're selling people a bill of goods in American Christianity that is not the biblical bill of goods.

We're telling them that God is just going to bless their socks off. Now, it does say that things that eye has not seen, nor ear has not heard, nor mind imagined, has God prepared for them who love him. God has it waiting for us.

People don't like that. They call it pie in the sky when you die. I want it now, baby.

And so we, smart as we are, give people what they want now. It's kind of like promise them anything, but give them the Lord. You know, just tell them that Jesus is going to make them rich.

Tell them Jesus is going to solve all their problems. It's going to be peaches and cream in Christ. Jesus promises persecution and suffering and division.

I was reading that today. You know, I used to read the hard parts of the gospel, the ones that people thought that was too rough. You know, I used to read it and go, yeah, yeah, yeah.

And then the last couple of years, I've been trying to get balanced out, you know. And so I'm reading that kind of nice kind of chiffon parts of the gospel. And they're in there.

Today, I just, you know, I just went back on one of my old favorite scriptures. I hadn't read it in about a year. And it says, do you think I came to grant peace on the earth? No, I came to, I came to bring division.

From now on, he says, may a household be divided, two against three, father against son, daughter against mother-in-law. It's going to be a bad time in the family for everybody who follows me. That's a promise.

I'll tell you what, those aren't the promises that these kind of people like to claim. And they're just as precious to me as the promise that says, fear not, little flock, for it's the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Because all of God's promises are precious.

The ones that I'm going to suffer and be persecuted and the ones that he's going to keep me and hold me and finish my faith. They're all precious because they're all promises and they're all from God. And we can't pick and choose the ones we want and the ones we like.

Just like we can't, we can't pick and choose the children we have. You might have a beautiful blue-eyed, blonde-haired, beautiful little girl and the next one might be mongoloid or retarded. And if you don't be a good parent to that second one, what kind of a parent are you? You're only going to be a parent to the pretty ones? Are you only going to love the things that God brings you that are good and pretty? Job said to his wife, shall we only thank God in goodness and prosperity or shall we not also bless him in adversity? Isn't life on the earth a bummer? I mean, isn't it? When we follow Jesus Christ, doesn't he promise that we're going to suffer and take up our cross, but that he's going to give us joy inside, that it's going to be beyond understanding? The only reason it's beyond understanding is because the stuff that we're going to have to go through would make anybody that was half sane miserable.

But we're going to still be able to smile through it. Not yippity-doo-dah, you know, we're not going to be able to jump for joy all the time, but we're going to be able to smile through it and go, God's got it under control and I'm his servant and even though it looks like the devil's winning, I know, I read the end of the book, I cheated, I know who wins at the end. I saw the end of this movie, you know, when the devil's got it all wrapped up, here comes the cavalry out of the sky.

I mean the cavalry, I always get that mixed up. What? What? The cavalry? The cavalry. It's not, it's not cavalry? No, that's what I said, here comes the cavalry out of the sky.

I said first on the calvary. Oh yeah, it does make sense both ways. We'll edit that out later.

Okay. Booklets like these usually mention a sort of repentance. I, like, like, you know, you must turn from your sins to Jesus, but they rarely explain what turning really means.

This is also true of such other vital terms like, you know, little things like Lord. They usually refer to Jesus as Lord, but again, they, they seldom define Lordship and people go their merry way believing they have the full right to continue running their own lives as long as they call Jesus their Lord. And I've seen that over, I mean, I get letters from, from girls that say, hey, I made Jesus my Lord and I'm pregnant and I don't understand why he's not helping me.

Or a guy that says, hey, I accepted Jesus a year ago and I've been having trouble getting up smoking or dope or, or sleep with my girlfriend. I don't understand. He became my Lord.

Why am I still sinning? I write him back. I said, because you're still sinning. That doesn't make much sense to them.

Well, wait a minute. If Jesus was my Lord, he's supposed to help me not sin. That's like getting married and your wife's going to help you not commit adultery.

That ain't going to happen. Your wife can't help you not commit. You're going to have to not commit adultery and the love that you share in Jesus will make you not want to.

But that's the whole ridiculous thing. We have all these beautiful words, Lord and the blood of Christ and the cross of Jesus. And they're just words until we understand what they really mean.

And we know the person who brings the meaning into our hearts. It's got to be a relationship. Christianity is a relationship.

Unless as a counselor or a Christian, you present a Jesus, not a message, but a Jesus, unless you turn people onto and introduce people to a person, the way, the truth, the life, not just a set of, you know, a set of doctrines that you lay out. Well, you know, you got to remember that this is the way you are. This is the way God is.

And you've got it all figured out up here. And the person's going, well, thank you. I can believe that.

That's true. Yes, I agree. And they go home going, well, I guess I'm a Christian now.

I agreed that everything he said was true, you know, and they never meet Jesus at all. And you go home going, you know, John accepted the Lord last night, let him in the prayer. And you think everything's fine.

And you see him a week later and he's, he's half drunk or, or he's having trouble or, you know, nothing's happened. Oh, don't worry. Now don't trust your feelings.

That's the next line we give him, you know, don't try it. Well, going ahead of myself again. Okay.

