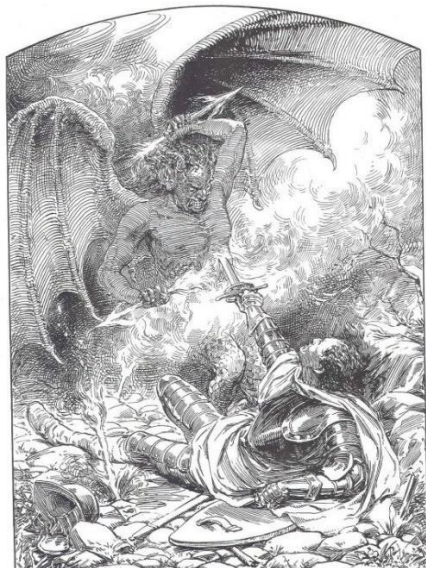


# MY WALK WITH JESUS

A THEOLOGICAL TESTIMONY



JOHN BORUFF

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**MY WALK WITH JESUS:  
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*I will remember the works of the Lord;  
surely I will remember your wonders of old.*  
—Psalm 77:11—

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## CHAPTER 1 CHILDHOOD (1990 – 1995)

I was born in the Chicago area on May 29, 1985. I remember playing with a camcorder a lot, so I got to watch myself on video over and over. I called it “John on tape.” Maybe this was why I’d end up on a YouTube channel later in life, who knows. *Superman II* came on TV one night and we and taped it with the camcorder. I probably watched that movie 50 times when I was about six or seven years old. I had a Superman costume that I practically wore year round; and I understand that I even wore it to the grocery store. I also pretended to fly by putting a fan in my face and balancing myself on a chair. *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street* were a big deal to me too back then.

The only religious thing during this time was our attendance to Catholic church services. I would pray “Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep” and “The Lord’s Prayer” at bedtime. I remember one time when I was alone in my room upstairs, with only my mom in the house, down in the kitchen. I was very still and quiet for about 30 seconds staring at the sun going down out my window. I heard a mental voice say, “John.” It was so distinct that I thought my mom had called me. So I went downstairs, but she said she didn’t call me. I related this experience to a charismatic pastor when I was in college; and he told me it reminded him of the story of the child Samuel, when God called him, but he had mistaken it for Eli’s voice (1 Samuel 3:1-5). I had no idea about that story all the way up until college; or, I had never connected those two things together. Pretty amazing!

Although it was not intentionally part of my religious education, we taped *Mickey’s Christmas Carol* (1983) when it

came on TV. That short cartoon movie, along with others came to be one of my favorites, and I would watch it a lot. I think it made a subconscious impact on my views of the world: Scrooge was an evil, mean, rich greedy miser who is visited by three spirits; and almost falls into the flames of Hell in his grave. This planted in me seeds of the fear of Hell for the wicked at an early age; although it was subtle and brief. Afterwards, Scrooge repents of his sin of greed; and becomes a nice guy; and gives lots of money away to the poor. I think “Night on Bald Mountain” in *Fantasia* also contributed to my early views of Hell: the scene where the devil plays with the souls of the wicked, and demons, and throws them into the flames.

I loved it when we visited my relatives; and especially my grandma out in Western Illinois. I have very fond memories of her; she was very sweet, and had a tender, affectionate spirit. My grandfather on my mom’s side was one of the ten police chiefs in Chicago during the ‘60s and ‘70s, and he retired in the early ‘80s. He saw a lot of action with the hippie counterculture and related political riots. My dad’s side was from a long legacy of farmers in the Boruff family, going back to *Little House on the Prairie* times; my dad’s mom was a paralegal for a short time before she married, as an assistant to her father, who was a lawyer. *Law* and *farming*:--these were the two “industries” in my family.

Although I never really got into sports, every once in a while I would play tee-ball, baseball, basketball, or throw the football. Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls and Bears were at a high point; and it gave us a real high to know that we lived in the Chicago area and “Da Bulls and Da Bears” were so popular. I developed a respect for black people; and from a young age, I think Jordan had something to do with it. I also had occasional black friends as either a neighbor or

school mate. *Mr. Rogers* eventually gave way to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*; but I liked Michelangelo the best, because he was a cool skateboarder dude.

I think it was around 1992 that we moved to Lexington, Kentucky for a job transfer. We lived in a very, very nice house in Palomar Hills. It was three stories! There were two central staircases; and a huge chandelier in the foyer. It was, to say the least, a very large upper middle class house. I had a good friend named Scott who lived a couple of houses down; I really liked playing *Doom* and *Unreal* on his computer. His dad was really computer savvy, because of his line of work; and this was around the time that personal computers were just starting to become popular. Back then they cost anywhere between \$2,000 to \$3,000 minimum. After several years of begging, my parents got us a Sega Genesis, which was great; I liked playing *Sonic the Hedgehog* and other games on it. I also had a dual cannon Super Soaker; I was a pretty happy kid: cap guns too; and a lot of flying, explosive fireworks. Fun, fun, fun; and entertainment; and games; and school. *Jurassic Park* was a big deal to us, because computer graphics in movies had reached a point where it made the dinosaurs look like they had come back to life. My brother was really into those toys.

My first “romantic” girlfriend was a girl named Erika; I remember we went to see *The Lion King* with my mom and brother and sister—and scandalous—we drank from the same soda straw! We would also talk to each other on walkie-talkies at nighttime. That was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, when I was nine years old. I really liked Jim Carrey’s crazy character in *The Mask*. At school, for the reading program, I really got into R. L. Stine’s *Goosebumps* and Alvin Schwartz’s *Scary Stories* books:--which, although they helped me learn how to read...I found they came to be a bad spiritual influence on

me...as I would be tormented with demonic dreams, fearful nightmares; and not knowing that I had opened myself up to evil spirits, by indulging in occult literature. In time, Jesus set me free from all those entertainment-induced, subtle, occult influences.

For a make-your-own-book project I made a picture story of three kids who went down to Hell; and were rescued by Jesus shooting light out of His hand and blowing the devil's head off, with lots of blood splashing out. It was originally titled *Hell Corpse*, but my teacher said, "Hell is a bad word." So I changed it to *Underground Corpse*. Censorship of Hell even then. A Jewish girl spoke out in class after my reading; and said she really liked my story. When I told my Grandpa about the story, he jokingly said I might be the next Stephen King. I didn't know the Bible very much then, other than *The Beginner's Bible*; and so my view of Hell, I think came from a TV show my mom and dad were watching, with medieval paintings of Hell, demons, and Dante's *Inferno*. I peeped through the railing of the stairs and saw a part of it; when I asked if I could watch, and I was told, "No; go to bed John."

Around this time, my mom's Uncle Tommy died; and because he had died in such an awful manner—he fell off a tall ladder and busted his head—and because he was so loving, my mom was very distraught and sad. *One night, in a glowing spiritual light, Uncle Tommy's spirit appeared in an open vision to my mom who was sobbing herself to sleep!* He stood at the foot of her bed and comforted her. He said, "You're going to need the moving cloths," meaning that we will be moving again. My mom was at peace, spoke with him shortly, and fell asleep (cp. Matthew 17:3).

Shortly before we moved away, my dad became persuaded by his older brother (who was an elder in the Presbyterian Church in America) that being a Catholic was Biblically



wrong; and that praying to the Virgin Mary was wrong. My parents had a bit of an argument over it; but they eventually settled the matter, and we started attending the United Methodist Church around 1995.

## CHAPTER 2

### A SKATER GETS SAVED

(1995 – 2000)

After living for a few years in Kentucky, which was really a highlight of my childhood:--my dad had to relocate yet again; this time moving the family to West Bend, Wisconsin. I had two friends—Tom and Kyle—who introduced me to rock music. Tom's dad was a radio DJ and related to the famed Jimmy Chamberlin, the drummer for The Smashing Pumpkins. This is when that band was at their height. But when Chamberlin got kicked out of the band for a drug overdose, Tom lost his respect for him. Tom was a really funny guy and so was Kyle. My second friend, Kyle—his hero was Kurt Cobain, the front man of Nirvana, who just a few years ago had committed suicide. Kyle, even though he was a 5<sup>th</sup> grader, had blonde hair that was spiked up, but he was so much like Kurt, that his name could have very well been Kurt instead of Kyle. At this time, my mom let me get a red electric guitar; and Kyle and I wanted to have a grunge band like Nirvana called "Core," with him on the bass. But it never worked; no drummer. Kyle had all of Nirvana's tapes (CDs hadn't quite 'kicked in' yet, but they were about to).

