

# The Quarterly Journal



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EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

## Joyce Mired in Psychobabble

### The “Smart-Aleck Preacher” Tells Us How to Live Beyond Our Feelings

by G. Richard Fisher  
with M. Kurt Goedelman

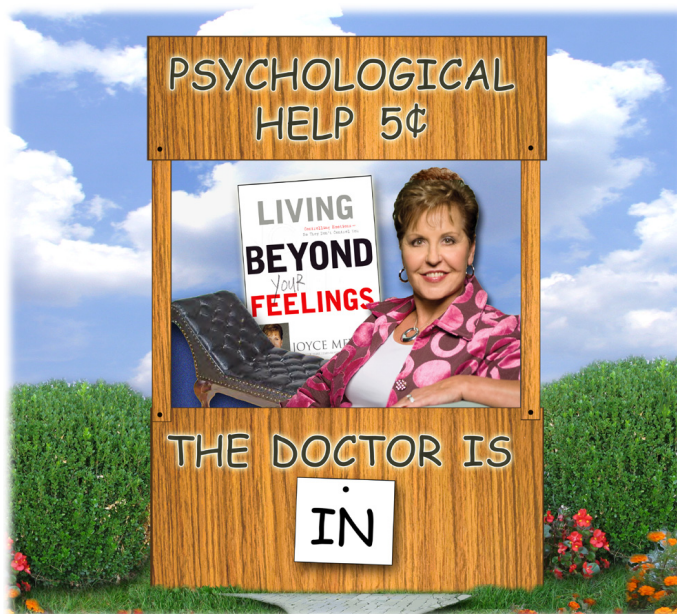
After years of ministry and writing books, televangelist Joyce Meyer told her readers that she was “frustrated and felt unfulfilled.”<sup>1</sup> This is quite an admission from the one who is touted as “America’s most popular woman minister [who] is teaching thousands how to overcome stress, fear and discouragement.”<sup>2</sup> Even more alarming is another confession:

“For years, I was an obnoxious, smart-aleck preacher who would mouth off to my husband at home and then walk up to the pulpit thinking I was a great woman of God. I did not know how to treat people well. I was impatient; everybody had to do things my way or I was going to get upset. Nobody could correct me; nobody could tell me anything; nobody could have any input into my life because I was ‘the woman of God’ — the president of what we then called ‘Life in the Word.’”<sup>3</sup>

Some might suggest that with such a prideful, sinful attitude, the godly response would be to step aside for

serious introspection and repentance. After all, it is the course that pastor and ministry leader C.J. Mahaney embraced last July when he acknowledged and then desired to harness his own sinful pride.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the demands of Meyer’s ministry prohibited such a move. Then again, that admission just may be a tactic to add to her mystique, appeal, and success by giving her followers an appearance of vulnerability and transparency. Despite such a serious disclosure, the mission and ministry of “America’s most popular woman minister” continued unabated. Her radio and television programs fill the airwaves and her books and other resources are incessantly marketed — most

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# Editorials

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## UNLOCKING THE RIDDLE OF CULT LEADERS' ALLURE

Many are baffled and wonder what false teachers and cult leaders have that makes some people want to follow them. In the face of the obvious hubris and frequent weirdness of the false teachers, what keeps people tied to them? Why do they keep coming back for more?

In a previous editorial, we offered the flip side and analyzed the motivation of cult followers and why they personally stay attached. (See "What is Behind the Energizer Bunny Syndrome?" *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2010, pp. 2, 22-23.) But what is it that the cult leader offers that helps keep the deadly dysfunctional bond in tact? We must remember that the cult leader is offering what some people want, or at least think they want and need. While followers have their own self-serving motives for staying on board, what does the false teacher and "Pied Piper" claim to have that completes the cycle of mutual dependence and super glue attachment?

A man named Frank Sandford is a good case study. Sandford lived in the late 1800s and into the early 1900s. He founded the Holy Ghost and Us Bible School and a commune in Maine called Shiloh. He claimed to be a modern-day apostle nearly a hundred years before C. Peter Wagner ever thought of the concept. He also claimed miraculous signs and wonders before there was

an Azusa Street and the birth of the modern tongues movement. Sandford was definitely an original and one of the first to attribute "zip codes" to demons. He claimed territory and geography for God by praying off the demonic spirits wherever he stood. He really is the father of the unbiblical territorial demon idea (and prayer walking). He also dreamed up the idea of bringing things into being by visualizing them. The Word-Faith movement is nothing new. He was a Charismatic extremist long before Benny Hinn, Todd Bentley, John Crowder, and all the other gold dust and angel feather prophets and apostles.

Sandford succeeded despite his failures. He had to do ten years jail time for manslaughter when followers died for lack of medical attention. His attempt to sail around the world on an evangelistic mission casting demons off various pieces of geography was not only an obvious failure, but an absolute disaster. Some of the ship's occupants died of malnutrition. He claimed to be the last-days Elijah, but was shown to really be a delusionary mad-man. (See further, *Fair, Clear and Terrible, The Story of Shiloh* by Shirley Nelson for a detailed biography of Frank Sandford. Also see, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* by Stanley M. Burgess, Editor, pp. 1037-1038.)

However, Sandford was able to keep members solidly attached. The question is how? It is no secret that the "father of lies" has inspired many like Sandford with the  
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# News Updates

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## CAMPING ADDS TO HIS FALSE PROPHET LEGACY

Like the response to the boy who cried “wolf” one too many times, so too was the reaction to Harold Camping and his latest prediction for the end of the world. Last year, Camping along with his Family Radio ministry and devoted followers spent millions of dollars promoting May 21, 2011, as the time for the end. As the days and then the hours hastened toward the time when God’s judgment was to take place, magazines, newspapers, and television all intensified a focus upon Camping and his radio ministry.

The date last spring came and went without the worldwide judgment predicted by Camping. The radio preacher told the press he was “flabbergasted,” by his prophetic failure. But within a few days, he redrafted his proclamation saying that May 21 had been the “spiritual” end of the world and that the final physical end would come five months later on Oct. 21.

Accustomed to failure and with diminished bank accounts, Camping moved from the brazen and rigid tone of his previous predictions. On Oct. 16, Family Radio representative Tom Evans posted on the ministry’s Web site that Camping told him that “he is convicted that the end will come very quietly, and that he believes that the end will come like a whisper, and that the unsaved of the world will fall asleep and never re-awake. There won’t be any suffering or torture. There will be no cataclysmic earthquakes or literal stars falling to the earth. Rather the end will come without any warning and very quietly.”

Evans added, “We’ve forgotten that God speaks in parables. And without a parable He did not speak to us. And that includes all the language describing the end of the world. That it is parabolic. That doesn’t mean it won’t happen, it just means that we have to understand it, not physically necessarily, but parabolically.” Evans also said, “We have learned, since May 21, that we cannot look at things literally, necessarily. May 21 was a very good teacher. And it taught us some very painful, but important lessons. And that is, we can never presume anything. We cannot presume that we understand something simply because we want to believe it. Especially when God uses parabolic language in the Bible and we look at it physically.”

Camping’s date-setting is not only unbiblical, but the manner in which he now describes the Second Coming of Christ is equally unscriptural — contradicting even his own, earlier assertions. Yet, despite a redrafting of the

particulars of the end, Camping held firm to the fall date. “It will happen, that is, by Oct. 21,” *USA Today* reported Camping as saying. In the Oct. 16 lecture, Evans acknowledged, “So now here we are: The ten thousand pound elephant sitting right in the room. In less than five days from today, we’ll know whether we were right or wrong. Whether we understood the Scriptures correctly, whether the Spirit of God directed us, or whether we were deceived.”

Needless to say, the Oct. 21 date, like the May 21 date and all other of Camping’s earlier predictions, failed and they “were deceived.” But this time it came and went without all the public fanfare and media attention. On Oct. 24, it was announced that Camping had “retired.”

—MKG

## BELL TAKES ON NEW ROLE

Rob Bell told the congregation of his Mars Hill Bible Church that he would step down in December as their pastor. He first made the announcement Sept. 22, then three days later told his membership of his intentions during Sunday services. Bell, 41, founded the Grand Rapids, Mich.-based megachurch in 1999, and more recently attracted the attention and aversion of evangelical Christians with his emergent church and universalist views.

Last year, *Time* magazine selected Bell as one of its 100 most influential people. Back then Bell was attracting even greater national awareness while sparking intense debate among conservative Christians with the release of his book, *Love Wins*, which argues against God sending unbelievers to an eternal hell after death.

Bell will be leaving Michigan and plans to move to Los Angeles. According to *The Grand Rapids Press*, ABC and Disney have plans to “work on a spiritual television drama loosely based on his life when he relocates to California.” The series is said to chronicle the spiritual adventures of a teacher and musician who becomes a benefactor and guide to others.

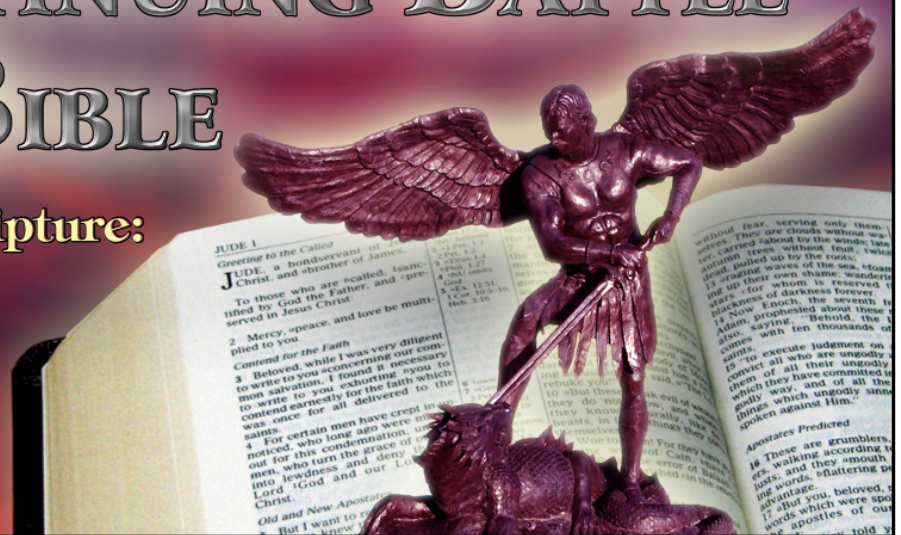
The television series title, *Stronger*, is based on the name of the lead character, Tom Stronger. The religious drama will unite Bell with Carlton Cuse, the executive producer and screenwriter for the hit television series *Lost*. The Grand Rapids newspaper’s report said that the “script deal has been reported as ‘hefty,’ but ABC staff declined to disclose its financial terms.”

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# THE CONTINUING BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE

## The Sufficiency of Scripture: When Enough Is Enough

by G. Richard Fisher  
with M. Kurt Goedelman



In the 1970s, a battle raged over biblical inerrancy. It was a controversy that split some denominations, while damaging others. Harold J. Ockenga cautioned:

“As evangelicalism grows, it becomes more and more threatened with incipient division. The perplexing question of the inspiration of Scripture is endangering the unity of the evangelical movement.”<sup>1</sup>

The stakes were high and attention was focused primarily upon the liberals and neo-orthodox who argued against total inerrancy. At the same time, another battle against Scripture had begun. Many who subscribe to an internally inerrant Bible balk at the assertion that the Bible is sufficient for all of life and godliness and maintain that we need “something more” to get us through life. However, there is little or no agreement as to what that “something more” is.