I don't care how many letters I get saying how much good has been done by such ministries, but the people that sent me the letters didn't, didn't read that part. I'm not going to have to get saying how much good has been done by such, such a ministry or how many have been saved through such and such a booklet. Jesus said, you shall know them by their fruits.

And in another place, he says that your fruit should remain. That means it should last. I believe we shall see in that great day.

Oh, this is heavy. I believe we shall see in that great day when God spreads out the lives of men in judgment, how many were truly converted by the efforts of these ministries and how many were turned aside from the path of righteousness being led to believe the pleasant half truths contained in these shallow and false epistles that have been printed to the ends of the earth by people with the best intentions and the highest integrity. Lord Jesus, I am not mad at these people.

I'm really not. I am mad that people are getting ripped off. That just burns me up.

And look, it bumps, you know, you, you see the news every now and then you hear about somebody that got ripped off, some little old lady who got ripped off all her money by some, some flim flam man that came through town, you know, and it makes us all mad, you know, or there was, there was a story on the news the other night about this family who lost their house in LA because they didn't pay a \$51 light tax bill. They lost her family. And the president even called up this guy, but we as Christians should get mad that there are people with good intentions, ripping people off with false half truths.

It should just make us furious to get on our knees and say, God, please stop them. Even if they mean well, have you ever met a Mormon didn't mean well? Have you ever met a Mooney that didn't mean well? Have you ever been to the airport and meet a Christian that didn't mean well? I haven't. They all mean well, but they're all sincere and they're sincerely deceived.

And I'm not saying that these people are in that bag, but in the same way, in the very same way, they are perpetrating a deception that I think is even more dangerous than the cults. You know why? Because the most dangerous counterfeit is the one that's hardest to tell that it's a counterfeit. The worst lie is the one that's closest to the truth.

If I tell you it's going to snow in July, that's not a very dangerous lie. But if I tell you it's okay to drive with ball tires on the snow, I just read a report on it. That's a dangerous lie because the first one is ridiculous.

It doesn't snow in July in Texas, as you well know. But it's possible that I could read a report. They tell you that if you're driving on snow and ice to let some air out of your tires so that they get kind of spread out.

If I tell you a lie that could sound true, that could be true, it sounds like it. If I make a counterfeit that is so perfect that no one can tell the difference except the most excruciating expert, that's not, no, discerning expert, then people, it's a dangerous one. You put Mickey Mouse on a \$20 bill, you know, it's not dangerous.

In fact, they won't even come and bust you. We can print up \$20 bills all day long with Mickey Mouse. They think it's a joke because it never passed.

They wouldn't even put us in jail. They wouldn't even, you know, put us in the paper probably, you know, maybe on the news even. But there you, you know, you make one that looks a little bit like it, you can get in trouble.

You make one that looks just like it, the FBI will be right at your house. And so the cults that say, you know, you know, like the Moonies that say Jesus didn't fulfill his role, he should have got married. Well, you know, Christians aren't in trouble by doctrine like that.

They go, that's funny, you know. It's not, it's not funny when you see what it does to people, but it, you know, it's kind of, I chuckle a little bit when I hear stuff like that. But when I hear stuff like this, that, that Christians, believers, people that I know believe and love and know Jesus, present a gospel that's so close, that has a lot of scripture, but yet presents the exact opposite view that Jesus presents.

That just burns me up and I bet it breaks God's heart and it should break ours. And we shouldn't go and start picketing those ministries. We should just try to be a good example and go forth.

And I love these people and I, I have some friends that, that work within these ministries and I pray for them and hope the best for them and would pray that God would lead them to make the changes. Boy, did we get, we've gotten a lot of letters also from people within these ministries going, thank you for what you wrote. I have been having a terrible feeling in my heart using these tools and I'm, and you've, you've opened my eyes and I'm going to quit using them and use the Bible because that's safe.

Amen. The poor Jesus syndrome. We'll go through this quickly.

This is the form of preaching that misuses the scripture in 320, behold, I stand at the door and knock. You can read the scripture, you know, behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any should open to me and I will come in and sup with him and he with me, explain all truth to him. How many evangelists have used that scripture to paint a pathetic picture of Jesus standing outside the door, waiting, knocking, knocking, waiting for the sinner to open up and let Jesus in.

Sometimes these preachers go on and on until it starts to sound like, ah, poor Jesus out there in the cold, shivering, waiting for someone to let him in. Won't you go ahead and let poor Jesus in your heart? Is anyone home? What a line of reasoning. First of all, the statement of the Lord, the Lord's revelation is not to be unsaved.

It's to the church in Laodicea. Look at 316. It says to the angel at Laodicea, the picture is truly pathetic.

Jesus is standing outside of his own church, knocking for them to let him in. Does that sound familiar? And if there's any doubt left to who he's talking to, look at verse 22. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit is saying to the churches.

Okay, that ought to tell you who he's talking to. Second of all, the truth of the matter for sinners is the exact opposite. Jesus is not outside of their world, knocking to come in.