With these friends, and others, I eventually got to looking at porn magazines:--which caused me a lot of problems later. Also, sometimes I would have a bully at school—in either Kentucky or Wisconsin—because I was short and easy to pick on. And, not knowing Jesus at all, with pent up and frustrated emotions, I would take it out on my helpless younger sister Julie, and would bully her. Something I greatly regret to this day. Also, our house in Wisconsin was *haunted by demons*. Julie, who was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, said she saw a blue ghost appear in her room; and there were also occasions of demon-

possessed toys; one of her dolls with a dead battery spoke by itself; and also, a clown toy with wheels, moved by itself following her and her friend around the basement, even though nobody pushed the “on” button. I wonder if it was my fault for reading the *Goosebumps* books; and bringing demons into the house; or, perhaps, Spiritualists lived in the house before us. I know I played with an Ouija board with Tom once; and that probably did it. Spiritually, things weren’t so good for me from 1995 to 1998. But God was with me in my ignorance.

*One night as I slept on the bottom bunk, a small white light the size of a quarter appeared in front of my face, and then vanished*—something that would frequently appear much later when I really began living by faith. The next day as our class was walking down the hall to another class, I tried to tell Tom about the light; he didn’t seem interested or surprised; so I just thought, “Huh, that was weird.” I never thought it could have been an angelic light or vision. It was around this time that I was going through confirmation at a United Methodist Church. I went because it was expected of me, but there was never anything I disagreed with belief-wise. I was in bondage to the devil and my sinful pleasures; but I think God used what He could get His hands on. We were preparing as a family for our next move: to Raleigh, North Carolina. And when my pastor asked me if I was ready for confirmation, with my parents present: whether I wanted to do the confirmation service here in West Bend or down in Raleigh at the new church, I said, “It doesn’t matter; whether I do confirmation here or down there. I’ll do confirmation here.” I just saw it as a convenient way out—to get it over with. *It was never done with an understanding of salvation from Hell by repentance and faith in the cross.* It was just like I went through a series of religious classes; and this was

the “graduation” ceremony. I was not born again of the Holy Spirit. Yet, I wonder if some good seeds were planted.

We moved to Raleigh, North Carolina in the summer of 1998. When school began, I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade; and the age of 13. I went to Leesville Road Middle School; and then afterwards, to Leesville Road High School. I was really a “freak” and a “skater,” because my interests were skateboarding, alternative rock, and nu metal; my hair was parted down the middle and I wore really baggy clothes. I stuck out like a sore thumb in a school dominated by “preps,” “jocks,” and “rednecks”; but I managed to make a few skater and freak friends. These new friends were pretty much a continuation of the same kind of friends I had in West Bend; the only difference was I felt like I fit in more with this group. These guys were more freak-friendly, whereas the group in West Bend was mainly jocks. I didn’t get the feeling I had to “fit in” with these guys; I already did; we had a lot of fun joking around, but it was mostly carnal and worldly. One of my first friends was named Dan, and he even had a half-pipe ramp in his backyard we got to skate on. We weren’t friends in high school though, because he turned into more of a prep and jock; and became popular with the high society rich kids.

I could have become a prep. My family was nearly wealthy enough, but it just didn’t appeal to me. Abercrombie & Fitch was the favorite clothing brand of the *preppies*. I just didn’t understand it. It was like they were *proud of being rich and showing it off*. Listening to grunge and alternative rock sort of put a proto-Franciscan spirit into me; creating a love for simplicity; and even a tattered, frayed-pants look, at the opposite end of the spectrum. Not that I knew anything about actually being poor or spiritual, because my family was anything but poor; I had thrifty parents, but not poor ones. *My sentiments were anti-corporate, anti-business, anti-rich,*

*anti- anything that looked like materialism.* I hated that idea; my music showed me it was all shallow and hollow. And that was probably the *only* good thing, other than rhythm and melody, that I learned from my style of rock music. It was Kurt Cobain's "grunge" idea; I also picked it up by being friends with Kyle in West Bend, and going to his house, seeing that his step-dad was a blue collar plumber, and their house was much smaller than anything I ever lived in. So, I gained a respect for simple living. You could be happy, funny, and enjoy life; and you didn't have to have a mansion, or a castle, or even come close to wanting something like that.

I still believe this generally agrees with the teaching of Jesus (see Matthew 6 and Luke 16). Take especially His teaching in Matthew 6:25, "*I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?*" (However, this doesn't mean you have to wear holes in your jeans to be saved from Hell.) When Rebekah came into my life later in college, and I was just starting to learn about St. Francis of Assisi in Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water*; she showed me a movie about him called *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, which was a big deal to "Jesus freaks" in the 70s.<sup>1</sup> It brought to the surface all these old sentiments I had about anti-materialism, grunge, and simplicity.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven"* (Matthew 5:3). Commenting on this verse, A. W. Tozer said:

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<sup>1</sup> Note: I totally disagree with the scene where St. Francis strips naked and walks out of town to make a statement that he is born again! And yes, he really did do that; misguided though he was.

The way to deeper knowledge of God is through the lonely valleys of soul poverty and abegnation of all things. The blessed ones who possess the kingdom are they who have repudiated every external thing and have rooted from their hearts all sense of possessing. These are the “poor in spirit.” They have reached an inward state paralleling the outward circumstances of the common beggar in the streets of Jerusalem. That is what the word *poor* as Christ used it actually means. These blessed poor are no longer slaves to the tyranny of things. They have broken the yoke of the oppressor; and this they have done not by fighting but by surrendering. Though free from all sense of possessing, they yet possess all things. “Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

By no means was I experiencing at the age of 13 what Tozer was just describing! I can only say that I barely touch the surface of experiencing that *anti-materialistic spiritual poverty* today, but it was there in seed form when I was 13.

David<sup>3</sup> was another friend I had in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We got in big trouble together once; and God used this incident to really humble me and prepare me for a *true conversion* to Christ. Since I lived so close to the school, we talked about how fun

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<sup>2</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread Publishers, 1992), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> It is possible that David’s parents had a Christian influence, but I’m not sure. I remember when I was over at his house once; he implied it was normal that his family watched PAX TV, which was mainly a Christian channel. All I know is they were from California.

it would be to sneak into the school late at night, when everyone was gone; then, we could just goof around and run around the school all by ourselves! It was a fool's idea—probably mine; a very 13-year-old, deviant, juvenile delinquent, boy idea. (When I lived in West Bend the year before, I had set a whole field on fire while goofing around with a friend and a box of matches. But we escaped from getting caught by the firefighters who responded to the scene.)

Well, we managed to break into the school. I had a health class on the first floor. While in it, I unlocked the window, which had no screen on it. Nobody saw me do it; I sat down at my desk, finished class, and continued throughout the school day. We had arranged for David to sleep over that Friday night. Since my room was in the basement, and there was a door, we slipped out the door when everyone was sleeping. We dressed in all black, pretending to be spies (probably influenced by *GoldenEye 007*, a popular game on Nintendo 64); but we also didn't want anyone to see us on our journey through the night. We didn't want to steal or break anything at the school; it was just a stupid game done for the thrill. We covertly ran, walked, and hid our way down to Leesville Road, and we arrived at the middle school window I had unlocked. I think this was around midnight.