### THE FOG SETS IN

A mindset has taken hold of Christians far and wide. It has come in increments, so it has been largely unnoticed. That mindset and attitude says that the Bible is not quite enough for real-life problems, struggles, and disappointments. There are supposed places deep inside us that the Bible

cannot quite reach and it takes some other discipline, technique, or “secret key” to help us through life. For many years some have tried to sound a warning. Over a decade ago, Southern Baptists James T. Draper, Jr. and Kenneth Keathley said:

“Unfortunately, even among those who affirm the authority of Scripture there has been a tendency to deny its sufficiency. Today, the sufficiency of the Bible is being disavowed in a number of subtle ways: the preaching of the Word of God is displaced as the primary purpose of the worship service; the teaching of the Scripture is replaced by contradictor psychological and social theories; the doctrines of the Word of God are redefined so as to lose their meaning; and the revelation of the Bible is supplemented with claims of private revelation.”<sup>2</sup>

And Michael Horton warned:

“Not only must we recover the official commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture, it must be the *only* voice we hear from those who assume the momentous task of being God’s spokesmen. And God’s spokesmen must ring the bells on this point.”<sup>3</sup>

Still others saw it too. In 1994, Millard Erickson projected what direction the Church was heading based upon trends that were becoming obvious: Evangelicals, once committed to the sufficiency of Scriptures, were drifting into a mindset of extrabiblical and subjective revelations. In other words, believers were drifting rapidly toward the idea that the Scriptures were not enough for life and godliness and that we all needed “something more.” Erickson projected and informed us that “young people, instead of looking to the Bible, are looking for a direct speaking by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, we can expect an increase of interest in ‘revelations’ rather than in revelation.”<sup>4</sup>

The prevailing view within the Church today is that Jesus Christ saves part of us, but the other part, deep inside, must be released and really set free by some special technique to realize the “abundant life” of which Jesus spoke. But what that technique is, no one is really sure.

Consider, for example, “inner healing.” Albert James Dager tells us this practice went by a variety of aliases, including “healing of memories,” “healing of the emotions,” “spiritual healing,” and “soul healing,” and that it “is a psychological technique

whereby a person seeks to overcome negative human emotions while re-affirming positive attitudes towards self and others. The negative emotions with which inner healing deals are primarily guilt, anger, fear, self-hatred or hatred of others, envy, and lack of self-confidence or self-esteem."<sup>5</sup>

Given real prominence in the late 1970s by Ruth Carter Stapleton, who was the sister of then U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the "inner healing" holistic health method was all the rage. The dust jacket of Stapleton's book, *The Gift of Inner Healing*, explains:

"The inner child of the past who lives in the heart, in the unconscious, of every person harbors painful and disturbing memories which may intensely influence his or her adult behavior. In *The Gift of Inner Healing* Ruth Stapleton tells how she and others have been healed and helped to grow toward wholeness through relational experiences with Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. By means of 'faith-imagination,' one can, with the help of a concerned friend, know 'inner healing' or 'healing of the memories.'"<sup>6</sup>

Stapleton was in "constant demand as a speaker on inner healing" and traveled throughout the world propagating its message and method.<sup>7</sup> She died in September 1983 of pancreatic cancer.

Years later, the idea that one could heal the inner child was kept alive and well by award-winning author Karen Burton Mains in her book, *Lonely No More*. Mains, who in addition to her many books, gained popularity over the airwaves on her husband David's Chicago-based television show, *Focal Point* and his national radio show *The Chapel of the Air*, claimed to have found an inner thirty-something male named Eddie Bishop who would constantly come to her in her dreams.<sup>8</sup>

No one would argue this is bizarre. But there is a sobering question that must be asked: Is this just a lady caught up in the unbiblical mechanisms of Jungian psychology or is this

a demonic spirit guide of some sort? What is really eccentric is that Mains dedicated the book to Eddie! It is frightening to read her words on the dedication page of her book:

"To Eddie Bishop, self of my self, and to the persistence with which he wooed me to love him."<sup>9</sup>

Rational-thinking people do not dedicate books to dreams or imaginary figures. Mains would have us believe in some kind of spiritual transgenerating. Even with the deficiency of discernment within the Church, it is of little wonder that Mains' popularity among Evangelicals plummeted because of the book. Yet on her Web site, [karenmains.com](http://karenmains.com), she still sells and defends *Lonely No More*:

"This book was extremely controversial in certain sections of ultra-conservative Christianity so I warn you, read it carefully. I stand behind every word, despite the controversy. It may even shake the ground beneath your feet. I will probably never write anything this well again. But I have certainly paid for the effort to be excellent, to be lovingly truthful, to want God."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps we can translate "ultra-conservative Christianity" as discerning Christians. Yet despite the "controversy," these many years later Mains continues to hold to and promote the ethereal Eddie. The dream — and book sales — persist. She is a vivid illustration of the fact that heavy investment can destroy discernment.

Many people are baffled as to how individuals can accept and believe these kinds of things. One answer might be the good feelings some people get by thinking they have secret insider knowledge. It really does appeal to our pride.

The "inner healing" practitioners concerned themselves with the finding of certain techniques or practices to heal the inner wounds imposed on us by past negative experiences or even thoughtless parents. Somehow being redeemed by Christ's blood did

not set us free in the deep inner recesses of our being and God's grace could not touch us there even in salvation. This bogus view is presently being presented under headings like "breaking strongholds" or "bondage breaking" and betrays a lack of understanding of progressive sanctification so clearly enunciated in the pages of Scripture.

Perhaps if we cannot get free of the past it is because we do not understand the doctrine of Redemption or perhaps we are dwelling on the negative past and not obeying Philippians 3:13 and 4:8. Focusing on the past is one sure way of staying mired in it. Life, like driving a car, can never be done successfully by looking constantly in the rearview mirror.

Today's newer solutions insist that some kind of ritual prayer or exorcistic rite is needed. Rather than break the habit of fixating on the past, we are told we need to break a "bondage" or "stronghold" that has shackled us. Perhaps some territorial demon or the bondage of some ancestor is restraining us.

But what is really needed is discipleship training and doctrinal instruction in obedience to the Savior's command (Matthew 28:19-20). We need to get a firm understanding that biblical sanctification is a lifelong daily struggle. There are no quick easy fixes. We are grateful that the daily mountain climb of progressive sanctification is enabled by God's grace and God's Holy Spirit, as well as directed by the Word. That puts it in our grasp.<sup>11</sup>

Adding to this problem is "the new civility." We are told that there are no absolutes and the new civility is the belief that it is not good to say anything is ever wrong. When one is committed to not say what is wrong they usually will not affirm what is right. After all, we must be civil and all get along and not hurt anyone's feelings! This new civility is the basis for political correctness. Even a vigorous apologetic has to be toned down or it will be labeled not civil. Prospective and even established apologists are being intimidated into toning

down their message so much that it cannot even be heard. We can no longer speak the truth in love or be ready with a biblical answer, but rather must be silent in resignation for the sake of civility. Would Jesus or Paul have curbed their promotion of truth?

## SUFFICIENCY HAS A HISTORY

Evangelical Christians lay claim to the sixteenth-century Reformation and see it as a time when there was a serious return to the biblical root system of the Church (Acts 2:42). Michael Horton reminds us:

“Christianity is a religion of words, a religion of the Book. Like the Reformers, we too must not accommodate to a visually or experientially oriented culture in the interest of marketing success, but must pour all of our energies into a word-centered community, however out of step with contemporary society that may be. The Reformers insisted that Scripture not only has the final say, but it is the *formal* principle of everything we believe about doctrine or conduct. That is, it shapes and forms our faith.”<sup>12</sup>

Reformation leaders disavowed tradition and ritualism and struggled to move the Church — both corporately and individually — back to a biblical foundation. Since the time of the Protestant Reformation believers have strongly adhered to not only the inerrancy of Scripture, but its *complete sufficiency* for life and godliness. *Godliness is simply godly living empowered by the Holy Spirit and directed by God’s Word.* The Reformers were certainly outspoken about this core belief of Scripture’s sufficiency. They believed that *everything* we needed for a successful Christian life was in the Bible by direct command or there in principle or logical inference. They strongly rejected mysticism and an esoteric approach to life. A sample of an early Christian creed which reflects many other early creeds would be the Seventeenth Century First London Baptist Confession, which states that the Bible has in it that which is “plainly recorded whatsoever is needful

for us to know, believe, and practice; which are the only rules of holiness and obedience for all saints, at all times, in all places to be observed.”<sup>13</sup>

The sad truth, however, is that what was once believed and held firmly in regard to the sufficiency of Scripture is no longer held at all. Like the pre-Reformation Church, somehow the Bible is no longer enough, or so we are told. Thus many find themselves off on an elusive hunt for “something more.”

## LOOKING BACK: THE CONFUSION TAKES SHAPE

In 1974, Catherine Marshall (widow of Peter Marshall, the well-known chaplain of the U.S. Senate) summed up this new attitude in a book title of two words. That title was *Something More*.<sup>14</sup> That “something more” meant something more than the Bible. Her book strongly suggested that the Bible was not quite enough for life and living and concluded that our dreams would give us guidance. This error goes back to Eve in the Garden when Satan suggested that God’s clear Word to her and for her was not enough. The seedbed of extreme charismatic views were beginning to bud within mainstream denominations in the 1960s and 1970s and Marshall’s *Something More* made those views even more palatable.

Marshall’s late husband, Peter, in addition to being chaplain to the U.S. Senate and a published author, “gained a widespread reputation as a master of oratory.”<sup>15</sup> Less than two years following Peter’s untimely death in 1949, Catherine penned his biography, *A Man Called Peter*, which was developed into a successful motion picture. This, along with Peter’s own stature certainly helped to enhance her resume as she took her mystical detour. Perhaps Catherine Marshall did not understand that every cult offers “something more” than Jesus and “something more” than Scripture.

A quarter century later, the lament was still being heard. Tommy Tenney, who was a very marketable commodity with his “God Chasing,” told us,

“There’s Got to Be More.”<sup>16</sup> Tenney, who claims to both “spark and fuel the fires of revival,”<sup>17</sup> promoted a mystical principle of immediate, personal, direct revelations to every believer.<sup>18</sup> And it was Tenney who chided those who embrace the sufficiency of Scripture when he wrote:

“God chasers have a lot in common. Primarily, they are not interested in camping out on some dusty truth known to everyone. They are after the fresh presence of the Almighty. ... A true God chaser is not happy with just past truth; he must have *present* truth. God chasers don’t want to just study from the moldy pages of what God has done; they’re anxious to see what God is doing.”<sup>19</sup>

He further assaulted Scripture saying:

“We have studied God’s Word and His old love letters to the churches so much that some of us claim to know *all* about God. But now people like you and me around the world are beginning to hear a voice speak to them with persistent but piercing repetition in the stillness of the night.”<sup>20</sup>

So today we are instructed that Scripture is “dusty truth,” “moldy pages,” and God’s “old love letters.” And from that mindset, we are being assaulted and inundated by mysticism, Gnosticism, emergent ideas, and a host of private revelations that say the Bible is not sufficient — not quite enough. We are told that we need hidden gospels, special revelations, or so-called prophetic words or now-words (sometimes referred to as *rhema* words). We have people talking to themselves and then listening for voices and calling that prayer. We are being sold on the pretext that we need something more for our spiritual lives. With the loud cacophony of contradictory ideas and bogus solutions, it is anyone’s guess what that something more should be. Lay them all out and it is like going to a religious flea market or a New Age convention.

Since the time of Marshall, books like those from Tenney have rolled off the presses. Their presentation can be subtle as in claiming the Bible plus a need for something else (like *The Book of Mormon* or a mystical experience). Or it can be frontal as in destructive criticism. This mindset creates problems that only the Bible can solve. However, the solution (the Bible) has already been rejected leaving no real solutions at all.

While it is true that all cults insist on something more than Jesus and the Bible for *salvation*, many Evangelicals insist that we need something more than Jesus and the Bible for *sanctification*. So, in either case it spawns confusion, division, and elitism.

Do we need *The Prayer of Jabez* or the *Secrets of the Vine* or the prayer rituals of Neil Anderson and Mark Bubeck? Do we ultimately need all the subjective and sensational books of Beth Moore or the mystical reflections and ramblings of Henry Blackaby? Some will tell us that the answer is the prophecies of C. Peter Wagner and his coterie of prophets in the New Apostolic Revival despite their often off-the-mark prophecies. Perhaps another will argue the ultimate secret is a Benny Hinn Miracle Crusade or the insanity of a John Crowder or Todd Bentley meeting. Then again it just may be the spiritualist meanderings and automatic writing of the perennial classic *God Calling* book. Who has that "something more" and where to find it reminds one of the old carnival wheels — spin and win — maybe, but probably not. Disgraced Family Radio leader Harold Camping thought he had it and so do other modern false prophets and date setters. Christianity is becoming like a carnival sideshow complete with barkers and ringmasters.