They are outside of his kingdom. And they can knock all night like the five foolish virgins in Matthew 25, but Jesus will never let them in unless they meet their requirements. A humble and contrite heart and a

complete disgust for sin.

Then and only then will God deliver them from their slavery to sin and transfer them by his grace to the kingdom of his loving kindness. God will never repent for someone. Never.

He can't. He's got nothing to repent for. He's never done anything wrong.

He can make it easy for you to repent. He can beg you and woo you and draw you, but he can't make you repent, nor can he repent for you. He will take every step possible to make the sinner see the folly of his ways.

But the final move, the surrender, the desperate gasp of, I'm a fool to run my own life. Lord, show me the way to your door, and I'll knock and knock and beg forgiveness. I'll do anything, anything, anything you say.

Then and only then can God save a sinner. Okay? Oh boy. Now this stuff coming up, well, let's go back real quick over the other one.

The poor Jesus syndrome is just making Jesus again the one who is the one that we need to accept. You know, he's the one we need to let in and all that other stuff. We have to ask him if we can come in, just like the virgins who knock at the door.

Let us in. This other stuff, the bumper stickers and cliches and Christian slogans, they're just again examples of abuses, of misconceptions, and a wrong view of Christ in the gospel. We'll go through this too.

It pains me to see the beautiful truths of scripture being plastered about like beer advertisements, or as they say in New Zealand, advertisements. Many think it is wise to get the word out in this way, but I believe that we're really just inoculating the world with bits and pieces of truth. We're giving them their gospel shots.

You know, if they want to keep you from getting malaria, they'll shoot a little bit of malaria into you until your body builds up antibodies, and they can't, and then when you get, you know, it keeps you from getting the real thing. If, whatever, a flu shot, they put in some dead flu cells, and your body builds up antibodies. Well, that's what I think that we do.

We put a little bit of the truth out there on our bumper sticker. They see Jesus, Jesus, you know, praise God, hallelujah, Jesus is coming, and all kinds of little truths. Jesus is coming, it's true, but it isn't presented with any love.

It isn't presented with any human kindness or spiritual anointing, and these people get numb to it, you know. It's like, oh, Jesus, yeah, I saw Ernest Ainsley that night, and I saw Robert Shuler that night, and I saw Billy Graham that night, or whoever, you know, and then it's all, it's like they had that thing on Prey TV, you know. They had an actor on there that I know to be a fact who's not a Christian, this guy that played the preacher in that show, who I read a thing in People Magazine once on the guy, that he meditates.

It's in the Transcendental Meditation, and he meditates every day, even if he's traveling. In the airports, he meditates for 20, 30 minutes every morning, and that guy had watched TV preachers, and he made a

better TV preacher than anyone I'd ever seen that was a real one. The guy sounded more sincere, less corny, temperate, balanced, concerned.

Man, I mean, some of the TV preachers embarrass me. I can't even watch their shows. I want to put my, I want to put a brick through the TV when I see some of them.

Go look what they're doing, but this guy, man, you know that they had an 800 number that they, a phony one that they flashed across the screen. Do you know that 50,000 people called that 800 number that night? That's how believable this guy was. It was in the paper the next day.

The operator says, the circuits were jammed. People thought it was real, and the guy was sincere, and he was an actor and did a better job than the Christians because he studied Christians acting, and he got more reaction than a lot of preachers do. So anyway, this gospel shot thing is, I think people are building up resistance by these things.

We're giving them their gospel shots, and we're making it hard for them to catch the real thing. People become numb to the truth when we splash our gaudy sayings in their eyes at every opportunity. You really think this is opening them up to the gospel, or is it really just another way for us to get smiles, waves, and approval from others in the born-again club out in the supermarket parking lot who blow their horns with glee when they see your honk-if-you-love-Jesus bumper sticker? What about those other sayings, you know, the quasi-biblical ones like, please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet? By the way, that's a true statement.

That's a true statement that we should be patient with one another, that God isn't finished with us making us into his image, and that's true. But again, well, let's read on and make my point in the thing, and we'll go back to it, which can be a really horrible replacement for I'm sorry, and besides, it puts the blame on the wrong person. The reason I'm such a creep is because God isn't finished with me yet, you know.

Now, if you say to somebody, brother, I'm really sorry for what I've done. Please be patient with me, you know. God ain't finished yet.

Now, that's okay, but most of the time, when that first saying came out, people were wearing the button, you know, and they just had the first letters of each word, you know, please be patient, P-B-P, you know, G-I-F-W-M-Y, you know, it's hallelujah, you know, you could read it and speak in tongues. So, people were going around and using it as an excuse. I mean, I went to one of those seminars, and they gave out the little thing, the stickers and the thing, it was a great saying, you know.

And so, of course, you know, brother, I saw you have a problem with lust, you know, I saw you kind of flirting with all the girls, the Bible said, brother, be patient with me, God isn't finished with me yet, you know. People were using it as an excuse. That doesn't mean that they can use anything as an excuse.

They can say, well, look at Judas, you know, and then hide behind, or the scripture, you know, you know, God's forgiving, you know, all the stuff about God being forgiving. They'll say, well, God will forgive me, you know, they use all kinds of truth for excuses. But I don't think that this is the kind of thing that we should be perpetrating, because it puts the emphasis on the wrong thing.