When we broke in, it was *fun*. It was such a *rush*. We simply opened up the window, and crawled inside. We ran all over the school halls in our sock feet, goofing around. It was then that I saw a little red light flashing over one of the doorways; and a feeling of fear came over me. I realized we had triggered some kind of motion sensor. Perhaps someone knew we were in the school; perhaps it was like an ADT system for burglars. (And that's exactly what it was.) Not really fully sure what the light was, the fear remained in me, as I urged my friend and I to get out of the building; my friend

was slow to get out, and was not at all worried, but I was. After slowly making our way down to the window from which we entered, and crawling out:—we had a snack of granola bars. As we were eating in the darkness, a group of men came around the corner with flashlights. At first I thought it was a bunch of young guys like us, but rough, and up to no good. I thought they were a gang or something. “Hey! You! Stop!” And they ran after us. Were they gangsters looking for trouble? We split up and hid under some classroom trailers nearby. They were a group of *police*; the silent alarm in the school had alerted them. Eventually, they found us and put us in the back of a *police car*. We waited until our dads came to pick us up. It was very embarrassing and humiliating. Shortly after this, a clerk of the Wake County Courthouse in Raleigh, North Carolina gave me the option of going before a judge, and possibly going to Juvenile Hall; or doing 24 hours of community service. I chose community service as a janitor’s assistant at Lake Lynn Community Center.

After this, a friend named Bryan invited me to “Hellfighter”:—its full name was **Hellfighter Youth Church**, the youth ministry of a non-denominational Charismatic church. I didn’t really know that though. I was under the impression it was a secular “youth club” or something for grunge culture, skaters, and “freaks” (which it was). But it was still a youth ministry. Still under the weight of my guilt from my foolish and dangerous action with the school, the word “Hell” was pressing on my mind, and my heart was convicted of wrongdoing, humiliated, and soft enough to hear what I believe was **the Gospel of Jesus Christ** for the first time. Up until then, I went to Catholic and United Methodist church services on Sundays with my family, but I had never heard the Gospel as a message of *repentant faith in the cross*



*that saves from Hell*. Nobody had ever told me that; and it was perfect timing that I heard that message when I did. It was a short and to-the-point altar call at the end of the youth sermon. I raised my head at the youth pastor's request to confess my commitment to *live my life for Jesus as Lord*, so my sins could be forgiven, and I would not have to go to Hell. It was at that moment of faith, that my life was changed; and I was born again to a new life of faith and growth in holiness (obedience to God's Word; living by the Bible).

Hellfighter Youth Church<sup>4</sup> and another church (which is where my new friend Luke, his dad was pastor; and where I would choose to go to church freely):--both were **non-denominational Charismatic churches**. I remember one time when Luke and I were at a prayer meeting, and I saw Luke praying with fervency and emotion, his eyes closed, his hands raised in a kind of ecstasy, swaying back and forth, having some kind of deep experience of God. I didn't understand it, but I knew *I wanted it*. I saw that he was making *strange sounds* with his mouth as he was praying. I had never heard anything like it. Eventually I came to understand this as ***speaking in tongues*** (1 Corinthians 14). Following his example, I just made this *my regular way of worshiping*. As I continued to seek God's face, I discovered He had given me the gift as well. **Closing my eyes**, focusing on the Lord, raising my hands, swaying, dancing, as I felt led, and praising and worshiping God with all my heart to English worship songs, and with the sounds. Another phenomenon happened as I worshiped and prayed with the sounds; although it didn't

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<sup>4</sup> In 1999, Hellfighter was the ministry that I got saved at and first committed my life to the Lord. It was in an industrial park. The address was 3216 Wellington Ct., Suite C, Raleigh, NC 27615.

always happen, but gradually more and more, when I worshiped this way, **concentrating on Jesus and worshipping in tongues**:—I would *feel a tangible, manifest presence of the Holy Spirit, surround me and comfort me* with holy reverence and adoration of our great God and King. This feeling of the Spirit in worship I understand is called **the baptism in the Holy Spirit**. And I believe I can be re-baptized in the Spirit with fresh fillings every time I choose to worship God in this manner.

### CHAPTER 3

#### A JESUS FREAK

(2000 – 2005)

After *feeling the Holy Spirit's* comforting presence every Sunday for months and months at my new church, and speaking in tongues, and praising God, and dancing, and raising my hands, and shouting "Hallelujah!," and just being an all-out Pentecostal worshiper; and telling my family all about these things:--my dad suggested seriously one evening that I should *read the Bible*. "Of course! That's what Christians do! They read the Bible so they know what God wants us to do," I said. Great idea; I should have thought of that much earlier. My mom took me to Family Christian Stores to get a Bible for me. We didn't know anything about Bibles, so when we got in the store, we saw that there were all these different types of Bibles, with different words, and reading levels. We didn't know what would be best for me since I was a 15 year-old who had just got saved; and didn't really know the Bible. So we went to the store associate; and she recommended the NIV translation. So, my mom bought me a red Broadman & Holman *NIV Drill Bible* on October 16, 2000.

I didn't know that the Bible is a spiritual sword (Ephesians 6:17); and that it requires maturity, and wisdom, and godliness to be able to wield it well. I grew in Bible knowledge by reading the NIV from Genesis to Revelation; and then studying the NASB *Ryrie Study Bible*. These formative years, I practiced very legalistically, not knowing much of Reformation theology, or the doctrines of salvation, and the dynamics of Law and Gospel. My execution of **the moral law** in daily life was very conscientious, but my fear of Hell,

unbalanced by a weak view of grace:—drove me to *evangelize my family, friends, etc. as zealously and strictly and nit-picky as possible*. I had experienced a genuine conversion, but my mind was intellectually legalistic and nitpicky in its daily Christian application. *When I sinned, I repented and asked for forgiveness by faith in the cross of Jesus, and I kept on trying to live holy*; but I did not see why other people who went to church did not try to live holy too; and I tried very hard to show them that in God’s Book, the message is “*without holiness no one will see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14). God has given us rules in the Bible, moral laws, that He commands all Christians to obey; and *I was very forceful about many moral things during these years*.

Partly out of fighting to preserve my own purity of mind from the ungodly pressures of others; partly out of a strong love for family and friends, *to not want them to die without salvation from Hell*. I strongly felt this way; but others did not have this strong fear of Hell that I did. I kept on hearing, “*Judge not lest ye be judged*” (Matthew 7:1) over and over; I was told that being non-judgmental was the spiritual, Christ-like thing to do. That Jesus never judged anybody, and so I should not either; the only thing I should do is show tolerance and love everyone the way they are, and not try to change them. If they are in sin, then God will judge them one day; just allow them to be as they are, and don’t tell them what the Bible says about right and wrong. Most of the time this pitch just sounded like excuses for moral laxity; and had no power over my conscience to steer me away from my divine mandate to warn the world of God’s commands to obey His Law! (Misguided, and *graceless zeal* that it was, I was an evangelist at heart.)

Although I had the Holy Spirit in me, empowering me to

fulfill many of His commandments in daily life, **on an intellectual level, I was probably a Pelagian** (a do-it-yourselfer Christian); and just couldn't see why so many other "Christians" were not doing what the Bible plainly says to do. (Looking back, I think many of those people never had a genuine experience of the Holy Spirit during those times, which would have rendered them incapable of hearing or obeying the Word of God. But I didn't know about things such as "regeneration" and "sanctification"; I just saw two categories of people: the obedient and the disobedient...which would have lined me up with a lot of Charles Finney's way of thinking, had I known then who he was.) Eventually, when alone in a prayer room at UNC Pembroke, my college, I became exhausted by a kind of Romans 7 battle with my flesh. I prayed, "Lord! I can't be a Christian anymore! It's just too hard; there are too many rules in the Bible to obey! I want to be a Christian; I don't want to go to Hell; oh! Please help me God!" And I heard a still, small voice immediately reply, *"That's why I died on the cross."* And I began to understand that the death of Christ was necessary, because it is impossible for man to keep the Law perfectly.