Trips to heaven (and even hell) have also become the rage today. The conflicting accounts so differ that it is obvious that they originate either by hallucinations, outright deception, or a vivid imagination. The contradictory nature of the reports and the speculative and contradictory details from

one to another is a dead giveaway as to their dubiousness.<sup>21</sup> These so-called accounts add nothing to the Bible's information on heaven.

### CULTS LEAD THE WAY

Dave Breese could not be clearer and more forthright on this issue when he writes:

"The Word of God is, therefore, God's final and complete revelation, and this revelation can be supplanted by no other. The cults have no such commitment, believing in the heretical doctrine of extra-biblical revelation. They claim that God has spoken and recorded words, through whatever medium, *since* He gave us the New Testament Scriptures. They assert that God speaks or has spoken outside or apart from the Bible. The first and most typical characteristic of a cult is that it claims for its authority some revelation apart from the clear statements of the Word of God. Most cults claim to respect the teachings of the Bible. Many even attribute divine inspiration to Holy Scripture. They then quickly announce their real confidence in some subsequent revelation that in effect cancels the teaching of the Bible in favor of a more authoritative new thing which they claim God has spoken subsequently. They are therefore claiming that the Bible is only part of the verbal revelation of God and that He has spoken or does speak in a manner that is extra-biblical, apart from Scripture."<sup>22</sup>

This "something more" attitude has paved the way for special revelations and fantasies of every conceivable sort. This is truly frightening because the human imagination is the Petri dish for all kinds of heresies. The Church at large is lost on a sea of fads, junk doctrines, alarming heresies, and non-solutions. In short, local churches and Christians are in a dangerous situation and are being tossed to and fro by every new trend or proclaimed revelation. The road map and guidebook have been effec-

tively ignored or removed, and people are wandering aimlessly. So today, bizarre is in and mindlessness is cool.

Kenneth Osbeck reminds us:

"We must realize that God's truth revealed to us is never contrary or apart from the Bible. Often there have been those who have claimed to have extra revelations through visions which supersede the Scriptures. God's Word clearly warns against this false assertion (Jeremiah 23:16)."<sup>23</sup>

### IT'S IN THE BOOK AFTER ALL

Bible students will never derive from the Bible itself that the Bible is not enough for our Christian life. Think of all the "Thus saith the Lord" statements. Paul insists that this inspired Word "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). We may agree that all that we need for salvation can be found in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15), and all that we need for understanding the future and prophecy is in the Bible, but many stumble over whether the Scripture is sufficient to *completely* reprove us, correct us, and instruct us in righteousness as believers. Modern Christians doubt it is able to equip us for every good work. Without the Scripture we have no GPS System. Dave McCasland underscores the importance of Paul's words:

"*Doctrine* tells us which road to travel; *reproof* tells us when we are off the road; *correction* tells us how to get back on; *instruction in righteousness* tells us how to stay on God's road."<sup>24</sup>

All that McCasland says goes by the wayside if we are seeking "something more." Knowing we need more growth with the help of Scripture is far different than a frenzied search for "something more" than the Scriptures. This is a critical and important distinction.

The Apostle Peter consents with the Apostle Paul's words to Timothy when he himself says:

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3-4).

So we have great promises and directives to live life and develop godliness. To escape the pollution of this world we don't need a therapist, but rather we need to take heed to God's Word and involve ourselves in its disciplines.

### BOXING GOD IN?

Many who try to skirt the Bible's sufficiency and run to subjective mysticism will often offer the timeworn canard, “We must not put God in a box.” This is misleading and ignores God's willingness to stoop in love to right where His children are. The doctrine of Immanence teaches us that God chooses to be in and among His people even though in essence He transcends earth's boundaries. He is outside of time and not limited. However, God may limit Himself in love for our sake and for our protection and not leave us on a sea of speculations and changing emotions.

We need to be reminded that God put Himself on a box — namely the Ark of the Covenant and offered to meet His people there when He gave Israel the tabernacle system (Exodus 25:21-22). The high priest went to the “box” annually on the Day of Atonement to meet God and sprinkle the blood for the nation's forgiveness. Who would dare to say God is not free to put His presence in a box if He chooses to. He manifested His presence in a bush, a pillar of cloud, and fire as well. There is no doubt that God was much more vast than His localized presence and He was never devoid of His omnipotence and omnipresence when He designed to meet His people the Israelites in the ways that He did. So, in fact, “The presence of God was visibly represented by the

Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple.”<sup>25</sup>

We need to remember that God condescended to put Himself in a body, that is, the body of Jesus when He was the tabernacle with us (John 1:1-14, Philippians 2:5-11). We see that He can localize Himself in a body while surrendering none of His *omni* attributes. We would never suggest that God's being or essence is limited (2 Chronicles 6:18) though He may limit His self-disclosure or activities as He pleases. We cannot push the doctrine of Immanence so far that we try to justify the extreme of pantheism and teach that God is in everything (part of every atom), thereby making no distinction between Creator and creation. However, we recognize that at times, God manifests Himself in certain forms as in the Angel of the Lord or as did the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

We need to remember that God in some sense limits His activities and takes up residence in the *believer* (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20). The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is a deep mystery that we approach by faith. Christ in no way blends His nature and essence with our spirit, but nevertheless this spiritual union is vital, life changing, and real. Because this mystery is beyond our intellect we reverently surrender to the clear teaching of God's Word on the matter. God is immense, but at the same time is near. We can no more fully comprehend that than we could pour a lake into a thimble.

### GOD FAR AND NEAR

This is difficult for us because we know of both God's immensity and His omnipresence and the fact that He cannot be limited by our human limitations. Jon Tal Murphree explains:

“Two religious systems, deism and pantheism, have taken the notions of transcendence and immanence to extremes. Deism says that a transcendent God created the world to unwind itself through a system of natural laws and that it functions rather well

on its own. It never needs outside manipulation, mechanical repair or mid-course correction. Since God is no longer needed by the world, He has become disinterested. He is now a distant God who does not relate with humankind, does not hear or respond to prayer and retains no particular interest in the direction or destiny of the world. Pantheism has taken the immanence of God to the extreme in the other direction. God's relationship with the world is understood as a substantive relationship and therefore mechanically necessary. The world is an extension of God's essence. It is the substance of God. Consequently God's existence is understood to be in terms of the world. Every part of the universe is included in the beingness of God. By definition God is ‘everything that is.’”<sup>26</sup>

To further explain, Murphree offers this:

“On first thought God's transcendence and immanence seem to be mutually exclusive, especially on the deistic-pantheistic model. God is either transcendent or immanent, but not both. To say He is both detached and connected at the same time, both independent and dependent, seems contradictory. Yet in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures we see God as both transcendent and immanent. What initially may seem incongruous, however, does not strain credibility when one realizes that God's immanence is relational rather than substantive. If God were immanent in the same way that He is transcendent it would be contradictory. But if He is immanent in a different way, there is no problem. God's identity with the world is a relational identity, never substantive. Unlike pantheism, the Christian God is *substantively* transcendent, and unlike deism He is *relationally* immanent.”<sup>27</sup>

Still further Murphree asserts:

“The Scripture puts together transcendence and immanence, divine difference and relational closeness, in a unique package which it attributes to God. His transcendence inspires our worship and His immanence commands our devotion. And His transcendental ‘beyondness’ makes the closeness of His fellowship more valuable.”<sup>28</sup>

### HERE’S THE POINT

If God was in a box, in a body (the body of Jesus), and in the believer, it is not a stretch then to say in some sense God in His immanence accompanies His *Book*. He meets us in the Bible in some way. If the Ark of the Covenant was a vehicle for God’s presence, why couldn’t He use a Book? After all, His ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). God did not become the Ark. Neither does He become the Book. In that Book, He wonderfully conveys who He is, what He does, how He works, and all that He expects of His children. He conveys these things as surely and clearly as if He was speaking audibly to us. We need no more for life and godly living.

The problem is that the Bible is being largely ignored and untried. We see in the above biblical references so far that God can do whatever He wishes and if He wishes to meet His people on a box, or in the body of the Messiah, or through a Book, He can do so! We cannot ignore the way He chooses to do things. John Wimber was dead wrong in asserting that we worship the Book. He was arrogant and off the mark when he said:

“Evangelicals all over the country are worshipping the book. They have God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the Holy Book.”<sup>29</sup>

We no more worship the Book than the Israelites worshipped the Ark. We can conclude then that truly genuine spiritual experience comes through the parameters of Scripture, not man’s fickle emotions. We worship God in spirit, but it *must be* in accordance with truth (John 4:23-24). With the

death of the Apostles and their direct revelation now written down in Scripture, the Bible becomes God’s final Word to us. We love it and respect it. We contend for it (Jude 3).

If you left a personal letter for your children with warm thoughts and details of things you wanted them to do, it would be as authoritative as if you were right there speaking those words to them. We are doubly blessed because we have God’s “letter” and His presence. We cannot ignore written revelation as if it is of no consequence. The Apostle Paul told us: “If anyone thinks himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant” (1 Corinthians 14:37-38). The Apostle Peter is as equally strong when he spoke of his teachings and writings as the very commandments of God (2 Peter 3:2). Jesus commanded John to write the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:19). Who would suggest it is lacking or defective? Could the issues be any clearer?

The following is another illustration that can be offered: A painter paints a beautiful masterpiece. It is then hung in a gallery for display and for the pleasure of art lovers. In this particular case the artist stays on with his exquisite painting and explains to observers his personal and deep meaning, the purpose of the colors, and his intent in painting that piece. He is with his picture. This in some small way illustrates that God is with His Word. Hebrews 4:12 says that God’s Word is “living.” God the Holy Spirit makes it alive. A deistic approach would say the painter walked away from his painting, that is, God walked away from His completed Word. A pantheistic approach would create a paper idol. The illustration above avoids both extremes and has God in dynamic ways working through His Word.

In today’s mystical, cliché-driven world it is not uncommon to hear a believer say something like, “I read the Scriptures and then listened for

the still small voice.” It is as if God’s written Word meant nothing and conveyed nothing. This negligent reader has already heard God’s voice in Scripture, yet he acts as if that is nothing. Consider how Jesus, when in conversation with the Sadducees about the resurrection and marriage, equated the written Word with hearing God’s voice therein:

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ... But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not *read* what was *spoken to you by God*’ (Matthew 22:29, 31, emphasis added).

Likewise, James in his epistle offers the same correlation:

“But he who *looks* into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful *hearer* but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25, emphasis added).

The late New Testament professor A.T. Robertson tells us to be a faithful, not a forgetful, hearer. James instructs his readers “to gaze carefully” in “the word of truth” and “the gospel of grace.”<sup>30</sup>

Imagine again the personal letter to one of your children detailing a long list of chores and duties for the day and assuring them of your love and care. That child then sits down and says, “Now I will just sit here for a long while and try to telepathically hear my father from wherever he might be today. If I don’t hear something — anything — I will conclude I have not heard from my father.” It does not take a deep thinker to realize what is wrong with this picture.

### EXTRABIBLICAL CONFUSIONS

The wisdom of God in giving us a complete and sufficient revelation in Scripture is seen clearly when one simply looks at all the conflicting, contradictory, ongoing “revelations” of the cults and other extremist individuals and groups. The conflicting traditions of the Roman Catholic and

Greek Orthodox groups are another example.

Failed date-setting is yet a further case in point. Pinning the tail on the Antichrist is an additional futile pursuit. If God wanted us to know the identity and meticulous details of the Antichrist, He would have told us plain and simple. There is no end to human imagination and speculation. God has given us a sure and firm Word for our direction and protection. The simple fact is if the "something more" agrees with the Bible, then we don't need it because we have the Bible. If that something more does not agree with the Bible, we don't need it because it is unbiblical and misleading. Author Curtis Crenshaw explains:

"If anything is contrary to Scripture, it is wrong. If anything is the same as Scripture, it is not needed. If anything goes beyond Scripture, it has no authority."<sup>31</sup>

Deuteronomy 29:29 indicates strongly that God has given us all we need: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law." Those "revealed things," we believe, are all contained in the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes our problem is that we want answers we don't really need.