And if you really want to play stretch the Bible, there is that other fabulous excuse that absolutely ends all quests or expectations for holiness. Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven. I don't like that.

It's true in most cases. It's true, but I don't like it. It's not something we're supposed to be blowing out to the world.

We're supposed to say God is perfect and Christians are forgiven. God is perfect and he wants to forgive you. The gospel is a perfect way to come to God.

I mean, what about, what's all this excuse? Oh, how convenient. You might just as well say Christians aren't moral, just forgiven. Or how about Christians aren't nice, just forgiven.

That might be a little too deep. Oh, no. How about the ultimate? Christians aren't saved, just forgiven.

That might be a little too deep. What we're saying by this glorious piece of prose is, madam, you cannot trust your teenage daughter with my Christian son. You better keep your eye on him.

He's not safe. He's just forgiven. Okay, maybe I've gone a little too far to make a point, but I think the world is completely sick to its stomach with our sayings and witnessing tools.

It's time for us to be expressing the truth with our lives and then the whole truth of God with our lips. Again, the only point I want to make on these sayings and bumper stickers and cliches is that the problem with a saying is that that's all it is. It's a saying.

Jesus says, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, is going to enter the kingdom. Now, what's more gospel than Lord, Lord? Lordy, lordy. I mean, what's more gospel than that? That's right out of the Bible.

Except both times it's used. It's used to put people down. You know, both times when he says, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, he says, many shall come in that day and say, Lord, Lord, but I shall say, depart from me.

Be careful. God isn't interested in your words. In fact, it's by his words we're going to be judged by every idle word that comes out of our mouths.

But God's going to judge us mainly by what's in our hearts. And you can tell what's in somebody's heart by what comes out of their mouth, by what they do with their body, what they do with their actions. These cliches, they kind of just wear people down.

They cloud the real issue. You come, bring them to church, and they go, oh, yeah, that's right. Jesus loves me.

I've heard that. Jesus saves. I've heard that.

I mean, I remember when I was, when I ran away from home when I was 17 up in Western Washington State College in Bellingham, Washington, and it said on the side of, it was in this, at this college, they had a stairway, and the concrete wall, it had written in spray paint, Jesus saves green stamps. I remember laughing at that. It's funny.

I wasn't a Christian, of course. Jesus saves the green stamps. Well, see, the Christians had had bumper stickers through the 50s and 60s that said Jesus saves.

They had, I've seen billboards. It has this picture of Jesus kind of the one with the far, the high forehead and a big long face and the kind of hair that went like, you know, Johnny Cash's back there, and it says, you know, it kind of has this look, and it says Jesus saves dot dot dot, John 3 16. Put people to sleep as they go down the highway.

I don't understand, and then, you know, every now and then somebody tells you testimony about their uncle George had been running away from God all his life, and he saw that saying and pulled over and got saved. You know, God can use Balaam's donkey. He can use, he can use the bumper stickers, and he can use anything if he will.

That doesn't mean that that's his will to have it that way. Do you think God wanted to use Balaam's donkey? Do you think God wanted to strike Paul blind on the road to Damascus? Don't you wish that God would have rather had Paul hear the preaching of Stephen, throw down the coats, and says, I'm getting in the ring with him, you know, cast it at me. There's a story like that in Fox's Book of Martyrs about a guy who was a hedgeman chopping off for the inquisition, and they were taking heads of people off, you know.

One afternoon, they had a line going all the way around the castle. They were just chopping heads off and taking the baskets out and the bodies out, and this guy, he couldn't believe it. The people were all real Christians coming in line going, praise you Jesus.

Oh God, forgive this man. He doesn't know what he's doing. Oh God, I pray for his soul that he would repent for what he's doing.

He doesn't understand it. God, the guy was hearing this. People were singing and rejoicing and kissing each other.

Goodbye. Here, girl. Here, here, Mary, take the baby, you know, and they'd pass the baby over.

They're going to chop the baby's head off too, you know, and put them over there, and they'd go, and the guy finally said to his, to his, to his officer, he says, I can't stand it anymore. Either you get somebody else to do this, or I'm going to get in line, and he got in line and his head chopped off like everybody else, because the spirit of how they were accepting death, which to them was just a doorway to heaven, so convicted the guy, and their prayers for him, and guess who was there? The Holy Spirit tapping him on the shoulder and going, that's true. They're praying for you, and here I am.

He was so touched. I mean, that's touching, to cut people's heads off for smiling at you and loving you while you're doing it. You can't take that too long, and Paul was there watching Steph and having his head bashed in.

When they stone people, it wasn't with pebbles. It was with big blocks of granite, like bricks. They'd pick up stones like, you've seen stones in the, in the, in a stream, you know, like those big rocks that the, that the frogs jump off of.

They'd pick that up and throw it at the guy, crush his skull with a couple of blows, you know, and says that Paul was standing by. He didn't cast the stones, but he was casting his approval. He cast his vote with him, saying, that's right, and he went out and became the worst persecutor of the gospel in those days.