I still retained a strong interest in alternative rock and nu metal during this time, which was a real battleground for my flesh and spirit (as spoken of in Romans 7). Bands like Korn, Limp Bizkit, Slipknot, Machine Head, System of a Down, Coal Chamber, Deftones, Sepultura, and especially *Soulfly* were what I listened to for fun; and I would scream and shred my metal guitar in my room for hours every week, expressing frustration at my sin, the flesh, the world and its temptations, and the devil; and I would write and record my own Christian metal songs. Thrown into the listening mix were some Christian bands in this style, which, musically weren't as good, but I still liked them because of their themes about

Christian warfare. Living Sacrifice, Project 86, P.O.D., Blindside, Embodiment, Selfmindead, Extol, Soul Embraced, Eso-Charis, Luti-Kriss, etc. *My dad eventually confronted me about the profanity he heard in the secular metal bands; and he did not want it playing loudly throughout the house to influence my brother and sister.*

I became so convicted by this, that I used a sledgehammer and smashed all my rock and metal albums that even had one cuss word on them, which was really hard for me, because although ***I had personally given up cussing*** (Colossians 3:8):--I loved the rhythm and sound of this music so much. And slowly, but surely, through will power and prayer, and accountability with Luke, ***I gave up looking at porn***, because I became convinced it was adultery of the heart to look with sexual lust at women you're not married to, and that can send you to Hell (Matthew 5:27-30). After this, I became just as strict with movies and TV; and the beach, the pool, and any venue of public swimming where there are bikinis, etc. I didn't want any media influencing me towards cussing or sexually immoral images. ***I was very nitpicky with my family about what they watched on TV*** (Psalm 101:3), but mainly because I didn't want to be tempted, or compromise the purity of mind I was trying to maintain—a clear conscience before God (Acts 24:16). *I managed to destroy a very large amount of our family's movie collection, with my parents' permission.*

## CHAPTER 4

### THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

(2005 – 2010)

UNC Pembroke was the college I went to. While I was there, I was confronted with the idea of “declaring my major” in 2005, my sophomore year. I was really at a crossroads. I had originally set out to get a B.S. in Business and Accounting, but none of that appealed to me. I was just doing it to make my parents happy; that way, I thought, I would be able to make a lot of money when I graduated. But that went against all of my *anti-materialistic sentiments*<sup>5</sup> (as mentioned earlier). It had already begun to show in my economics and accounting classes—with a D and F. I had tried, but my heart was not really in it; if I continued down this path, I feared my parents would be wasting lots of money, I would be miserable doing something I didn’t want to do, and would probably end up with a very low GPA. My goal in college was to make As and Bs like I mostly did in high school.

So, I went to the “Meditation Room” in the university center to pray alone. While I was in there, I prayed, “Lord, which major do You want me to choose? I am here by necessity; my parents have made me come here. This decision will affect me for the rest of my life. Please show me Holy

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<sup>5</sup> *Materialism in philosophy* is the idea that there is no spirit world (and so, it’s linked with atheism and naturalism); the view that the only thing that exists is the physical, material world that we can touch, taste, see, hear, and smell. Not too distantly related is the common **economic definition of materialism**, of which I am speaking: *the tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values*. I believe this is what Jesus condemned when He spoke against the rich and desiring wealth as an end in itself. The Lord Jesus Christ was anti-materialistic.

Spirit: which major should I choose?" And I heard a clear inner voice say, "*Isn't it obvious?*" And I inwardly knew I should choose the Philosophy and Religion major; I had seen the sign for it, and felt drawn to it; in fact, I yearned for it. When I told my parents, I had some resistance, because it was not seen as a money-making degree; but eventually they consented. All throughout college, I never doubted that I was called to the ministry, or that this would be the degree to prepare me for it. Mainly, throughout my Philosophy and Religion program, I got As and Bs! And afterwards, I chose more of those Bible, theology, and religion classes to fill up my electives:--just because I loved it so much.

But these were secular classes; they were not taught from a pro-Christian or pro-evangelical viewpoint. They were taught from an *academic* viewpoint: "Just the facts." However, with some classes, professors did make a mockery of Christianity, or would express skeptical views of God. Atheists were just as welcome as Christians and Muslims, and others. I had one professor, Dr. David Nikkel, who although I didn't come to agree with all of his theological views, came to be a rather positive influence on me. He was my "Advisor" as well; the professor appointed to guide me through the process of selecting classes to make sure my credit hours were up to par. Dr. Nikkel used to be a United Methodist pastor and was currently an elder in a Disciples of Christ church.

Perhaps his **Arminianism** indirectly rubbed off on me, but I think I was always of an Arminian bent, because of my Catholic, United Methodist, and non-denominational Charismatic backgrounds. I had never been taught **Calvinism**, not once, not even one hint. It had always been something foreign to me. So, when people at the Baptist Student Union (BSU) started talking about a belief they called "*once saved,*



*always saved*,”<sup>6</sup> I was immediately turned off by this. The sense in which this was conveyed to me, and the context in which it arose in conversation, seemed to always take on the character of excusing carnality, immorality, and moral compromise of the lives of these “once saved, always saved” Southern Baptists.<sup>7</sup>

For a while it was hard for me to love Baptists, because I just saw them as hypocrites that excused their carnality, and were not really trying hard enough to live holy for God. I kept on hearing them say things like, “We’re all sinners, but I know I’m forgiven. I got saved when I was seven when I asked Jesus in my heart, so I know God forgives my sins automatically, whenever I sin, and I know I’ll go to Heaven when I die.” This sort of idea was totally foreign to **my Arminian view of salvation**, which requires daily holy living and vital faith in the cross—but if you backslide, then you could go to Hell. That was what I understood naturally when I just read the Bible.<sup>8</sup> Eventually I got J. Matthew Pinson’s *Four Views on Eternal Security*; and came to identify with the Wesleyan Arminian view; but I couldn’t believe in entire sanctification. I came to agree with the Baptists that sanctification is only progressive and gradual in this life. Perfection in holiness only occurs *after* the death of the saints, which is called glorification. This is the point that prevents me from being a 100% Wesleyan on all points of my soteriology. But, just as well. I believe this is the most accurate, Biblical view to take on these issues.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Also called *eternal security*.

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this was a form of *antinomianism* or cheap grace.

<sup>8</sup> Also called *conditional security*.

<sup>9</sup> Today, my view of salvation aligns closest with the Free Will Baptist Church. But with Church of the Nazarene and other Wesleyans and

Some of the professors I had were Bible critics and would introduce me to ideas I absolutely hated. I guess they thought this was necessary to give me a full-orbed exposure to all the ideas out there. Over time, it really began to wear on my soul, but the Holy Spirit, and the foundation that was laid in my Charismatic churches back home, and the *Pentecostal worship* had given me such an assurance of the reality of God, of salvation from Hell, and of *the witness of the presence of God's Holy Spirit*:--that I was pretty bold, if not daring at times, in confronting my professors in class. One time, during one of my Bible classes, I said, in my opinion, that John Dominic Crossan is a **heretic**.<sup>10</sup> Well, he is! This atmosphere served to strengthen my faith rather than weaken it. But in the middle of rational debate, I came to value the witness of the Holy Spirit; or feeling God's presence in Pentecostal worship, as the surest foundation of all that I believed intellectually in my head; and of course, a deep-seated, immovable fear of Hell. The practical application of unbelief in the Bible is atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, and the pleasures

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Methodists, I believe that some apostates can get saved again, and return to their first love, which is Christ (Revelation 2:4-5).

<sup>10</sup> A liberal Bible scholar who asserts that *all* of the miracles and teachings of Jesus in the Bible are not literally true, but were made up by Christians later on. This is called **Biblical criticism**. Josh McDowell's *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* and Norman Geisler's *When Critics Ask*, are solid evangelical responses to Biblical criticism. Geisler's book especially helped me when one of my professors started making claims of Bible contradictions. I found that most of what unbelievers call contradictions are, in fact, not contradictions; and even when Bible critics do seem to have a point, they tend to *exaggerate* minor issues as if they were major indictments against God. This way, they feel they have *excused themselves* from the responsibility of fearing Hell and living a holy life for God. The same kind of reasoning is used by atheists (see Romans 1:18-20).

of sin (Hebrews 11:25):--all of which were options I chose consistently against at college, out of a total fear of Hell. But I saw other Christians fall away from the Lord often; the temptations and lures of the pleasures of sin—especially of *the frats*, mixed with the skepticism of their professors, eventually killed their souls. I would sometimes plead and beg some of my BSU friends to come back to God; but they would not; their hearts had been hardened (Hebrews 3:12-13).