### GUIDELINES AFTER ALL

We agree that not every tiny choice we have to make everyday, like the color of our tie or the kind of car to buy, is contained in the Bible. However, there are all kinds of biblical principles that can come to bear on our decisions along with the fact that God allows His children creative and individual choices in non-essentials (Romans 14). Garry Friesen, in his distinguished volume on biblical decision making, elucidates quite nicely this freedom of choice using Adam and Eve in the Garden to make his point. Eve begins the conversation telling Adam:

"I'm not sure which of these lovely fruits I should prepare for

supper. I've prayed for guidance from the Lord, but I'm not really sure what He wants me to do. I certainly don't want to miss His will on my very first decision. Would you go to the Lord and ask Him what I should do about supper?' ... Adam did as Eve requested. When he returned, he said, 'I got the same answer as before: "From *any* tree of the garden you may eat *freely*; but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.'" Adam and Eve were both silent for a moment. Then Adam said, 'You know, Eve, the Lord made that statement as though it ought to fully answer my question. I'm sure He could have told me what to eat and how to eat it; but I think He wants us to make those decisions. ... Eve was incredulous. 'Do you mean that it doesn't matter which of these fruits we have for supper? Are you telling me that I *can't* miss God's will in this decision?' Adam explained: 'The only way you could do that is to pick some fruit from the forbidden tree. But all of these fruits are all right. Why, I suppose we could eat all of them.'"<sup>32</sup>

Like eating apples *or* oranges, some choices are benign and of no consequence. Thus the biblical principle of Christian freedom would cover these small benign decisions, so even with these choices the Bible is still in play with the truth of liberty in Christ. But for the ones that are weighty, like whether or not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we have guidance in the Scriptures.

Even medical decisions can grow out of the principle of our bodies being temples of the Holy Spirit, the value of life, and the saving of life, as well as compassion on the hurting. Quality of life decisions can be made to glorify God and serve him better with better health. Every decision can be made with biblical wisdom and through a biblical grid. Proverbs gives us great and enduring principles for life's decisions. Everything in one way

or another relates to the Bible and its direct teaching or its principles.<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes we do not know just what to do as it may take more time, prayer, and biblical research. But — like when faced with whether or not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil — we always *know what not to do*. All of this is just not being stressed or even looked at. We are surely living in an age of confusion.

So the question which must be answered is: Is the Bible sufficient enough for life and godliness, and is it complete enough for all aspects of our lives? Scholar Gerhard Maier has given us the biblical and orthodox approach to this:

"Now, there can be no doubt that revelation understands itself as a *fundamentally closed entity*. When Joshua is commanded to proceed according to the Law 'in all things,' and is at the same time warned 'to turn neither to the right nor to the left' of what the Law says (Jos 1:7f.), then it is clear that the Torah is complete and unalterable (cf. also Dt 4:2; Mal 3:22). It is just as clear that for the New Testament writers, the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament were a closed entity that could not be expanded or reduced at will (cf. Mt 5:17ff.; 22:40; Lk 24:44f.; Jn 5:39; 10:35; 2 Ti 3:16). In 2 Peter 3:15f. Paul's epistles are likewise spoken of as an entity that is in principle complete. In 2 Thessalonians 2:2 Paul himself spoke out against the danger of letters circulating falsely under his name. Jesus' words, too, have a definite scope, according to 1 Corinthians 7:10ff. Finally, Hebrews 1:1f. states that God's revelation culminates definitively in the time of Jesus. What these and other observations amount to is this: biblical revelation arrives in its final form in the time of Jesus. It informs us that the history of revelation has now arrived at its goal. Its completion is found in the Messiah. That is, it clearly

informs the church that further revelations are not to be expected, though that which was given earlier should remain in force."<sup>34</sup>

Limits in the Canon of Scripture have the ultimate result and benefit of protecting us from false apostles, false prophets, and false revelations.

### **THIS MUST BE CONSIDERED AND ANSWERED**

Those who do not put limits on the Canon and direct revelation say we are supposed to recreate the entire biblical phenomenon with signs and wonders. *It is a selective game at best*, all done in a closed and highly manipulative atmosphere and in meetings with a lot of pumped up adrenaline and heightened expectations. None of the super-healers are producing talking plants or bushes, turning a rod into a snake, getting water out of a rock, opening a sea with a stick and a command, making donkeys talk, multiplying food or walking on water, among other things. None are healing lepers or restoring limbs. They are not having God show up in a pillar of fire. They cannot make their faces shine or speak foreign languages without language study as in Acts 2. Why? If their premise is true, would they not be able to do all these things and more? Why only the "miracles" that can be manipulated among highly suggestible people in a closed environment? Whipping someone up into a frenzy does not even come close to our listing above of true biblical signs and wonders.

The evangelical world is developing amnesia as far as the rich heritage of our spiritual past. In despising the past, Evangelicals have become spiritual orphans. One of the refrains of the emerging church is that we must jettison the past. Remembering the Reformers must really be dangerous! The Puritan Fathers believed that Scripture contained wonderful resources for all of life and living, as Timothy Keller points out:

"1. The Puritans were committed to the functional authority of the Scripture. For them it was the

comprehensive manual for dealing with all problems of the heart. 2. The Puritans developed a sophisticated and sensitive system of diagnosis for personal problems, distinguishing a variety of physical, spiritual, temperamental and demonic causes. 3. The Puritans developed a remarkable balance in their treatment because they were not invested in any one 'personality theory' other than biblical teaching about the heart. 4. The Puritans were realistic about difficulties of the Christian life, especially conflicts with remaining, indwelling sin. 5. The Puritans looked not just at behavior but at underlying root motives and desires. Man is a worshipper; all problems grow out of 'sinful imagination' or idol manufacturing. 6. The Puritans considered the essential spiritual remedy to be belief in the gospel, used in both repentance and the development of proper self-understanding."<sup>35</sup>

It is obvious that we have been down this road before. Psalm 19 reminds us:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (vv. 7-11).

### **SUFFICIENCY MAKES SENSE**

Teaching on the sufficiency of Scripture, John MacArthur offers:

"Contrary to what many are teaching today, there is no need for additional revelations,

visions, or words of prophecy. In contrast to the theories of men, God's Word is true and absolutely comprehensive. Rather than seeking something more than God's glorious revelation, Christians need only to study and obey what they already have!"<sup>36</sup>

In other words, why do we need to seek more when we are not even reading, attending to, and obeying what we already have? MacArthur continues:

"There is no substitute for submission to Scripture. Your spiritual health depends on placing the utmost value on the Word of God and obeying it with an eager heart. If you think you can find answers to your spiritual problems through human counsel or worldly wisdom, you are forfeiting the most valuable and only reliable source of answers to the human dilemma. Don't relinquish the sweet, satisfying riches of God's Word for the bitter gall of this world's folly."<sup>37</sup>

If the five books of Moses were enough for God's people in Moses' time and the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi was enough for God's people in Jesus' time, why isn't a completed Bible both Old and New Testaments enough for us in this time? We are overwhelmed with biblical riches, yet acting like spiritual paupers. We have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), yet without the Bible we don't even know what those blessings are.

### **WHAT MEN OF THE BIBLE THOUGHT AND TAUGHT**

As Christians seek "something more" in any and all forms, they will do less and less of what the Apostle Peter commanded in 1 Peter 2:2, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." It is important to note that, "The Greek word translated 'desire' speaks of an intense yearning. It is a compound word meaning to 'earnestly desire' or to 'long after.'"<sup>38</sup>

We need to look again at the great respect and reverence David had for God's Word:

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments" (Psalm 119:9-10).

Seeking God is paralleled here with staying attached to God's Word. It is clear then that we seek God in and through His Word.

David then continues, "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word" (vv. 15-16). There then seems to be a warning for the "something more" crowd: "You rebuke the proud — the cursed, who stray from Your commandments" (v. 21). Then David equates getting help from God with purposely holding onto the Word, "Let Your hand become my help, for I have chosen Your precepts" (v. 173).

Based on that verse we could say that without God's Word we are really helpless as believers. Charles Bridges concludes that "surely we need all the help of Omnipotence to sustain us in the tremendous conflict. We may plead our *choice of his precepts*, in looking for his *help*."<sup>39</sup>

Without knowing the Bible, we cannot even define God properly or know the doctrines that are vital to our faith. Jon Tal Murphree is right when he says "the contemporary spiritual quest without theological authority has made our culture vulnerable to neo-paganism. Today we have before us a smorgasbord of bizarre religious and quasi-religious systems; many are grounded in Eastern mysticism, such as Zen Buddhism, Transcendental Meditation and New Age."<sup>40</sup>

## ROAD MAP OR ROAD TO NOWHERE

Those who write books offering "something more" throw out a bone and say they really believe in the Bible. It is disingenuous. If a man said

he loved his wife and spent the bulk of his time with his girlfriend, would we really believe he loved his wife? Would he not be deceiving himself and in the process really be trying to deceive others? If we really believe the Bible is sufficient, then why are we on an endless search for "something more"? The "something more," it turns out, is really something less.

Jay Adams says of the Holy Spirit:

"He did not produce the book only to say that it could be laid aside and forgotten in the process. Godliness does not come by osmosis. Human ideas and efforts will never produce it. There is no easier path to godliness. It always requires the prayerful study and obedient practice of the Word of God. ... The Spirit works through His Word; that is how He works."<sup>41</sup>

Either the whole Bible is enough for life and godliness or it is not. It is God's gift for our growth or it is not. We need to follow "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). If the Bible is not sufficient for life and godliness, we should simply throw up our hands in despair over the confusing deluge of claimed revelations, contradictory visions, extrabiblical books, and cult heresies and admit we have no definitive answers. No one would know where the truth really is. We would have to conclude that there is no road map or guidebook. There is no lamp for our feet or light for our path and that there is no fixed truth or guiding plumb line. We would be on our own — lost and sailing adrift upon a sea of subjectivism and mysticism. It is the Bible or nothing. Nothing else makes any sense. The Apostle Paul charged that we are "not to think beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Thus, we affirm that the Bible is enough. And enough is enough!

## Endnotes:

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11. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Mountain Trek of Christian Living - Avoiding Growth-Stunting Detours," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2003, pp. 1, 15-20.

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## MIRED IN PSYCHOBABBLE

(continued from page 1)

with the theme of "How you can enjoy everyday life."

### STRIPPING AWAY THE VENEER

Joyce Meyer certainly has a powerful public image. Her programs air on nearly 500 television networks and almost 400 radio stations. Meyer's ministry says it is now capable of reaching nearly 4.5 billion people worldwide. Her multimillion-dollar lifestyle and private jet rank her among the very rich and famous.

Meyer and her publishers have flooded the Christian marketplace with books — close to 120 in 30 years, totaling some 12 million copies. As noted, many of the current ones are fashioned from the self-help genre, causing people to think that she really feels their pain. This helps to keep her front and center. Many of the dust jackets of her books feature her photograph. The collection fills the shelves and displays of Christian bookstores and secular ones alike.

The 68-year-old Meyer was born Pauline Joyce Hutchison. She is a former Missouri Synod Lutheran who found a home in the extremist Charismatic Word-Faith camp. Her expansive corporate offices are in Fenton,

Mo. She has found a way to straddle the Word-Faith and evangelical camps with her books and teachings.

The gravely voiced Meyer received honorary doctorate degrees from both Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla., and Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Ariz., along with an earned Ph.D. in theology from Life Christian University, an unaccredited institution in Tampa, Fla. Her beliefs, at times, have been extreme, as she formerly parroted verbatim the radical teachings of her Word-Faith mentors. These major errors and aberrations are extremely unbiblical and even heretical. While Meyer may desire to distance herself from or even deny those early declarations, they are well documented.<sup>5</sup> Meyer at times in her public meetings verbally slaps around her listeners. She throws surly barbs, put-downs, and critical comments at her audiences — and they all seem to love it. She has earned her self-imposed moniker of an obnoxious, smart-aleck preacher.

Yet despite her fame and following, not all has gone well for Meyer. She has had various run-ins with tax agencies, financial oversight committees, and the media for excessive salaries and spending, along with considerable real estate holdings. When contrasted against her followers, she really does live in luxury.