God, it was not God's will for him not to repent. It says that it's God's will. It's not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and I believe that that is our calling.

It's not our calling to make Christianity sound fun. It's not our calling to make it sound groovy. It isn't our call to make it sound interesting or entertaining or any such thing, but it's to make it sound true.

If we can't make it sound true, then we might as well just shut our mouths. Sure, we should become all things to all men. Sure, we should try to reach anybody, use the kind of bait that works, but not paint it so sweet that people lose the value and the meat of it.

Finally, the follow-up program. Here we've come to the whole reason that I've been teaching this study to you, and we've sent it to you on videotape, is because we want you to know the difference between this corny, horrible follow-up situation that's going on in American evangelism and what we want to do based on what we have seen work in the Bible and what we have seen work in the history of the church. And you know what? If our follow-up program 20 years from now becomes the norm and everybody's using that way, then God might start blessing the altar call again, because then people are going to be looking to the inquirer's meeting, and they go, well, you know, have you been to an inquirer's meeting? You know, did you ever go to one of the last days? Well, you're not saved.

Well, if people start doing that, God's going to take his anointing right off of it, and people are going to slip their hands up and get saved every day. You see that? God's only going to use what doesn't take people's eyes off of Jesus as the Savior. The follow-up program.

There's one last great mistake being committed in the name of evangelism. It's rightly called follow-up. I say rightly called because it is following up the same miserable and incomplete gospel with a miserable, incomplete, and false replacement for what the Bible calls discipleship.

Our follow-up usually consists of a packet of literature, which almost always includes a complete list of all church services and functions. This packet also may include many essential items, like a complete Bible study on tithing. Also enclosed is usually at least one tithe envelope.

It's amazing that this is one principle that nearly every new believer is taught right away. That's true. I've been to churches.

I'm not telling you a lie. I've been to churches in my early Christian life when I used to play churches. I'm not against playing churches, but nothing scares sinners like churches.

That's why we use neutral auditoriums. I went to this church, and they take us to the back, and they said, brother, now we want to get people's names and addresses, and here's a little packet we're going to give them. Here's a little card we're going to have them fill out, and it said on the bottom of the card, your name and address and your phone number.

Would you like somebody to visit you? It says, I would like to. I'm coming forward today. Let me see.

It says, I'm coming forward today for the following reason, and they had about eight things that you could check a box in. The first one was salvation. The other one was rededication, and they had for counseling, then a whole bunch of other things, and on one of them was because of tithing.

I want to discuss tithing, or I want to repent because I'm not tithing. That's one of the reasons for coming up to the altar. Then I had other fill in, you know.

I said, I'm sorry, sir, you can't use these in my concert. Why? I said, because I'm only here for the first one, and the other stuff, you can, you know, get somebody else to come in, but, you know, no thank you. That's why we did, that's why we started the last day's newsletter, for God's sake.

That's why we did it, for God's sake. We started the last day's newsletter because so much of what was coming forth at the concerts was such minestrone that we wanted to give people something afterwards. We didn't know we were going to become, you know, what we've become.

We didn't know we were going to have albums. I was signed to Sparrow Records when we started the last day's newsletter. We didn't know we were going to have tracks.

We didn't know, we just thought we're going to have a little newsletter that we didn't even know we were going to have articles. I haven't written an article in my whole life when we put out the first newsletter. We just thought we're going to have a bunch of little news briefs about what was happening in the world that pointed to the soon return of the Savior, and also maybe some exhortation, and then when we're going to come back in town, and a list of books that you could read, and possibly, we wanted to have what we originally call a discipleship network.

We were going to set up a place where people could write to and find a family, or a church, or a fellowship where they could come to and get, you know, get some fellowship counseling, and whatever they need, some encouragement, prayer. But, you know, after we had about 5,000 people on the mailing list, and we got about 50 people writing in saying they want to be on the discipleship network, we didn't know them from Adam, and some of them were kind of looney tunes for Christ. We didn't know, we didn't, we realized that we couldn't refer people to just anybody, and so started the long saga called us.

Now, we do not think that we have a corner on the market of truth. God forbid. I don't want that corner, thank you.

I just want to be a Christian. I don't want to be a prophet. I don't want to be even an evangelist.

I just want to be a Christian. That's all I want to be. That's all I'm interested in being.

If I, when I go to heaven, and God says, well done, you were a good Christian. That's all I care about. I don't care if he says, wow, you led this many to Christ, you put out 100,000 newsletters, or you know, whatever.

I don't care if he says, you were a, you lived up to this word, Christian. Boy, I've made it. I have made it.

I say, hallelujah, I'm here. I've arrived. I'm a Christian, and that's my message, and for some reason, I don't know what the reason is, the church today, God bless them, and God bless us as a church, the church today has gotten caught up in preaching about 10% of the Bible.

The same 10% over and over again, like old reruns of Gilligan's Island, and that used to bug me. I'd read other parts. How come I never heard a sermon on, he who endures to the end shall be saved, or you know, I didn't come to bring peace, but I came to bring division, and all of this stuff.