I learned how fickle and unstable even Christian friends can be. And the verse had a deeper meaning, “*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man*” (Psalm 118:8). This gave me an opportunity to get closer to the Lord and develop more of a personal devotional life. **2006 was a very prophetic year for me;**<sup>11</sup> this is when I started to receive divine dreams, and experience more signs and wonders. I kept a journal called “Supernatural Experiences” and had it in 4 hardback journal volumes, which are now gone. I learned about [sermonindex.net](http://sermonindex.net) and listened to many audio sermons by Leonard Ravenhill, David Wilkerson, and A. W. Tozer. I practiced contemplative prayer a lot; and was excited to experience *direct revelations from God through dreams, visions, voices, impressions, and signs*. The whole revelatory dimension of the Spirit was opening up to me (I think they call this an “open heaven”);<sup>12</sup> and it was so amazing; *miracles of physical rain would happen on occasion in*

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<sup>11</sup> In the summer of 2005, a camp counselor friend showed me his copy of Kris Vallotton’s *Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry*. I flipped through it and came to a description of an open vision; and really started to desire that for myself. My friend was a big fan of Bethel Church (Redding, CA).

<sup>12</sup> [ElijahList.com](http://ElijahList.com), [Wikipedia.com](http://Wikipedia.com), and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) all played a role for me to explore the realms of prophecy and Christian mysticism. I

*answer to faith-filled prayer*, as God was building up my inner man! I wanted to experience the amazing things of God that the prophets in the Bible did, like Elijah and Elisha; I didn't think there was anything arrogant in this, I just thought, as a Charismatic, this is what God has to offer the body of Christ! I eventually read James Goll and Julia Loren's *Shifting Shadows of Supernatural Experiences* (2007), which my dad bought for me on Christmas; and it really confirmed in my heart that all these things I was experiencing were for real! I also learned that the devil is in the details, when you open yourself up to these realms, and you have to practice Biblical discernment in order to sort out God's voice from the devil's voice; and especially be on guard against New Age deceptions and teachings. Ira Milligan's *Understanding the Dreams You Dream* began to be a must-have resource to aid me in Biblical dream interpretation. I was coming to see myself as a "Christian mystic."

There was a small Christian bookstore in Pembroke called "The Potter's House," and I would go in there sometimes and browse and buy a spiritual book I was curious about. This began a process towards learning about spiritual gifts, Christian mysticism, and eventually mystical theology. On the internet, I discovered James Goll and Patricia King and Sid Roth's *It's Supernatural*. I learned a lot about dreams

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would also go to the UNCP library and research related subjects in the religious reference encyclopedias, because I was just so thirsty and personally interested. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* online also introduced me to contemplative prayer, and "mystical theology" greats such as G. B. Scaramelli, Augustin Poulain, Adolphe Tanquerey, and Arthur Devine. I learned about the "apostolic-prophetic movement," the Vineyard churches, the Kansas City prophets, and the Toronto Blessing movements.

and visions. I was really interested in deepening my awareness of God; and of personal spiritual formation, because there was a vacuum being created by my Bible critic professors. With the help of that bookstore and [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), I was able to buy lots of cheap books in which I was curious about discovering new theological and *supernatural areas of thought*. Among those I read or referenced were:

Derek Prince's *They Shall Expel Demons*

Richard Ing's *Spiritual Warfare*

Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Hank Hanegraaff's *Counterfeit Revival*

Mary K. Baxter's *A Divine Revelation of Hell*

James Beverley's *Holy Laughter...*

Guy Chevreau's *Catch the Fire*

To this day, I think Richard Ing's, Brother Lawrence's, and Hank Hanegraaff's books not only satisfied my mystical thirst the most, but created a hunger for more knowledge of such things; with the Bible in hand, and reason on the other: -carefully, judging and discerning these mysterious subjects. I came across one book in the library: Herbert Thurston's *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, which describes way out-there miracles and supernatural experiences of the Catholic saints. I know I had only grazed the surface of the knowledge of God and the reality of the Holy Spirit; only grazed the surface.

In February 2006, I had just started a short-lived campus ministry called Fusion, and used it as a launching pad to host a DVD presentation of Kent Hovind's *Lies in the Textbooks* in the university center. The science faculty and others protested with signs and a rebuttal seminar. I had posted flyers all over campus that said, "EVOLUTION IS A LIE"; but when the faculty responded that I was personally accusing them of being liars, then I changed the flyers to "EVOLUTION IS FAULTY." A Baptist pastor persuaded me to change the program videos to *Unlocking the Mystery of Life: The Case for Intelligent Design* and *Icons of Evolution: Dismantling the Myths*.<sup>13</sup> He said Hovind came to his church once and was very disrespectful. Good that he did too, because not soon after, Hovind was imprisoned in January 2007 for tax evasion, causing a big scandal. So, the change in program served to strengthen my cause for **intelligent design** rather than weaken it. However, I still think Hovind's program is the best. (Whether his tax evasion was legit, I don't know; it seems to have revolved around his Dinosaur Adventure Land being recognized by the state as a Business rather than a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.)

***Contemplative prayer, and hearing and journaling God's voice, and seeing closed visions***, were an exciting new adventure for me. One night I will never forget in 2006. I finished my homework, and I was tired, but I decided to lay prostrate and spend time with God in contemplative prayer. As I was contemplating on God, I drifted into a half-awake trance state. I could still see the floor and the bottom of the dresser to my left when I opened my eyes now and later. Then I felt an angelic presence standing about 10-20 feet in front of me diagonally to my right. I could not see him, but I

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www2.uncp.edu/pineneedle/news/2006/020906\\_evolution.html](http://www2.uncp.edu/pineneedle/news/2006/020906_evolution.html)

intuitively knew that it was **an angel** in the form of a young man! This was in the spiritual realm surrounding me.<sup>14</sup> My eyes were open and I could see the floor and the dresser; but because I was in a trance, I was also able to sense the spiritual realm around me just as much as the physical realm. In the spiritual realm, it was like there was a 30-foot extension to my tiny dorm room, and the angel was standing in this room extension.

In the physical realm, the angel would have been standing in the tree outside of my window—the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of my dormitory. He asked me, “Who wrote *The Pursuit of God*?” And I said, “A. W. Tozer.” Then the central air conditioning vent in my room—as it was blowing air—began blowing air more intensely and it became loud and rushing (Acts 2:2). It was the Holy Spirit, and the sound of this rushing Wind and spiritual Water flooded my being. This loud rushing sound resonated in my head. Then the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord came upon me (Isa. 11:2), because I remembered that God’s

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<sup>14</sup> Since this experience, Rebekah and I have fairly regularly had “angel sparkles,” appear to us to guide our thoughts, especially since September 2008, when we got married. I have found that **if you are too open in talking about angel experiences with even spiritual Christians, they tend to respond with skepticism or jealousy**, and might even quote Colossians 2:18: “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind” (NASB). They always quote this out of context: the verse was originally referring to Gnostic religion (see *The NIV Study Bible* note). Over time, and after having read the lives of Sts. Columba, Hildegard, Francis of Assisi, Vincent Ferrer, and Ignatius of Loyola, who all saw visions: I saw they practiced “prophetic secrecy” as I like to call it (Amos 3:7). **Visions are for personal faith-building.** And the Christian who thinks he will be heard by blabbing about his visions, will soon find that most people think he’s a fool, and that he’s just mistaking his imagination for visions from God. So, keep it a secret!

voice sounds like rushing water (Ezek. 1:24; 43:2; Rev. 1:15; 14:2). As a divine coincidence, I had recently told my family this when we went to see a rushing waterfall in the Appalachian mountains.

Then I saw a vivid closed vision of a black man—the picture was zoomed up close into his eyes. And I heard a loud mental voice say, “The humility of God,” and the man’s eyes widened because of the fear of the Lord. And that was the end of that divine experience. I stayed prostrate for a little while longer, and then I got up from the floor about 45 minutes since I had begun, and I went to bed. (It took me a while to read Tozer’s book; it turned out to be quite a bit about humility.)

I had several short dreams, but I only remember one of them. I dreamed that the pastors from a certain Charismatic church—were walking beside the music building at my college over a grassy area. As they were walking, I began to approach them from behind, and I felt the Holy Spirit manifest between both of them and also on the top of my head; it was as if God’s Spirit were grabbing me by the head. And one pastor turned around, tackled me in the Spirit, and I prostrated myself with my arms covering my head. The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord was present, and the pastor was on my back laying down on top of me, as I was prostrating in the Spirit; and he loudly prophesied over me, although I don’t remember what he said. When I mention the “Spirit of the Fear of the Lord,” I mean that I was overwhelmed with a sense of God’s majesty, righteousness, and power.