In May 2009, Meyer's image suffered another setback when her bodyguard, Chris Coleman, was charged with three counts of first-degree murder in the strangulations of his wife, Sheri, and young sons, Garrett and Gavin, in their Columbia, Ill., home. Coleman had worked for Meyer for nearly a decade and at the time of the incident was reportedly being paid an annual salary of \$100,000. Evidence presented at the trial showed that Coleman was having an affair with a high school friend of Sheri's while on ministry trips to Florida with the televangelist. A jury returned guilty verdicts on all murder charges on May 5, 2011, the second anniversary of the killings. On May 4, the day before the verdicts were delivered, attorneys for Sheri's family filed a wrongful death suit against Coleman and Joyce Meyer Ministries. It is safe to say, there will be no book from Meyer on these events.

### "DR." MEYER, THE PSYCHOLOGIST, I PRESUME

Last fall, Meyer served up her latest offering to, once again, aid her readers to achieve the victorious life. The book is titled, *Living Beyond Your Feelings: Controlling Emotions So They Don't Control You*. The "feel" of this book is that it is made up of edited recorded messages from Meyer's meetings. It is a collection of Meyer's

personal experiences along with testimonials, stories, and anecdotal reports.

But this new book may not be as fruitful as all the hype promises. The page on Amazon.com advertising the book makes Meyer appear to be an expert in the human psyche and holds her up as a female savior for all the weak, confused, downtrodden, and needy. It tells us:

“Joyce Meyer examines the gamut of feelings that human beings experience. She discusses the way that the brain processes and stores memories and thoughts, and then — emotion by emotion — she explains how we can manage our reactions to those emotions. By doing that, she gives the reader a toolbox for managing the way we react to the onslaught of feelings that can wreak havoc on our lives. In this book, Meyer blends the wisdom of the Bible with the latest psychological research and discusses: the 4 personality types and their influence on one’s outlook, the impact of stress on physical and emotional health, the power of memories, the influence of words on emotions, anger & resentment, sadness, loss & grief, fear, guilt & regret, the power of replacing reactions with pro-actions, and the benefits of happiness.”<sup>6</sup>

One may be a bit surprised to hear that Meyer is promoted as being schooled enough in “the latest psychological research” to write a book on it. Psychological research is always in a state of flux and internal disagreement. Today’s psychological truth often becomes tomorrow’s error.

Even what is called “Christian counseling” includes mysticism, exorcism, and repressed-memory therapy. Although called “Christian,” it can go to the extreme of the easy dispensing of pills and drugs or even to behaviorism, which advocates “aversive control,” whereby man is controlled into proper behavior by means of rewards and punishments.

Meyer is really out-of-date with her venture. In the 1950s, Clyde Nar-

amore tried to amalgamate Christianity and psychology. His effort kicked off a trend that has not proven at all to aid the Church at large, but only moved them further from the Bible.

What Jay Adams stated over four decades ago is even truer today:

“... the newspaper headlines have not improved; crime is on the increase; our streets have become unsafe; there are riots in the cities; and the mental institutions, in spite of tranquilizers, still do a thriving business. As a matter of fact, psychiatry, that illegitimate child of psychology which historically has made the most grandiose claims, is itself in serious trouble.”<sup>7</sup>

### DEJÁ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

Meyer’s new book is billed as the answer to every one of our emotional struggles, which means that all of Meyer’s previous books were not. Her former writings were supposed to bring us freedom, happiness, deliverance, insight, victory over our strongholds and bondages, and on and on. Moreover, in 2002 Meyer already did a book on our emotions titled, *Managing Your Emotions*. In her more recent 2010 book, *Power Thoughts: 12 Strategies to Win the Battle of the Mind*, we were promised a 12-step program to conquer the negativity of the mind. This book, according to Amazon.com, was also supposed to provide us wonderful tools to “manage emotions” as they divulged Meyer’s promoting of positive thinking and Norman Vincent Peale. We were, back then, also promised “amazing results.”<sup>8</sup>

Meyer once claimed that God multiplied money in her wallet. Truth be known, that increase comes at the expense of her fans — those who donate to her and buy her resources. One observation that rings clear is when she says that “Stress management is a multibillion-dollar business.”<sup>9</sup> Her self-help books are all part of the business. Moreover, if any of the claims of the earlier books were even a little true, there would be no need for the constant dispensing of additional material and books on top

of books. It is obvious that many of Meyer’s cures and clichés just do not work! The book of Jude talks about clouds that appear to be bringing rain but greatly disappoint because they are “clouds without water” (v. 12). The Word-Faith teachers, like Meyer, are all promise and no delivery. In this same verse, Jude also says “they are autumn trees without fruit.”

Sadly, what helps to propel Meyer’s books is the misguided notion within the evangelical world that if a volume is in print and labeled “Christian,” it is probably beneficial and trustworthy. As well, there is the naive assumption the large publishing houses are still “Christian” in every sense of the word. But publishing today is about profits, not truth. Sales commissions take precedence over the Great Commission. There are very few solidly Christian publishing houses and those that exist are small and relatively marginalized.

### FIRST, A SMALL CAUTION

Throughout her new book, Meyer makes frequent use of the Amplified Bible. The Amplified Bible has benefits, but comes with a warning. One should understand that the Amplified Bible is a paraphrase. Portions of the Amplified Bible, beginning with the Gospel of John were released in 1954, and then the entire Bible was completed and released in 1965. The Amplified Bible is the work of Frances Siewart. Because it is a one-person translation, it does not have all the checks and balances of a translation that is done by committee, which is another primary reason why it should be used judiciously and discerningly. In fairness to the translation (or paraphrase), it must be said that the publishers maintain that it was reviewed by other scholars. Because the Amplified Bible often translates one word with many words, it may be hard to follow and sounds fragmented when read. Apologist Ron Rhodes says that with all the synonyms inserted, it is “almost like swallowing a thesaurus.”<sup>10</sup>

A weakness of an expanded translation is that the reader may be confused wondering what actual word

applies because all of the words listed could not. Last, but not least, Rhodes writes that scholars wisely suggest that we can “compare a number of English translations”<sup>11</sup> for a better outcome.

### NOW, SOME MAJOR CONCERNS

It first needs to be asked if Meyer’s teaching is biblical or secular. She is correct when she stresses that we should not live by feelings and that we are to be “choosing right over wrong” and that feelings are “unstable and must be managed.”<sup>12</sup> We wonder though if she is overpromising when she asserts:

“If you are ready to master your emotions, this book is for you. I believe I will be able to help you understand some of your feelings, but understanding them is not nearly as important as controlling them. ... This book could be one of the most important books you ever read.”<sup>13</sup>

It is not difficult to see that by and large, people live by their feelings and are fueled by their emotions. We know that feelings can be a help, but they also can be a hindrance. Feelings can be a good handmaid, but a terrible master. What is important is answering the question: What is the antidote or answer for our out-of-control feelings and emotions and, most importantly, is that antidote biblical? Meyer’s answers to these concerns are what we are interested in knowing and evaluating.

Meyer seems to generalize in such a way as to often miss the truth. For instance is her statement that, “Our feelings are unreliable and cannot be trusted to convey truth”<sup>14</sup> always universally true? When we have sinned and are guilty before God we feel bad and rightfully so. Bad behavior produces bad feelings and we cannot deny our way out of that, but need to repent and confess sin. Consider the testimony of Scripture in respect to Cain and his offering:

“And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you an-

gry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Genesis 4:5b-7, emphasis added).

When one is under conviction and feeling bad, it is like a fire alarm (God’s fire alarm) that has to be responded to through confession of sin and behavior change. So it is not universally true that all feelings are “unreliable and cannot be trusted.” A few pages later, Meyer speaks to the reality of guilt and the need for confession,<sup>15</sup> which may confuse some readers. These types of inconsistencies and lack of clarity run throughout the book.

### A BIT OF CONFUSION

Meyer also makes statements that are not adequately explained, but are nevertheless clearly unbiblical. For example, she states that the Apostle Paul “experienced a soul death as he laid aside his own will” and she equates the “soul” to the “flesh.” She then equates both soul and flesh with “dying to self.”<sup>16</sup> When these entities are merged together it indicates a real lack of precision and clarity in her diagnosis. This is not, as some may argue, just nit-picking. These statements are clearly scripturally off the mark.

If the soul is the same as the flesh as Meyer says, this would mean that the soul is equivalent to the sin nature, which is incorrigible. David did not think so when he asserted, “He restores my soul” (Psalm 23:3). When David prayed, “return O LORD deliver my soul” (Psalm 6:4), he could not be talking of his flesh or sin nature. There will be no deliverance from that until death and heaven. Further, when David lamented that “the enemy persecuted my soul” (Psalm 7:5), how could he have meant that his sin nature was being persecuted? It is obvious that the Psalmist did not have Meyer’s view when he rejoiced that, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Psalm 19:7). How can the sin nature be converted?

In Psalm 41:4, David spoke of soul healing.

The biblical evidence shows Meyer is clearly wrong here and her inaccuracy stems from a misunderstanding as to what the word soul means. If she misunderstands so basic a biblical concept, can anyone really trust her and believe that her book is one of the most important volumes an individual can read?

The word soul is used more than 780 times in the Old Testament alone. The Hebrew noun form in English is *nepes* and the verb form is *napas*. According to linguistic specialist W.E. Vine, it was a common word “in both ancient and modern Semitic languages.”<sup>17</sup> So the meaning was and is well known. There is no excuse for confusion. The word has a wide range of nuances and so must be determined by the context which is not difficult.

Genesis 1:20 is the first use of soul and carries the simple meaning of life, while other contexts show it to be the self or the person. It also occurs in the Old Testament with the meaning of breath as the essence of life and at other times simply means the inner man as opposed to the physical body. At no time is it negative or in any sense referring to any kind of spiritual soul death or fleshly action as Meyer alleges. Dying to self simply means dying to the lower nature or dying to the sinful self, which is far different than what is stated by Meyer. But to emphasize again, a wrong and inaccurate diagnosis will always lead to a faulty cure.

Meyer further confuses us with the statement:

“The Bible frequently uses the term ‘the flesh’ when referring to a combination of the body, mind, emotions, and will. The word *flesh* is used synonymously with the word *carnal*.”<sup>18</sup>

Meyer offers no Scripture or linguistic documentation for this strange statement. The New Testament word for flesh is the Greek word *sarx*. Most often it just refers to the human body or the flesh on the body. Paul uses it in that way, but also uses it to

describe “the body plunged into sinful practices and habits as the result of Adam’s fall.”<sup>19</sup>

Meyer’s merging of body, mind, emotions, and will to speak of the flesh makes no biblical sense. The body addicted to sin, habituated to evil, and acting out that sin is Paul’s meaning of the sinful flesh. To be carnal, on the other hand, is to be sensual and unspiritual and has to do with a selfish, self-centered mindset. These biblical distinctions seem to elude Meyer.

### QUESTIONABLE SOURCES AND POP CLICHÉS

It is unfortunate that Meyer quotes Watchman Nee<sup>20</sup> because Nee is a blind guide and an untrustworthy teacher. Meyer’s use of Nee may be benign, but it conveys the idea that Nee is orthodox and can be trusted on important matters.<sup>21</sup> This is an indication of how undiscerning and untaught Meyer really is.

Meyer further lacks insight when she champions Hannah Whitall Smith and her book, *The Christian Secret of a Happy Life*. PFO has documented in a past article that Smith’s life rebutted any claim to knowing the secret of a happy life.<sup>22</sup> She experienced a failed marriage and was miserable and depressed her entire life. She was a tragic figure. Smith’s book was hastily written and reflected the higher life teaching of that era over a century ago. For some reason biographers and publishers have papered over her past and created an imaginary hero, never revealing “the rest of the story.” Meyer has bought into the chimera and perpetuates it.

Meyer next quotes Robert Schuller<sup>23</sup> who has touted what he called possibility thinking, which was a new spin on the old ideas of Norman Vincent Peale. Schuller has long denied the biblical doctrine of sin and depravity and ignores man’s desperate need to repent and acknowledge his lost condition.