Why aren't people preaching all that kind of stuff? It used to really bother me. So I said, well, I guess I ought to write an article on this scripture, and wow, there's a whole subject people aren't even dealing with, and then Melody read an article on abortion, and she hadn't read anything in a Christian literature

that really got to the point. Someone do that, and then she did gossip, and then we did this and that, and we started dealing with subject after subject that we hadn't seen, not that we had any corner on it, but that we had not seen any literature that really got right down to the brass tacks in a couple of pages of what the issues were about, and what the issues were about, what's your attitude, what's your character like, what's your relationship with God like, and we always pointed back to the answer was being close with Jesus.

So for some reason that was unique. We never tried to be unique. We just wanted to try to be as close to Jesus as possible, and that somehow made us unique.

It shouldn't be that way. God, it shouldn't be that way. I remember the time I went to a church and played at this church in Virginia.

Oh, I can't think of the city. I think it starts with an R. I think in Raleigh, Virginia, but anyway, it's not in Raleigh, Virginia. Richmond, Richmond.

Okay, so I played in Richmond, Virginia, and the night before, I played in the church. I got in the night before Melody and I flew in, and they took us out to a Farrell's ice cream parlor, and we were sitting there, and the waitress came up to us, and I was about two, three years old in the Lord, and I used to witness to everything that moved. So the waitress came up, and before she had the second person's order at the table, I said, do you know Jesus? That was my subtle way of witnessing in those days, and she said, well, no, not really.

I just put, oh, you know, when you come to this concert, I'm giving at this church tomorrow night, and I want you to know Jesus, and the pastor's you know, looking at me like that, and he introduced me the next night, and he said, when he introduced me, he says, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in the church, I just want to say that this brother really believes what he says. I mean, we went out to the, he is a great brother. We went out to Farrell's last night, and we couldn't shut him up.

He's witnessing to the waitress. He's a real kid, and everybody's going, roar, that's really great, and I got up there, and I was sad. I was going, well, wait a minute.

Why did you just give me a, now, I'm not very tactful, I got to admit. I seem to say things, I seem to open my mouth and change feet often, and I'm really sorry for being that way. I don't want to be that way.

I really want to learn how to be sweet, and gentle, and kind, and all kinds of stuff that the Bible says the fruit of the Spirit brings in your life, and I'm working on it, and he's working on me, but this night, I kind of got up there, and I ripped that pastor up one side down the other, and I didn't mean to. I was ripping a concept up, and it seemed that he took it personally, and I said, how dare we lift up anybody for doing what God expects every Christian to do. That is stupid, and I didn't say that's stupid.

I say it now. It still is stupid, but I said, that is really bad that we shouldn't do that, and everybody's going, yeah, praise God, you know. Well, anyway, the pastor called me back after the service and says, you embarrassed me.

I said, well, bro, I didn't mean to. That was it. I haven't played in Richmond since.

That's okay. That's okay. It's not okay that I hurt the guy, and if I had to do it over again, I would say it in a different way, but it really made me mad.

Not at him, really. I've never been mad at individuals or personalities, but it made me mad that somebody thought that it was unique to do what God wanted us all to do, and it took me a couple years to get over the shock of that fact that if you did what God wanted you to do, Christians would think you were a super-Christian, when we're all supposed to be super-Christians. We're all supposed to be super-obedient, super-loving, and you know what super-loving means? Being loving like God is.

Super-obedient means being just like Jesus was to his Father. It means being normal. Watch my knees.

I've got a book called *The Normal Christian Life*. You read it, and you fall on your face because it's so above you, you know, but the problem is that Christianity and the church today has become so subnormal that a normal Christian is considered abnormal. It's not supposed to be like that.

So anyway, going back to this follow-up thing, in my studies on the life of Jesus, it has amazed me that he never had a follow-up program. It was usually his habit to let people follow him up. That's profound.

He never had to go door-to-door looking for that fellow whom he healed last week, wanting to share another parable or two. Hey, did you hear the one about, you know? He always seemed to have the attitude of, well, if they want life, then they'll have to come and follow me. It wasn't like, well, you know, I'm too big.

No, it was just, if you want me, here I am. He went to the next town, and he never had any trouble with people following him. He had multitudes follow him, until he came out with the tough words like, eat my flesh and drink my blood, and then everybody had a dentist appointment.

Can't you see what fools we are? We preach a man-made, plastic gospel. We get people to come forward to the altar by bringing psychological pressures that have nothing to do with God. Then we leave them in a prayer that they are not yet convinced they need to say, and then to top it all off, we give them counseling, telling them it is a sin to doubt that they're saved.

That's the saddest thing. Oh, counselors, Christians, disciplers, don't ever tell a person he's saved. That's an insidious thing to do.

That's like telling a male that he's a male. That's like telling a wife that she's married. It should be a fact to the person if it's true.

Nobody's got a right to tell a Christian that they're saved except the Holy Spirit himself. Now, sure, there's such a thing as condemnation. Sure, there's such a thing as doubt.

Then you have to very carefully encourage somebody to check the scriptures, and like Paul says, Paul didn't say, of course you're saved. He says, examine yourselves to see if you're in the faith, right, lest you fail the test, lest you fail to recognize this fact that Jesus Christ lives in you. Now, what's worse? A believer who's worried he's an unbeliever, or an unbeliever who thinks he's a believer.