## **Interpretation**

I experienced these visions and dreams very close to when I



had first learned about contemplative prayer. God was gracious enough to send me an angel to suggest A. W. Tozer's *The Pursuit of God* (1948) to me for contemplative guidance. I eventually got around to reading it. It had some **contemplative** material about *being still and listening to God's voice*. But more than anything that jumped out at me in its pages was the message of **humility** and *detachment from things*. Although I found the book hard to digest at first because of Tozer's vocabulary words, I feel that God was pointing me to Tozer as an *Evangelical mystic*, and to follow the path of humility in my pursuit of God. **Dreams and visions** can puff a man up with pride, so it is necessary to remain humble in the contemplative life. Everything else in the dreams and visions seems to have been tokens of the presence of the Holy Spirit—confirming the message of Tozer.

I was developing my own views of God and theology; not anything heretical, but just expanding my understanding of what I had been taught in the introductory class at **my home church in Raleigh**. Sometimes when I would come home from college, I would visit my home church; and I was always glad to be back again and be immersed in Spirit-filled worship. But there was an increasing displeasure that I was developing about it; I was getting the “cold shoulder” from various people; and I couldn't figure it out. I had been feeling this “rejection” ever since I came there; my friend Luke was the only one who made me feel welcome. After he became a missionary permanently in South America, around 2005, my home church didn't feel much like a home anymore. Plus, I had a crush on one of the pastor's daughters; and she rejected me, which made it worse.

The final straws that broke the camel's back were a series of conversations I had with my pastor. The first was while I was reading Derek Prince's *They Shall Expel Demons*. I was

telling him all about it; and what a great need there is for **deliverance ministry** today. He dismissed it quite easily; and said it was an unhealthy obsession with demons.

The second was an occasion when I was with the pastor and his wife in the pastor's office. I asked him what his interpretation of the following text was, because I wanted to know what the meaning was: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until Heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of Heaven"* (Matthew 5:17-19). I asked my pastor the meaning of this text—was because I was being very legalistic, nitpicky, and censorious towards my family members about right and wrong. I saw by judgmental attitude about even the smallest issues of morality to have some level of support by this passage. Yet, I also felt that I went too far at times; and I wanted to have my pastor's wise input on the matter. Maybe he could give me some practical advice on how to best interpret and apply this obviously important teaching of Jesus. And maybe this would help to bring peace to my home.

So, after I read them the passage, my pastor said, "BO-RUFF! YOU PUTTIN' ME ON THE SPOT!?" Uh...I was totally shocked and surprised at this reaction. No, I wanted his godly advice on how to understand and live out this passage of the Bible! Especially since I heard several people in high school and college always say, "Judge not lest ye be judged." And say other similar things against living by the

rules and laws of the Bible. Not only was the pastor's response rude and surprising, it revealed to me that he apparently felt convicted of wrongdoing—of being somewhat of an antinomian...of downplaying the role of God's moral law in the Christian's life. And worse yet, that I should start to see *him* in the same way I saw all the rest of these non-judgmental types who downplay God's rules.

**Antinomianism** is a word I came to learn in college: it's the heretical theological idea that the New Testament, Jesus, and the Gospel have brought in an era of grace and forgiveness—and therefore, Christians don't have to live by the rules and regulations of the Old Testament law in order to be in a right standing with God, *even the moral law is no longer in effect*, in the antinomian view. I came to see lots of Southern Baptists and other Christians held a view like this towards the moral rules in the Bible. It took me a while to separate the concepts of the *ceremonial law* and *moral law*; and that Christians are only under the moral law by faith in Christ. As it says in the *39 Articles*, “No Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.”<sup>15</sup>

The third conversation I had with my pastor that really finished my association with my home church—was about **evangelism**. Ray Comfort's program *The Way of the Master* was coming on TV around this time, and was really getting me hyped up for witnessing and street evangelism. Comfort had a book called *Hell's Best Kept Secret*, which exposes antinomianism; and teaches that using the Ten Commandments is a necessary means in evangelism to prepare the consciences of people to see that they've done wrong, and they need **salvation from Hell** by faith in Jesus Christ. This was

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<sup>15</sup> VII: “Of the Old Testament.”

the beginning of forming my views of the Gospel and true Biblical evangelism.

One comment is all it took. My pastor said, in front of his elders, “I’m not a fire and brimstone preacher.” I had mentioned the title: *Hell’s Best Kept Secret*, and apparently because I even so much as said the word “Hell”—it was enough for him to disassociate himself from that. I WAS SO TURNED OFF BY THIS! As you can remember, the thing that got me converted was being humbled by the *law* when I broke into the middle school; and then afterwards going to *HELL*-fighter Youth Church. To hear my own pastor reject the word “Hell” in light of evangelism, in the presence of his elders approvingly standing by him:--this was *too much for me*. I shortly afterwards explained to my parents that I was no longer going to that church, which they understood completely. My pastor e-mailed me, basically implying that *I had no good reason to leave his church*; that all churches are carnal and worldly; and the only reason why I have such holy convictions is because I’m “called to the ministry.” Implied in that idea was that I could be holy, but everyone else:--that it’s okay if they’re not holy. Judge not, lest ye be judged. I know it was for my increasing zeal for holy living, that I either openly or silently, received rejection from the kids in that church.

***So, my pastor’s rejection of deliverance ministry, God’s law in the Christian life, and Hell-fire preaching:--that’s what made me give up on associating with my home church. I didn’t want to even try to get along with that kind of spirit. So, I set out on a journey of faith, really trusting in God, and not trusting in man. Psalm 118:8: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” Don’t think that just because all I did here was quote one sentence of what my***

pastor said, that I wasn't hearing him out. I just don't remember the conversations in their entirety; but I do remember the sense in which I was coming from; and the sense in which he was coming from. Ultimately, in my view, he was an ***antinomian Charismatic***<sup>16</sup> who thought that emphasizing worship, and music, and Bible teaching—is the way to do ministry. **No Hell, no law of God, and no casting out demons for him. Well, I just couldn't swallow that.** I'm thankful for the *Bible teaching and Pentecostal worship* atmosphere he let me build a foundation on—but when it came to these other things—I couldn't agree with him. They were just too important.<sup>17</sup>

I found **another non-denominational Charismatic church in Durham, NC**, hoping to find more *holiness* among the youth group. But sadly, I was disappointed. The youth pastor defended his use of *cussing* as culturally relevant for our times, and I reported this to the pastors; and understood not much was done about it. That youth pastor also

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<sup>16</sup> By the grace of God, and His revelation, I've come to see myself as a ***Wesleyan Pentecostal***. How comforting and assuring it was to discover that John Wesley, William J. Seymour, Smith Wigglesworth, David Wilkerson, and other classical Pentecostals have held to similar views as I have: without me doing anything much more than just reading the Bible and trying to live it out. ***Antinomian Charismatics*** or “lawless enthusiasts,” on the other hand, have been with us in all ages, as the worst of heretics: the Gnostics, the Alumbrados, the Anabaptists, Johannes Agricola (d. 1566), the Philippists, Tobias Crisp (d. 1643), Anne Hutchinson (d. 1643), the Quakers, the Ranters, the Dispensationalists (this group could have influenced my pastor).

<sup>17</sup> This pastor is currently in Raleigh, NC and has a non-denominational Charismatic church that broke away from Rock Church International in the 1980s. This is not the church that had the Hellfighter youth ministry. Today, they support MorningStar Ministries, Bethel Church (Redding, CA), and Catch The Fire. In my opinion, these are all antinomian (non-judgmental and *not holiness-oriented*) Charismatic ministries.

had about 20 bottles of hard liquor openly displayed on top of the cabinets in his apartment, while all the youth played a violent game on his X-Box. It didn't take me long to leave that Charismatic church either. We had gone open air preaching, which was impressive to me, but when I preached *repentance and Hell*, one of the youth leader girls opposed me, and said, "We're not about being like John the Baptist...we're supposed to be like Jesus, and preach God's love." Eh...? Yet, I know one guy got visibly converted when I was "not preaching like Jesus."