Meyer then puts forth another popular generality when she writes that “hurting people hurt people.”<sup>24</sup> People that hurt people are sinful and

they are wrong. For sinful reasons some of those who have been hurt may hurt others. It is true as well that many who have been hurt know the pain they have endured and as a result do not wish to visit that on others. Then there may be some who have had a relatively good and even Christian upbringing with life and others treating them well and they may strike out at others for sinful reasons. So it is not universally true that “hurting people hurt people.”

Many Christians (and even unbelievers) have had many hurts in their childhood and do not wish to hurt others. Not everyone is a prime candidate for the Jerry Springer or Maury Povich shows. The cliché of Meyer’s is a secular cliché that allows some to avoid responsibility and shift blame. Her statement is not true to the Bible or real life. Later Meyer will acknowledge that there is no excuse for bad behavior,<sup>25</sup> but will her readers hear that part or the winsome proverb that says, “hurting people hurt people”?

Meyer takes her readers down another secular rabbit hole when she says there are relationships that “are very dysfunctional at best.”<sup>26</sup> The concept of dysfunction flows from secular psychology and two decades-old books by Melody Beattie. Beattie dedicated her book *Codependent No More* to herself and then in her book *Beyond Codependency* she was so bold as to say, “We’ve started the journey of self-care and self-love.”<sup>27</sup>

In most literature addressing the theme of dysfunction, nearly everyone is said to be in a dysfunctional family and therefore codependent. William Playfair tells us, “According to the recovery industry, codependency is, like alcoholism, a disease.”<sup>28</sup> It’s likely that Meyer appeals to a disease model for sin and sinful behavior because she has picked up secular terminology. That family members willingly enable those mastered by sin is a well-known fact and constitutes sin as well. The world may call it “dysfunctional codependency,” but the Bible would frame it as a sinful interdependency with each one using and being used in some fashion.

### TEMPERAMENT THEORY — THE REAL ORIGINS

Meyer then takes her readers into further murky waters when she begins to explain our behavior based on the old temperament theory view of people and why they act as they do. She tells us:

“... four basic personality types have been identified. Some people have a personality that is more emotional than others; this group is called sanguine. Sanguine people are cheerfully optimistic. ... The other three personality types are choleric, phlegmatic and melancholy. ... most people have a dominant type ... The choleric or type A person is strong in his approach to life. ... Dave is more phlegmatic. He is more easy going and not emotional at all. ... Then we have the melancholy people. They are creative, talented, and highly organized. ... most of us have a blend of personality traits.”<sup>29</sup>

Though Meyer has stated that her husband, Dave, is “easy going” as a phlegmatic she contradicts herself and states he is, to a certain degree, locked into a finicky negative personality weakness. She later warns:

“You just don’t want to mess with Dave’s stuff. He carries a bag of golf hats when we travel, and if anyone squashes them, we pray for them quickly because you just don’t mess with Dave’s golf hats.”<sup>30</sup>

It sounds as if Meyer and her entourage need to pray for Dave rather than the others!

Whether knowing it or not, Meyer borrowed these secular theories from Tim LaHaye, Florence Littauer, Gary Smalley, and a few others. There is nothing in the canon of Scripture to indicate that we are locked into personality types, so the question arises as to where did LaHaye and others acquire the theory? The whole idea is not only a fantasy, but deterministic as well. Humans are too complex and have been created to be multifaceted with incredible capacity to be changed

by God's grace. Personalities vary and God has certainly created us differently and gifted us in many different ways. People are viewed in Scripture in terms of their gifts and abilities, not in a mechanistic way. We are not constrained into being fussy over golf hats. That's an expression of lack of patience and caring for things more than people.

However, there is something even more troubling about the temperament theory: its real origin and associations. Its roots go back for centuries in the secular and occult world. Though discarded in the Middle Ages, it was resurrected in the 1940s by a Norwegian theologian named Ole Hallesby.

Hallesby popularized the temperament theory in his book *Temperament and the Christian Faith*. It was then mainstreamed as a new Christian fad by Tim LaHaye in the 1960s. Jay Adams tells us:

"The temperament theory came from pagan Greek physicians (cf. Hippocrates) who believed that four humors flowing in the body controlled one's temperament according to the balance and mix of them. Brought into the church over time by O. Hallesby, it was first brought into Christian counseling circles by Tim LaHaye. The theory is non-Christian, tends to categorized people in ways that the Bible does not, and gives counselees excuses for sinful behavior. After all, if temperament is genetic, then who is to blame? Who can help it if he is sour, jovial, gloomy, etc.? LaHaye and others attempt to find biblical support by setting up the pigeon holes and stuffing them with biblical characters. The trouble is, the categories came from paganism, not from Scripture. And the characters are 'made' to fit them. Surely the framework for a system of counseling ought to arise from biblical exegesis, not from pagan Greek philosophy and flawed, outdated anatomy and medicine. Only when the framework is biblical can a system be said to be."<sup>31</sup>

Martin and Deidre Bobgan, who authored a full-length book on the subject, add this insight:

"The four temperaments theory is an ancient system devised to understand human nature and improve people by dividing them according to their basic temperament. ... Then people are assigned to one or more types by matching the person with those descriptions. As the theory has been passed down through the centuries, the descriptions of each type have been modified and expanded. Descriptive terms for each type are not always consistent among those who use the four temperaments system. For some, a particular characteristic, such as *leadership*, would be used to describe the Choleric; for others it would describe the Sanguine. Thus, the lists are not hard and fast. They vary according to the person who is presenting them. Through the years, philosophers, psychiatrists, and psychologists have devised numerous typologies to classify people according to social behavior, modes of feeling and perceiving, attitudes, and even bodily physique as it might relate to temperament. A brief look at the history of the four temperaments will reveal that their origins lie in ancient myths and occult practices. From ancient times through the Middle Ages, physicians and philosophers used their understanding of the four humors (bodily fluids), the four temperaments, and signs of the zodiac to treat diseases and understand individual differences among people."<sup>32</sup>

What is remarkable is that it took professing and undiscerning "Evangelicals" to bring these ideas into the Church and give them a place of prominence:

"The four temperaments were finally devalued and considered relics of limited, ancient attempts to understand and deal with individual differences. Although

they remained a point of historical novelty, they were often totally ignored in psychology textbooks. In fact, few scholars give serious attention to the four temperament classifications, except as historical reference. Nevertheless, the temperaments have been enjoying a revival outside scientific circles. ... And nowhere are the four temperaments more popular than among astrologers and evangelical Christians. The four temperaments evolved from a mythological, astrological view of man and the universe and were consistently combined with the signs of the zodiac. They continue to be used to improve the human condition through knowing and tempering the strengths and weaknesses present at birth. Even though Christians who use the four temperaments today do so without the rest of astrology, the four temperaments are that feature of astrology made palatable for Christians."<sup>33</sup>

### THE APPALLING APPEAL

Why would this ancient occult theory have such a draw today? There are some possible reasons. First, the Church at large has drifted further from the Bible, leaving the inner need for truth that has to be satisfied. And it will be in some other way when the Bible is ignored (2 Timothy 4:2-4). Second, the four temperament theory seems quite easy to grasp. It is a simplistic package that does not take a lot of study. Third, it seems to give an advantage by having inside information and an easy way to classify people. We all want to know ourselves and others better and this seems to be an easy way to do it. After all, it is a lot simpler than Bible study and research. Fourth, it helps us superficially to explain the unexplainable. Evil and human motivation are both complex and shrouded in mystery. How can people do what they do and why? If we believe their temperament made them do it, then it is so much easier than trying to ponder the doctrine of sin and depravity. Frankly, we will never com-

pletely know why and how people can be so evil and sinful, but we do know the root of it all according to the Bible. Thus we basically do know why.

Probably the most subtle problem with the temperament theory is that it becomes a huge distraction as far as the real issues involved in a Christian's sanctification. It is an almost undetectable detour that gets us off the main road.

The Bobgans explain:

"While one of the ostensible reasons for using the temperament theory is to help people see their weaknesses and sins so they can overcome them, the Holy Spirit does not need extrabiblical theory to point out sin. Because of the system's pagan nature and the errors involved, a Christian may come into the bondage of trying to fix himself up through modifying his weaknesses and exercising his strengths, rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to work in His way. If we truly want to identify our besetting sins and our sinful habits, the Lord will give us ample opportunity to discover them. Our problem is not that we cannot discover our sinful tendencies without knowing the four temperaments. Our problem is not wanting to notice our own sinfulness."<sup>34</sup>

## METAPHYSICS AND MAGICK

Meyer regresses into Word-Faith theology as she employs various forms of positive and negative confession. Her view is "Words are containers for power."<sup>35</sup> She also says, "if we speak negative words, then we minister death and misery to ourselves."<sup>36</sup> And then she proposes, "Sometimes Just Talking *Does* Make It So."<sup>37</sup> Still later she boasts, "I have probably never written a book that did not include some teaching about the power of words, and I probably never will."<sup>38</sup>

Positive confession is a metaphysical concept which has origins in what is called Mind Science. Mind Science

stems from the teachings of Phineas Quimby in the mid-1800s. These ideas eventually spawned Christian Science and what was called New Thought.<sup>39</sup>

The foundational idea within these early groups was that positive thinking and positive affirmations could create a new positive reality. As these ideas influenced E.W. Kenyon, they worked their way into the Pentecostal world and were fully developed into the practice of positive confession by Kenneth Hagin and the Word-Faith movement. Word-Faith promoters claim that we can change or create our own reality by speaking aloud positive words. As a result the movement has been labeled "positive confession" and "name it and claim it." It must be stated that this movement is soundly rejected by main line Pentecostals such as the Assemblies of God.

Meyer's conviction is that Scripture spoken aloud somehow is more potent and powerful and can change our minds as well as our circumstances. She expresses it this way:

"If you have read my other books or watched me on television, you already know that I strongly recommend confessing the Word of God out loud. Even though what you confess may be the opposite of how you feel, keep doing it. God's Word has inherent power to change your feelings. God's Word also brings comfort to us and quiets our distraught emotions. If you haven't read my previous book *Power Thoughts*, I recommend that you do. It gives an in-depth understanding of our thoughts and words over circumstances and emotions."<sup>40</sup>

The biblical antidote for the positive confession teaching is a reading of 2 Corinthians. In nearly every chapter Paul tells the reality of his sufferings. The beatings, the shipwreck, the persecutions, and his thorn in the flesh are all on display. He recounts the negative realities that came his way. In the insanity of the positive confession movement some would argue Paul was creating these things by talking about them.

There is also a hint of an admission here that Meyer's new book will not be quite enough and that we really need the other book, *Power Thoughts*, as well. Is it true that speaking God's Word aloud gives one an edge on things that ultimately result in changing "circumstances"? There is no biblical reference to prove that. Life is a balance and we must constantly speak in reality and about reality. Telling ourselves something that is not true may cause us to live out of reality or be unable to truly assess things properly. If one's bank account is empty, just telling himself it is overflowing could get him in deep trouble. Christians cannot affirm what is not true, but are to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) — even if it is *hard* truth.

David in many of his Psalms spoke of meditating on God's Word and musing over God's Word. Psalm 1 is an example. As David thought about God's Word, it brought to him stability and strength. Each and every way we contemplate Scripture can be beneficial to our mindset, but nowhere is it promised that verbalizing Scripture out loud is the ticket to creating new circumstances. Using Scripture in such a way may move us into vain repetitions, which Jesus said we are to avoid (Matthew 5:7). There might be some benefit in retention if we were to read the Bible out loud, but we should never think it can be done to manipulate God or our circumstances. Meyer is over-promising.

In the end, the truth escapes as Meyer gives a negative confession of her own in regard to fear. The careful reader will notice that she acknowledges that positive confession may not work:

"The best response when you feel fearful is to say emphatically, 'I will not fear.' I cannot promise that declaration will make the feeling of fear disappear."<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the book there are constant references by Meyer to her claims of being sexually abused by her father. There is also the rehashing of her first marriage. One has to wonder if those repetitions themselves are not a negative confession.

Meyer discusses interacting with difficult people, dealing with thoughts and feelings, and ways to talk oneself into success.<sup>42</sup> In her section titled "The Power of Believing the Best," Meyer quotes Sugar Ray Robinson, who said, "I've always believed that you can think positive just as well as you can think negative."<sup>43</sup> It is true that Robinson was a championship boxer, but he is far from being a model. Robinson had two failed marriages and his third marriage resulted in lifelong alienation from the rest of his immediate family. He died in poverty. He may have been a great boxer, but there was absolutely nothing about his life that reflected Christ.