What's worse? A guy that's really saved that's having doubts about his salvation, or a guy that isn't saved that's having no doubts about it. I would rather see a believer have doubts the rest of his life and authentically get to heaven than an unbeliever go through the rest of his life having no doubts about it at all. It never hurts to doubt something that is true about us as long as it's true about us.

And if it's not true, hallelujah, doubt all you want to because it's going to lead you to find the truth. But if you are saved, nobody can talk you out of it. And Paul says, not height, nor depth, nor any created thing can separate us from the love of Christ.

He says, I'm convinced of that. Not my doubts, not your doubts, not anything. Not anything created.

And I want to tell you something. If somebody comes to you and says, brother, I don't know if I'm saved. Say, all right, you're not saved.

Get saved. Now, if they're already saved, what do they got to lose? Maybe a couple of nights sleep, but not eternity. Maybe a couple of days of perplexion or confusion.

Hey, confusion's a bummer. Jesus went through it the night before he died. He went through confusion.

He went through being perplexed, being upset. He sweat drops of blood. We've already talked about that a few times.

It didn't stop him from going through with what God wanted him to do. It's better to hesitate and to do it. Remember, there was two brothers, two brothers.

One of them said, when his father says, go out in the field, he says, no. But later he went. The other guy says, I'll go.

But he never showed up. Which one did when his father asked? What does that parable mean? It means it's better to stop and think and hesitate and even say, I'm not going, God, like Jonah did, but go. Then to say, hallelujah, praise God, I'm saved, I'm saved.

And then when the chips are down, you're gone. There's nothing worse than self-confidence. Don't ever do anything to bolster a person's self-confidence.

Bolster a person's faith with love, example, prayer, encouragement. Encouragement is not excitedly shooping somebody along the path. It means being a positive help to them.

It means being there when they need you, but shutting up unless they ask you or unless you really need to say, wait a minute, you're in trouble. Sure, if somebody runs out in the street and a car is coming, it's your duty to kick them out of the way if you have to, even if you break their ribs. It's better to have broken ribs than your friend all over the street.

That's true in the spiritual life too. If somebody's entering a fatal mistake, say they're going to go get an abortion or they're right in the midst of falling all the way down, well, then it's time to pull out the stops, call them up, pull your hair out, do whatever you can. It says, save some by snatching them out of the fire if you've got to.

There is a time for being heavy. There's a time for being even a pest. Remember the guy that was bothering his friend at midnight to get what he needed and the nag that was trying to get what she wanted from the judge and he says, though I do not fear God or men, I'll give it to her because she's wearing me out.

There is a time for that, but the norm is in the gentle, peaceable way of the Lord to allow somebody to come to Christ. Don't push them down the aisle and when they're thinking, don't say, don't try to talk to

them like, well, have you seen this tire? Have you seen, like you're selling them a used car? This is a life changing eternal decision. Let's finish this and we'll talk some more.

Conclusion. Now we come to the end of this Bible study. Yes, that's just what it's turned out to be.

I hope you'll take the time to look up each of the scriptures given and see for yourselves what God has said in his word about all these things. I realize that these articles will step on many toes and some might even be deeply offended, but that is not my intention at all. My only prayer is that through this little effort, many will begin to take up the cross and preach the good news of our salvation with the same power and anointing that Jesus promised and gave to the early church and that when we ministers stand before him on that great day, that we will be able to say with Paul, I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. I have fully preached the gospel of Christ so that we may hear those sweet words from our Lord's lips.

Well done, that good and faithful servant. Beloved family, the world around us is going to hell. Not because of communism, not because of television, not because of drugs or sex or alcohol or even the devil himself.

It's because of the church. We are to blame because we alone have the commission, the power and the truth of God at our ever constant disposal to deliver sinner after sinner from eternal death. And even though some are willing to go into the streets or the prisons, foreign lands, or even just next door, they're taking a watered down, many are taking a watered down, distorted version of God's message, which God has not promised to anoint.

That is why we are failing. And unless we admit, that's, you know, that's one of the dirtiest words of the English language to most people. I'm a failure.

Nobody wants to admit it. Unless we admit that we are failing, then I'm afraid there's no hope for us or the world around us. We have a choice between causing eternal tragedy for our whole generation or bringing our beloved God a whole family full of good and faithful servants.

Please pray over all this and God is waiting to meet you in the closet. Now to finish this up, to finish this up, I just want to say that as a counselor or as anybody who's a, some of you might be listening to this on cassette tape and you're not going to be a counselor at one of our crusades, well then you're a counselor for God's crusade on the earth. You know, you don't even have to ever get our newsletter to please God or listen to one of my albums or anything.

This is not a message to get you closer to our doctrines or anything like that. It's to point out the horrible weakness in today's modern methods and to lift up the power of Jesus's ancient methods that work newly today. And if you're going to follow somebody up, okay, we're gonna, I'm gonna, I'm gonna preach and sing at the concert, all right, the next day myself or Winky Prattney or Martin or one of our elders is going to preach at the so-called inquirer's meeting.