This church was paid a visit by **Harald Bredesen** and Joan Fitzgerald. It was because of them being featured in a newspaper article for Pentecost Sunday that I thought of visiting the church at all...my dad had given me the article. I didn't know much about either of them, but when Bredesen took the platform, and was going to be interviewed, the Holy Spirit said, "*Church father.*" That night, Fitzgerald held a **healing service**:--something quite rare in the Raleigh-Durham area. She laid hands on my mom and prayed; and my mom said she felt like falling over and laying down in the comforting feeling of the Holy Spirit. One girl was violently screaming because demons were coming out of her. Nearly towards the end of the healing service, I went over to Bredesen who was sitting in a chair. As I walked up to him to shake his hand, he looked me in the eyes, and said to the pastor next to him, "*This is a righteous man.*" The pastor, sort of playing along, said, "Yes, he is!" (He didn't know me from Adam.)

But what an *encouraging word* it was to have Bredesen prophesy this to me in light of the opposition I was just receiving from my pastor of 6 years! We talked a bit; he said, "I have to go up to Washington, DC to see my agnostic brother." Then he kissed my forehead; and gave me his

blessing. One month later, he died.<sup>18</sup> My mom cried when she heard this.

I went back to college; and was browsing through the religious books in the library as usual; and I came across a book: John Sherrill's *They Speak with Other Tongues*, and skimmed through the contents and saw chapter 2: "Harald's Strange Story"—IT WAS ABOUT HARALD BREDESEN! ABOUT HOW HE EXPERIENCED *XENOGLOSSY* (SPEAKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TONGUES) IN POLISH! This happened within *weeks* after me having met the man! I had received a blessing from a church father, a true prophet, a leader of the Charismatic Renewal,<sup>19</sup> and I had no idea who he was! God set it all up.

In the summer of 2007, when I was working as a camp counselor, I read several Christian books that helped me *grow in holiness*...as this was very important to me now. The following is one of my journal entries, from August 2, 2007:

After reading a series of books during this summer, I noticed that they all magnified the topic of divine love. These books were Leonard Ravenhill's *Why Revival Tarries* (1959), John Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1777), Hannah Whitall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875), Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* (2001),<sup>20</sup> and finally Os Guinness' *The Call* (2003),

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<sup>18</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harald\\_Bredesen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harald_Bredesen)

<sup>19</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charismatic\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charismatic_Movement) - This article says, "The term 'charismatic' was coined by American Lutheran minister Harald Bredesen in 1962 to describe what was happening in mainline Protestant denominations. Confronted with the term 'neo-Pentecostal,' he preferred to call it 'the charismatic renewal in the historic churches.'" Wow! *That's* Harald Bredesen!

<sup>20</sup> Foster's book really played a role at showing me the four Christian

and when I reached page 14 of this last book—I came to conclude that *divine love is the highest good*. After coming to this conclusion through a revelatory impression, I chose to sit still and meditate on it. As I sat still with my earmuffs meditating on the common teaching of divine love in this succession of books, I heard a quiet mental voice say, ***“There is nothing more important than love.”***<sup>21</sup>

God had made it clear to me that obedience to the moral commandments of God is to love God and man: that ***“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law”*** (Romans 13:10). And ***“this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous”*** (1 John 5:3). It is not a non-judgmental, allowance of sin; not a tolerance of carnality in the name of friendship; but is a holy, pure, divine love from the Holy Spirit that energizes obedience to the moral law of Scripture. I think John Wesley’s *Plain Account* influenced me the most in this view, because it was full of Biblical references.

On September 25, 2007, Kerrigan Skelly visited UNC Pembroke to do some **open air preaching**. This was an amazing coincidence! I had just been watching his open air preaching videos on YouTube a few days ago. And now, here he was.<sup>22</sup> I stood by him as he preached; and he even let

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spiritual traditions, which I came to adopt: **Evangelical, Holiness, Contemplative, and Charismatic**. This probably played a role in my formation of the phrase “Evangelical mystic” around 2009; a phrase that John Fletcher, the early Methodist preacher, had come to centuries ago, without my knowing until much later (see Robert Tuttle, “John Fletcher’s Evangelical Mysticism,” in *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, pp. 138-142).

<sup>21</sup> This agrees with 1 Corinthians 13.

<sup>22</sup> Prior to this **in 2006**, I did a biographical research paper on George Whitefield for my Religions of America class. It was based on the first 100 pages or so of **Albert Belden’s *George Whitefield: The Awakener***



me preach a bit. This was my introduction to open air preaching. It got me out of my comfort zone.<sup>23</sup> After he left, I started to do open air preaching by myself on campus. Like me, Skelly had been influenced by Ray Comfort and his program *The Way of the Master*, which featured methods of evangelism on the streets and other public places. Now Comfort has a YouTube program called “The Comfort Zone.” Heh.

It was around this time period that Rebekah and I met. She and I loved each other immediately. She fulfilled a detailed “wife specifications” list that I had written and prayed through for 2 years! We spent hours and hours talking about ecclesiology, house church (especially as it relates to the 1 Corinthians 14:26 practice of open-participation in a meeting), denominations, church government, and church corruption. She had been influenced by house church ideas; and I was trying to see where she was coming from. Two of her favorite movies she showed me were *Brother Sun*, *Sister Moon* and *Cotton Patch Gospel*. And when she showed me the “Relationships” DVDs by Bob and Peggy Hughey, I could really tell she was serious; as much as I was.<sup>24</sup>

**September 8, 2008 is when Rebekah and I got married;** and times were tough for several reasons. The recession had

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(1930). This book profoundly impacted my view of open air preaching, extempore preaching, revival, etc. I came to identify with **John Wesley’s Arminianism** during this study. I was also hit by a sign from God: his name was John, so am I; he led a campus ministry, I just started Fusion; WHITEFIELD AND WESLEY WENT TO A “PEMBROKE COLLEGE”—and so was I! God was probably showing me I have a similar calling in my life to Wesley.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www2.uncp.edu/pineneedle/news/2007\\_2008/092607\\_NEWS\\_evangelist.htm](http://www2.uncp.edu/pineneedle/news/2007_2008/092607_NEWS_evangelist.htm)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.alifestyleoflight.com/videos.php>

just hit; and although I had graduated, it was hard for many graduates to find a decent job. *Both of our parents did not want us to get married*, because of our economic situation, and for other personal family issues going on. Rebekah and I had come to accept “house church” ideas from one of her professors (mainly her), who had also got her converted. He also taught her to distrust the organized church and all ministers in denominations.<sup>25</sup> He was influenced by the Jesus Movement; and since the 1980s was involved in **the House Church Movement**, and heavily influenced by Watchman Nee’s, Gene Edwards’, and Frank Viola’s ideas (especially *Pagan Christianity?* which had just come out in a new up-to-date form). There was some Biblical purity in the teachings; the main idea was to focus on developing Christian friendships, and not get lost in the “bigness” of the institutional church.

Yet there were *anti-clerical* ideas he held to (anti-clergy, **anti-pastor**): like an Anabaptist or Quaker. In this view, for a church to have one pastor contradicts the idea of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). But this can’t be true, because the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) were written specifically for single-pastors or solo-shepherds over churches. Also, the word “pastors” is used in Ephesians 4:11. To be anti-pastor is also to be anti-sermon, which undermines preaching the Gospel (evangelistic sermons), and the regeneration of man by hearing the Word preached (1 Peter 1:23; Acts 16:14). Over time, God showed us that “*godliness with contentment is great gain*” (1 Timothy 6:6); and that whether it is godliness in the institutional

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<sup>25</sup> A lot of this was a well-meaning reaction to what he saw as **church corruption** in denominations. No doubt, what I would later acknowledge to be the bad fruit of **the Seeker-Sensitive Movement**.

church or godliness in a house church, it doesn't matter. I also struggled with my call to the ministry; and denominational guidance. I had seen a "**prosperity gospel**" being pushed in certain Pentecostal churches that I did not want any part of;<sup>26</sup> and I just did not know where to go.