### BRAIN MATTER

To add a measure of the scientific to positive thinking, Meyer introduces Dr. Caroline Leaf, author of the best-selling book, *Who Switched Off My Brain?* Leaf, we are told, "has been in the field of learning, intelligence, and brain research for more than twenty-five years."<sup>44</sup> In addition to Meyer, Leaf has caught the attention of several other Charismatic icons, including appearances on *The 700 Club*, Trinity Broadcasting Network's *Praise the Lord* broadcasts, and James Robinson's programs.

Leaf's Web site states that she "received her training in Communication Pathology,"<sup>45</sup> also known as speech therapy.

Brain research and studies, along with the study of how we learn and change, happens to be a field which is saturated with complex theories. Simple ideas back in the 1970s claimed that learning changed behavior. Since then the field has become dense and incomprehensible to all but proficient experts. How the brain stores information and how we acquire facts and skills is a study which continues to be examined. How we relate subject matter to the real world (that is, knowing and knowing how) is matter of persistent research. What is the relationship between formal guided study and practical acquisition of knowledge and skills is yet another area of exploration. What effect stress

and negativity have on the brain and body is a growing area of learning. The question of the difference between brain and mind is a topic of continued study. But if we could understand every aspect of the brain, it would not change the fact that what God requires for our good and His glory is simple obedience to His Word. We do not need scientists to agree with us or endorse us when it comes to trusting and obeying. Getting too fixated on how our brain works can be self-focused and encumber us in the "paralysis of analysis," rather than simple obedience. Long before Meyer and modern science, Christians did well with just their Bible in hand.

In addition, Meyer does not offer any medical documentation to verify what Leaf says about brain changes.<sup>46</sup>

### PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANDERS

The second portion of Meyer's book deals with anger, guilt, fear, loss, depression, forgiveness, and emotions. And while segments therein may be of help to some, at times Meyer's acceptance of pop psychology taints her view of how sinful problems should be handled. Since the fall and Adam's blame shifting ("the woman whom You gave to be with me" — Genesis 3:12, emphasis added), man has the inherent ability to avoid responsibility by indicting others.

For example, Meyer relates the story of Melody, who was horribly mistreated by her mother. Now in her adulthood and married with children, she perpetuates verbal abuse upon her own family. Melody ends up going to a psychiatrist. Meyer then shares:

"Thankfully, the one she went to was a Christian in addition to being a great counselor, and he was able to help Melody see that deep down inside she was still very angry about the way her mother had treated her, and this was causing all her emotional problems. He helped her face the truth, forgive her mother, and learn how to control her emotions."<sup>47</sup>

There are a number of things biblically wrong and missing here. Melody's "emotional problems" were no doubt caused by her guilt over her sins against her own family. If Melody's mother was not living or had not sought forgiveness, Melody technically could not have forgiven her. Forgiveness is conditional; it is a transaction and must be sought by the offending party. God Himself is our model, extending forgiveness and granting it to those who seek it (1 John 1:9). The Bible teaches that we can (and must) extend forgiveness to those who seek it (Luke 17:3). But when people do not seek our forgiveness, we can choose not to wallow in bitterness. So in Melody's circumstance, if forgiveness was not solicited (or her mother was deceased), she could have stopped being bitter and holding on to that bitterness. Melody also needed to stop living in the past and violating the biblical principle of "forgetting those things which are behind" (Philippians 3:13). These are all biblical factors missing in Meyer's book.<sup>48</sup> And other important scriptural components are also conspicuously absent.

Most offensive is that neither Meyer nor the "Christian" psychiatrist said anything about repentance and confession of sin to God and family on Melody's part. The real root of Melody's problem was not her mother, but her own sin nature and from that the practice, reproduction, and imposition of her mother's sins on others in her own family. Even when she knew the hurt of abuse, she was willing to visit it upon others. This is the reason that people often spend years in psychiatrists' and counselors' offices. The counseling never includes a complete biblical program for confession of sin and lasting change by owning responsibility. A reading of Ezekiel 18 clearly shows that Melody's mother did not make her do what she did. Neither was her mother "the cause" of her emotional problems as Meyer alleges. Others can only bring out what is there. Jesus said it is out of our own heart that sin is born and springs forth (Matthew 15:18-19). Change can begin the very day in which people

like Melody handle their sins and failures in a biblical way. Meyer is scripturally off-target when she tells us that people like Melody “require a lot of time to heal.”<sup>49</sup> Our past can be left behind at conversion or whenever we decide not to live in the rearview mirror. None of us would be satisfied with partial answers from our doctor, yet Meyer can get away with it.

Meyer also directs her fans to “Relax, learn to love yourself.”<sup>50</sup> In sharp contrast, the Apostle Paul warns, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves” (2 Timothy 3:1-2). Perhaps Meyer is unaware that even the secular community has thrown overboard the old self-love theories.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Scripture tells us, “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Ephesians 5:29). Man’s problem is not that he lacks self-love and that he should learn to love himself. Rather it is that he loves himself too much. Meyer exemplifies the self-image delusion with her own self-pandering:

“I know people who can wear the same outfit twice a week every week for ten years and not care, but I won’t wear the same pajamas two nights in a row. I need a lot of variety. ... I care what I look like everywhere!”<sup>52</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUPERMARKET DUMPSTERS

Meyer’s new book is certainly not “one of the most important books” we will ever read. The book is a muddy mix of parts and pieces of her older books. It dispenses some pieces of good advice here and there. But it also comes with an excessive amount of mediocre advice and a drastic measure of decidedly bad advice with its pop psychology, its misunderstanding of the biblical concept of soul, its baptizing of the old pagan temperament theories, its promotion of positive confession, and its misguided teaching of self-love and self-forgiveness. Readers can take their chances if they wish. However, there are certainly more helpful books and more helpful authors referred to in this article.

Meyer advises, “First Thessalonians 5:21 states that we should test everything and hold on to what is good.”<sup>53</sup> That has been the aim of this article evaluating her book. She further asks, “Is it in harmony with the entire Bible?”<sup>54</sup> As demonstrated above, when one takes time to look at her teachings, they will find that many of those teachings are not in harmony with the Bible.

The problem with Meyer’s self-help books is that they have a lot of chaff and very little wheat. These books have to be read discerningly and cautiously, and that takes effort and a doctrinal foundation. Sadly, many Christians lack that foundation and therefore will not filter out the harmful and unhelpful and will be set up for even greater error. There will be the assumption that Meyer is the expert on everything. A review of comments left by her adoring fans on the various Web site product pages for Meyer’s books attests to this opinion.

We often hear the followers of aberrant teachers say, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water. After all, they do teach some good things and do help some people.”

In most neighborhoods, there is a supermarket. Located outside the store, somewhere in back, is a dumpster. One can dig into that dumpster and occasionally find some good food. But it’s no reason to go dumpster diving. We need to be more discerning and selective about where we shop and what we eat. And like Meyer herself, her readers may very well find themselves “frustrated” and “unfulfilled” — until her next book is published and the cycle begins again.

### Endnotes:

1. Joyce Meyer, *The Power of Simple Prayer: How to Talk with God about Everything*. New York: Faith Words, 2007, pg. 222.
2. *Charisma & Christian Life* magazine, November 1998, front cover.
3. *The Power of Simple Prayer*, op. cit., pg. 221.
4. See Bobby Ross Jr., “Sex, Money ... Pride? Why Pastors Are Stepping Down,” *Christianity Today*. Article posted July 14, 2011 and accessed at: [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/julyweb-only/sexmoneypride.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/julyweb-only/sexmoneypride.html).

5. See further, G. Richard Fisher and Paul R. Belli, “The Doctrinal Ambiguity of a Wandering Star,” *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1996, pp. 5-8; Paul R. Belli and G. Richard Fisher, “The Preacher Who Doesn’t Tell It Like It Is,” *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1999, pp. 1, 13-20; G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman, “Mired in Confusion and Mysticism,” *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2002, pp. 4-20; and M. Kurt Goedelman, “The Pragmatic Theology of Joyce Meyer,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2005, pp. 2, 23-25.
6. Product page on Amazon.com for *Living Beyond Your Feelings: Controlling Emotions So They Don’t Control You* by Joyce Meyer. Document accessed at: [www.amazon.com/Living-Beyond-Your-Feelings-Controlling/dp/0446538523](http://www.amazon.com/Living-Beyond-Your-Feelings-Controlling/dp/0446538523).
7. Jay E. Adams, *Competent To Counsel*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1970, pg. 1.
8. Product page on Amazon.com for *Power Thoughts: 12 Strategies to Win the Battle of the Mind* by Joyce Meyer. Citation is from “Editorial Reviews From Publishers Weekly.” Document accessed at: [www.amazon.com/Power-Thoughts-Strategies-Battle-Mind/dp/0446580368](http://www.amazon.com/Power-Thoughts-Strategies-Battle-Mind/dp/0446580368).
9. Joyce Meyer, *Living Beyond Your Feelings: Controlling Emotions So They Don’t Control You*. New York: Faith Words, 2011, pg. 242.
10. Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Bible Translations*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2009, pg. 87.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.
12. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. xi.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. xi, xii.
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
17. W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985, pg. 237.
18. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 9, italics in original.
19. Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling (More Than Redemption)*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, pg. 160, footnote 1.
20. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 12.
21. For additional information on Watchman Nee, see G. Richard Fisher, “Watchman Nee: The Master of Mix-Up,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2003, pp. 1, 10-20.
22. See further G. Richard Fisher, “The Secret of a Christian Classic: The Unhappy Life of Hannah Whitall Smith,” *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1997, pp. 1, 15-17.
23. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 108.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 15.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.  
 26. *Ibid.*, pg. 16.  
 27. Beattie quoted in William Playfair, M.D., *The Useful Lie*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991, pg. 119.  
 28. *Ibid.*, pg. 116.  
 29. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pp. 21-23.  
 30. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.  
 31. Jay E. Adams, *The Practical Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*. Stanley, N.C.: Timeless Texts, 2003, pp. 174-175.  
 32. Martin and Deidre Bobgan, "Tim LaHaye & Psychoheresy," *PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter*, July-August 1999, pg. 1. The Bobgans' book on the subject is, *Four Temperaments, Astrology & Personality Testing* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: EastGate Publishers, 1992).  
 33. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 7.  
 34. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.  
 35. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 101.  
 36. *Ibid.*, pg. 102.  
 37. *Ibid.*, italic in original.  
 38. *Ibid.*, pg. 106.  
 39. See further, R.B. Schoepflin in Daniel Reid, Editor, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 968.  
 40. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 77.  
 41. *Ibid.*, pg. 158.  
 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-91.  
 43. *Ibid.*, pg. 92.  
 44. *Ibid.*, pg. 97.  
 45. "About Dr. Leaf" Web page. Document accessed at: [www.drleaf.com/about.php](http://www.drleaf.com/about.php).  
 46. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pp. 97-99.  
 47. *Ibid.*, pg. 138.  
 48. Elsewhere Meyer offers further unbiblical counsel when she says on pages 147-148 that we can and should forgive ourselves. Meyer may allege she is in good company with the likes of Frank Minirth, Paul Meier, J.I. Packer, and others who promote the self-forgiveness teaching. However, the truth is that the idea that one is to forgive themselves is nowhere in the Bible. Jay Adams in a straightforward biblical way confronts this error: "The problem is that people who talk this way recognize something more needs to be done. Forgiveness is just the beginning; it clears away the guilt. They also recognize that they are still the same persons who did the wrong — that

though they are forgiven, they have not changed. Without being able to articulate it, and using instead the jargon they have heard all around them, they are crying out for the change that will assure them they will never do anything like it again. When as a counselor I help them deal with the problems in their lives that led to the wrong, in such a way that they have adopted a more biblical lifestyle, I then ask, 'Are you still having trouble forgiving yourself?' Invariably, they say no" (*From Forgiven to Forgiving*. Merrick, N.Y.: Calvary Press, 1994, pg. 64).  
 49. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 139.  
 50. *Ibid.*, pg. 171.  
 51. For further biblical evaluation of self-esteem and self-love, see Jay E. Adams, *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1986; and Paul Brownback, *The Danger of Self-Love*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1982.  
 52. *Living Beyond Your Feelings*, op. cit., pg. 68.  
 53. *Ibid.*, pg. 121.  
 54. *Ibid.*, pg. 123.