It's an inquirer's meeting because it's for people who are inquiring about the salvation of their souls. We may sing a song, we may pray. At this point, we haven't had one yet.

We don't really know how it's going to fall into place. Hopefully God will keep it fluid so it's different every time so it doesn't turn into a crystallized traditional thing. But most likely it's going to be a time of instruction

for maybe up to a half an hour to an hour and then a time of quiet.

Maybe there'll be a room for people to talk and just a place for people to just kneel down, lay down, stand up, jump up, sit up, and pray. Find out. This might be people's first prayers.

They might be, they won't even know how to say, God, are you there? I mean, they don't, people, you have to learn how to pray. The disciples said to Jesus, Lord, teach us to pray. They had to learn.

Praying doesn't come natural to people who are used to talking like this. You know, all of a sudden you're talking to the air because you can't see God. It says neither eye has or ear has seen or heard God at all at any time.

Not in this way. They've seen the visions, they've seen the representations and incarnations of God. But this is a new thing for people.

The points that I want to give you, and I can't give them all to you on this tape, and we'll have some kind of literature for you by the time you get this tape and books for you to read, is going to be just that. You should never disturb somebody while they're seeking the Lord. You should be a gardener that knows when your plant needs to be watered or pinned up on the trellis or get out the bug spray and get them demons away through prayer and through love.

And counseling is a very delicate thing. Counseling is a very delicate thing. It doesn't mean that you should take somebody out and give them the tape recorded cassette brainwashed rap that most people give to people in the cults and in the church.

It means that you should not be a tape recorder, you should be a human being filled with the Holy Ghost. That you should be somebody there and willing to open your heart, your home and your life to them. It means that you shouldn't parrot things that the pastor or Keith Green has told you.

It means that you should open up your heart and let the Spirit. It says that you should not take any thought what you're going to say in that moment, but open up and the Holy Spirit will tell you in that very hour what to give somebody. I have found that to be true.

I have taken people into counseling, whether it be a young pastor or a prostitute, and my mouth is opened up and things have come out, but afterwards I just look to my wife and says, God spoke through my mouth. I don't even know. I was learning.

I was taking notes, you know, and that's happened to every one of you, because the only way we can be taught, the only way we can really teach is to be taught of the Holy Spirit ourselves. By teaching, we'll be taught. By opening up and sharing.

A lot of times I've told people, given people advice, and then I went away from that and go, boy, that's pretty good advice. I think I'll take it, you know. That's true.

In fact, the only one on the earth that never had to take his own advice was Jesus, because he had that in his heart from the time he entered the earth. He was God. And he always took his own advice, but not because it was his advice, but because it was the Holy Spirit dwelt in him from head to toe.

And there's parts of us that still need to be engulfed in God's Spirit, and we need to be in prayer and become more holy. You know, there's a scripture. You know, a lot of you as Christians are seeking

holiness.

Leonard Ravenhill pointed this out to me, this scripture, and you never thought of it this way, probably. The scripture that says we should look to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Perfecting holiness? Well, I'm not even holy yet.

How am I going to perfect holiness? You know, is holiness imperfect? All that means is that Christian growth is a crisis and a process. A crisis and a process. We enter into the Spirit of God, then we get a little dirt on us.

Then we need to perfect holiness. That means that we grow in holiness. That means that we grow in our closeness to the Lord.

Like, when you get married, you're never going to be any more married than the first day you're married. You're married, man. You're one.

But you're going to get closer, even than that. You understand what I'm saying? You're one, and you're never going to be any more one, but you're going to experience that oneness on deeper levels. Now, the taboos of a counselor, never interrupt somebody when they're sharing with you their heart.

Hear them out. Never interfere with them when they're praying or even talking to somebody else. Let them be.

Just be there as a listener and somebody who to answer questions if they have it. Don't look to have all the answers. Know your scripture.

Read the things that we're giving you to read, and look up the scriptures so you know for yourself what the Word of God says. Don't depend on our literature, but depend on the literature of God. Whatever part of ours that is from God, you'll know.

You have an unction from the Holy One, 1 John says. You know all things. And the main thing you should never do, like I said, is tell somebody they're saved or convince somebody they're saved.

Let them convince you they're saved. And you convince them you're saved, so they'll know what salvation looks like. That's so beautiful.

That's what Christianity is. It's a self-perpetuating thing. It's something that continues to multiply itself.

You don't have to... I mean, sometimes when people get married, their parents or their in-laws have to sit down and tell them about sex and stuff, but not too much. They'll find out. They'll learn.

You don't have to tell somebody how to ovulate. You don't have to tell somebody how to give birth to a baby. It'll happen naturally.

It's a self-perpetuating thing. Christianity, when left alone on its own, will just blossom all over the place. It's when we interfere with it that death enters in.

When the flesh gets in, mixed in with the spirit, death is all over the place. And then, when things are dying, we have to prop them up and put up cardboard representations of truth and salvation. So let's just throw all that stuff into the fire and start over again.

Holly. Okay, I think that will do for now. And God bless you for coming.

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