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## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

same deception. It is as repeatable and traceable as one's favorite recipe. Sandford, like so many other false teachers, claimed that they saw things in the Bible that others did not see. To say something "is in the Bible" is one thing, but though something may be in the Bible does not mean that what *we say about that thing is really in the Bible*. We could call that the "insertion principle." It goes like this: I see a word or phrase in the Bible. I then assert that the word or phrase means this or that because I say so. For example, the book of Revelation mentions "streets of gold." We take those words, which are used to describe the paving material used in Heaven's streets, and mix in the idea that we should expect God to give us gold now. What I have stated is in the Bible is not. With that in hand, it becomes a bit easier to spot how the false prophet keeps the followers in tow.

Sandford, for his part, found obscure verses in Song of Solomon and claimed they supported his authority over his followers.

Let's get down to what false teachers offer and promise, which then ties in to what followers are looking for.

1. They offer a place that seems to promise unchanging structure and safety. In other words, they offer a haven of sameness. The troubled and restless latch on to this quickly.

2. They offer a sense of having the inside track with God through personal revelations and authoritative voices from heaven. Claims of trips to heaven or even angelic visitations really impress the naive.

3. They offer their boldness in a chaotic and frightening world.

4. They offer a sense of determined direction.

5. The false teacher has honed the ability to twist the Scripture and reality to fit into the group's purpose. Even dramatic shifts in theology by the false teacher are simply reinterpreted as an attack of the devil or a test from God or maybe even suffering for Jesus' sake.

6. The false teacher is able to convince the devotees that doubt is just giving in to reason and the carnal mind. The deep level of the spirit must bypass logical thinking.

7. The false teacher is able to blur the lines between God's approval and the false teacher's own approval. God's approval comes through him alone.

8. Lastly, add to the above that the phony leader is able to convince them there are things in the Bible that are not just because he says so. His interpretations and additions are then considered "Bible." One current expert at this is Harold Camping. He gives mystical meanings to numbers and then tries to convince others that these private meanings are in the Bible. He boasts that he is just teaching the Bible. Even in spite of his dismal prophetic failures, any thinking person can see that it is just not

true. It is what Camping adds to the Bible that is being taught. It can be called, "seeing what is not there."

So now we can understand more easily why there is such an allure and why such strong attachments are forged between cult leaders and cult followers. In actual fact, the cult leader is an antinomian, without law, structure, or guidelines, running only on his personal subjective feelings, visions, voices, hunches, and sometimes outright fabrications and lies. When we see through the manipulations and attempts at mind control, it makes us less vulnerable.

We need to review these things and share them with as many as possible. We need to know the truth for it is the truth that sets us free and keeps us free. That is a big part of the personal freedom that Personal Freedom Outreach hopes to offer.

—GRF

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Not all are impressed with Bell's new venture. The Religious News Service disclosed that, "Within hours of the Mars Hill announcement, best-selling author and Saddleback Church Pastor Rick Warren was on Twitter, saying pastors who leave churches have less impact and no base for credibility. 'Speaking tours feed the ego All applause & no responsibility,' said one Thursday [9/22] tweet from Warren. 'It's an unreal world. A church gives accountability & validity.'" Warren, himself, has been a lightning rod for criticism for his ecumenism and partnerships with unbelievers.

—MKG

## SCHULLER BACK ON BOARD

The events of the Crystal Cathedral definitely rival the storylines of most soap operas or reality shows. Last July it was reported that the Rev. Robert H. Schuller had been removed as a voting member from the board of the church that he had founded over 50 years ago. That incident was reported in the last issue of *The Quarterly Journal*. But no sooner had ink been set to paper when it was being announced that Schuller was back on the board of the Crystal Cathedral.

In late July, *The Orange County Register* reported, "Crystal Cathedral founder Rev. Robert H. Schuller has been reinstated on the megachurch's board as a voting member, and two other members who stripped the founding pastor of his authority have been ousted, officials said." The newspaper also reported, "The board

shakeup comes following an outcry over Schuller's ouster that prompted church members to start a petition drive to 'take back their church.'"

Meanwhile the financial woes of the church continue. Two major institutions were reported as wanting to purchase the church buildings and 35-acre campus. The Reuters news service reported the church's crisis "has touched off a bidding war between a Roman Catholic diocese and a local university." In the end, the church's board approved the \$46 million offer by Chapman University, which is affiliated with the Disciples of Christ denomination. The university's plan was favored over the offer by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange because it allows the church to continue to hold worship services and use a number of buildings, and extends the possibility for the church to repurchase its buildings.

With all the church's troubles, Schuller's position seems less than enviable. In late September, the church's creditors enlarged the target of their lawsuits to include church insiders. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, "The creditors committee in the Crystal Cathedral bankruptcy case has filed suit against church insiders, alleging that family members borrowed money from an endowment fund and continued to receive generous salaries and perks even as the church struggled financially. The lawsuit is the result of a conflict between the committee and church insiders, who include family members of founder Robert H. Schuller. According to a bankruptcy exit plan filed by the committee, insiders will be the last paid after the sale of the church campus." The newspaper indicated that Schuller and his family members wished to be paid at the same time as creditors, which prompted the lawsuit.

—MKG

## PHILIPPINE-BASED SECT BUYS GHOST TOWN

A church founded in the Philippines a century ago has purchased the entire town of Scenic, S.D.

The 46 acres that comprise the town and surrounding properties were purchased for \$800,000 by the Iglesia ni Cristo church (Church of Christ), but little more is being said about the transaction. The property was owned and sold by a longtime resident of the town, Twila Merrill, a former rodeo performer. The town was said to be purchased "sight unseen."

According to an Associated Press report, "The church isn't divulging its plans for the property. A person answering the phone at its offices in Daly City, Calif., said that he couldn't share any information. Neither could members of church spokesman Bienvenido Santos' staff. 'They've got a non-disclosure agreement, and I'm a signatory to that,' said David Olsen, the real-estate agent who represented Merrill's family in the sale."

In 1963, Merrill began purchasing land in the town, which now "is officially an old ghost town." It is located just west of South Dakota's Badlands. About two years ago, health issues caused her to put it on the market. The original asking price was said to be \$3 million, but last summer Olsen intervened and lowered the price to \$799,000. Immediately offers from around the world began inundating Olsen, saying that "he took more than 500 phone calls and 200 emails about the property." But it was Merrill who made the final decision, accepting the offer from the Filipino church.

The Iglesia ni Cristo church was founded in 1914 by Felix Manalo, a former Seventh-day Adventist minister. He died in 1963. The church has nearly 2 million followers in the Philippines and has more than 5,000 congregations in that country. The sect claims over 600 congregations in more than 60 countries worldwide. In the United States, congregations are said to be in more than 40 states, with its strongest numbers in California, Texas, Washington, and New York.

The AP report disclosed that the sect "rejects the Christian doctrine of trinity and believes Christ is one of several prophets. The church is focused on the end times." According to a Christian missionary serving in the Philippines, it is a works-based religion that continues to prosper by encouraging its poverty-stricken members to sacrificially give while itself never being strapped for cash, even erecting opulent buildings in small, poor communities.

—MKG

## MORMONS EXPAND AD CAMPAIGN

A Mormon advertisement campaign that was first launched in nine test market cities during the summer of 2010 was expanded last October to 12 major cities including Atlanta, Denver, and Phoenix. The publicity drive includes television commercials and billboards featuring biographic vignettes of individuals with the punch line, "And I'm a Mormon." In addition to the nine previous markets, a separate ad effort began last June in New York City.

There is no claimed association between the presidential campaigns of Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman, who are both members of the Latter-day Saint church, and the advertising blitz according to Paul Gilbert, a Mormon leader and Arizona co-chairman of Romney's presidential campaign. A Gallup poll last summer indicated that 22 percent of Americans would not vote to elect a Mormon president. *The Arizona Republic* reported that those responsible for the advertisements say that its own church research revealed that "about half of all Americans say they have never met a Mormon, and that many held misconceptions about church tenets."

The television and billboard campaign directs those interested to a Web site, [mormon.org](http://mormon.org), where they are able to obtain additional information on the Mormon church, find answers to common questions about the LDS religion, or chat live with church representatives.

—MKG

### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



# Books in Review

## WHERE IS GOD IN ALL OF THIS?

by Deborah Howard

P&R Publishing, 158 pages, \$9.99

What we believe really does affect how we live and what we think of God and ourselves. One critical area of our doctrine is how we view pain and suffering. Biblical counseling pioneer Wayne Mack tells us in the foreword of Deborah Howard's book, *Where Is God In All This?*, that in response to suffering, most people's "theology tells them that God must have had something to do with what is happening, but they conclude that since God is sovereign and He allows these things to happen, it must mean that He really doesn't love or care for them. These people read or interpret God through their own circumstance rather than reading their circumstance through the character of God or through the Holy Scriptures" (pp. 9-10).

Among the prosperity gospel and Word-Faith proponents there is a distortion of what role adversity and sorrow play in the lives of believers. Additionally, nonbelievers frequently use evil, sickness, suffering, and tragedy to question God's goodness and His power and authority — or even His existence. Therefore, a biblical understanding of these things is essential for the Christian. Howard's book is an excellent resource in setting forth sound doctrine and a proper interpretation of Scripture in this regard.

Howard is well equipped to teach on the subject from both a spiritual and practical level. She has studied under the direct teaching of Mack and other biblical counselors, and has been a hospice nurse for years.

Howard's premise is simple and biblical: expect trials, suffering, and even death. Scripture repeatedly tells us so. Nevertheless Howard notes, "But despite reading it throughout the Scriptures, we seem surprised when adversity and death actually intrude into our lives!" (pg. 29). The world — and some Christians — tend to "try to find some way to escape the situation and therefore alleviate the pain" (pg. 21) and "seek the comfort of the perfect pill or combination of pills" (pg. 20). But true

peace and comfort, Howard writes, comes from God's Word, His grace, and an understanding that, "Everything that is brought into our lives is there because God either caused it, or allowed it to be there. And whatever is brought into our lives is designed by God for our best good and for His glory" (pg. 27, quote rendered in italics in original).

Howard's book is divided into three main sections. The first explores the general theology of suffering, not as "an inaccessible dissertation," but as "an engaging discussion." Howard here discusses the purposes and origin of suffering.

The second part presents the purposes common to all suffering, that is, God's motives behind allowing us to suffer. She uses seven chapters to disclose the purposes of suffering which are to: 1) complete our sanctification, 2) drive our souls to God, 3) teach us to trust God's promises, 4) prepare us for coming glory, 5) give us opportunities to witness, 6) make us more grateful and appreciative, and 7) equip us to comfort others.

The chapter which speaks to us as being comforters is tremendous in its practical advice on how to be others-centered and the caring and compassionate person God desires (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). It is great counsel about how to be a careful comforter — what to do and what not to do. As Billy Graham's mother is to have said, "God doesn't comfort us to make us *comfortable*, but to make us *comforters*" (pg. 91, italics in original).

The last section surveys purposes specific to some suffering or the biblical grounds for why God uses suffering and misfortune. It outlines biblical reasons for suffering, which include teaching us God's law, demonstrating His love, disciplining wayward believers, weaning us from the world (and worldliness), revealing sin in our lives, and punishing the wicked.

Howard draws from a selection of trustworthy teachers and expositors, including Mack, Jerry Bridges, D.A. Carson, John MacArthur, and Charles Spurgeon. If there is a flaw in the book, it is a single *faux pas* where Howard expresses on pages 80-81 a wrong understanding of forgiveness (extending forgiveness without repentance).

Howard writes, "Our lives are a journey. During that journey our faith will be tried, our trust will be tested, and our attitudes examined" (pg. 124). *Where Is God In All This?* will help you apply these truths to your life.

—MKG

**Editor's Note:** The publications featured in PFO's *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$2.50 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.