We set out to Arkansas where Rebekah's professor friend was; and his godly family. We were married outside of the library on the grounds of **Harding University**; and a crowd of *hipsters* came to watch. There was also a bagpiper who came to play for us. Rebekah was baptized as a final seal of her conversion in 2005; and we felt like we had set out on our lives together, trusting God totally. That group of hipsters had a worship gathering at night in someone's backyard called "chai night." For the first time, I saw what Rebekah and I came to call "**angel sparkles**." *Little white specks of light* appearing around the head of a young man with a guitar (a worship leader). When I told him, he told me he believed me; and that he was a Charismatic, and that was kind of a no-no, because Harding was a non-Charismatic school. He asked me, "Have you ever heard of the baptism in the Holy Spirit?" I said, "Oh yes, it's a very good thing! Speaking in tongues in the presence of God during intense worship—there's nothing greater in the world." He said he had read Bill Johnson's *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, and it was really awesome to him. I encouraged him to remain a Charismatic; and I blessed him and we left.

Eventually, a friend of the professor's opened their house to us around Albuquerque, New Mexico; and we lived with them for about one year. I was in total *dismay*. I had no direction; no idea what kind of a job to look for. I was into the

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<sup>26</sup> Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Assemblies of God.

house church ideas; and became persuaded that American churches and pastors had gotten so corrupt, that there were no openings for any of the kind of preaching I would like to engage in. We did some open air preaching at **the University of New Mexico**, right around the time when the elections were between Barack Obama and John McCain. I was rooting for McCain as the lesser of the two evils; but my view for societal change was much more towards evangelism, and much less about voting for presidents. One man gave us \$20 when we were preaching out there; the first of several like occasions.

**One night, Rebekah had an open vision of an Indian woman with a sari, holding a baby at the foot of our bed!** She was afraid of it at first, so she covered up her face with the blanket. I judged the vision as possibly demonic, because she was left with the impression that we should go to India in obedience to God for an independent mission trip. We had no money, so how could it be from God? Then we were open air preaching at the college again, and an Indian woman came up to Rebekah, and said, “Nobody is listening to you here. Why don’t you just go to India!?” Okay, I was impressed at that; then on the bus ride home, as we were talking about it, my eyes fell on something like “Indian Jewelry Store.” I was getting even more persuaded it was from God. A couple days later, we were in a bookstore, and I came across K. P. Yohannan’s *Revolution in World Missions*, which is mainly about indigenous missionaries in India. I read that book, which basically argues that the church should be supporting native missionaries, and not coming over and colonizing a white culture on a foreign culture. I agreed. A few days later, when we were at the pregnancy center taking parenting classes, one of the counselors offered me a job to paint several rooms in her house—and then the pay could

help us for our mission! It turns out she paid us several thousand dollars, which was just enough for all of our airfare, and extra money for the trip. It turned out to be a sort of honeymoon-mission trip all set up by Jesus! Through Facebook, Rebekah was able to get us two contacts in India through friends who had gone on mission trips.

While we were there for 4 weeks (Mumbai and Goa), I found that the **Christianity in India** is not too different than it is in America. Sure, there are cultural differences, but *the lukewarmness, the prosperity gospel, and the formality* is all the same there. It showed me in the end there is no good reason to seek out non-American “foreign mission trips” in order to find God and find revival. They have all the same spiritual hang-ups that American Christians do, even though there is a level of persecution and hiding. The Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), and looking up to American church leaders, like Benny Hinn and Rick Warren, has contributed to this lukewarmness in India.

After coming back to America, I came to see the need for “missionary work” here in the states—seriously, and not as a cop-out. For several reasons: 1. Foreign pastors look up to American church leaders. 2. Foreign Christians have a harder time respecting American Christians or missionaries, because of their cultural differences. 3. America has no harsh persecution of Christians, as it is in the foreign countries. Therefore, it is a very opportune place to do evangelism and open air preaching at places like secular colleges. 4. Standing firm against churchianity and formality and seeker-sensitive ministry ideas is absolutely necessary, no matter what country you are ministering in; and standing for traditional views of revival, soteriology, and evangelism is always internationally relevant. 5. While I’m not against visiting a foreign country in obedience to the Great Commission or the

guidance of the Holy Spirit:--*I believe God made me an American, because He mainly intends on me being a missionary to Americans*; and I think the same could be said for all Christians from all cultural and racial backgrounds. Think of it like this: God made the Apostle Paul a Greek-speaking Jew, because He mainly intended on him being a missionary to the Greek-speaking Roman empire...He didn't send him off to India or China. (However, church tradition says God did send the Apostle Thomas to India.)

After New Mexico, we shifted around and lived in various states; but to tell all that happened in this time, would be more than I would want to. To put it as simply as possible: 2009-2010 was VERY HARD TO BEAR. During this hard period, Mary was born on May 26, 2009. And what I learned was that if you want to go up in the kingdom of God, then you must go down in the eyes of the world:--it's a humility thing. I started writing and blogging; and eventually put out my first manuscript on the web called *How to Experience God*, which was a summary of my experiences in contemplative prayer and prophetic revelations:--I took G. B. Scaramelli's *A Handbook of Mystical Theology* and Augustin Poulain's *Revelations and Visions* as earmarks of spiritual discernment; or a skeleton on which to build my theology of spiritual experience.<sup>27</sup>

The manuscript was endorsed and a Foreword written by

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<sup>27</sup> While in a bookstore, I came across Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon's *The Seduction of Christianity* and Douglas Groothuis' *Confronting the New Age*. These books helped me to filter out some of my beliefs about the supernatural. Back in 2008, I had already come to see that Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* was polluted by New Age ideas; and that being called a "**Christian mystic**" wasn't good enough, wasn't specific enough theologically, and wasn't really what I was aiming at. So, at this point around 2009, I came to call myself an "**Evangelical mystic.**"

a popular Charismatic teacher, but when he and the publisher spoke about *book marketing*, traveling and selling my book from church to church, and when I criticized turning my Father's house into a marketplace (John 2:16); and how a lot of pastors are just like Pharisees, the teacher said, that unless I take these statements back, "There's no way you're getting *in on this*." And at that point, I knew that man was corrupt; and he was just merchandising his spirituality like a religious salesman. Like old Tetzl, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings—the soul from Purgatory springs." Same thing, just different times and theology. Today this man holds \$300 conferences on how to hear God's voice; and that's how he makes his living! Can you spell S-I-M-O-N-Y?<sup>28</sup>

I started to develop a really radical, rogue-like, prophet-in-the-wilderness mentality around this time. I'd had that idea for years;<sup>29</sup> but now I was really *starting to shed a lot of religious conventions off of me*, something that a woman rightly prophesied to me at a Charismatic church. I wasn't going to be confined by *churchianity* anymore; God was going to lead me, and guide me: period. From 2010-2013 I worked as a security guard, contemplating what God has in store for me; these were not pleasant times, but I was glad to have a job—it was better than all the janitor, sub sandwich maker, assembly line, retail, odd-ball jobs I had before. But being a security guard does not mean you have a regular schedule; or a regular life. My *desire to preach* was satisfied by writing, blogging, street preaching in Raleigh, NC, and

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<sup>28</sup> *Simony* came to be understood as the corrupt practice of selling pastoral and bishop jobs to the highest bidder. But originally, it was a reference to *Simon the Sorcerer who asked Peter if he could buy the power of God with money* (Acts 8:9-24).

<sup>29</sup> Leonard Ravenhill's sermons in 2004-2006 on [sermonindex.net](http://sermonindex.net) probably influenced me in this independent, non-conformist spirit.

making YouTube videos. Frustrated as I was that *I couldn't being preaching in a pulpit on Sunday mornings in a church*, I had a vague conception that it was not really something that the church crowd would accept, because all I would do is preach about sin, righteousness, judgment, and deeper spiritual issues (aka. “revival sermons”). And I came to learn later that most church boards *despise* that kind of preaching: especially the subjects of HELL, REPENTANCE, and OBE-  
DIENCE TO GOD’S LAW.



## CHAPTER 5

### A THEOLOGICAL MISSION

(2010 – 2015)

Still in a state of *economic dismay*, and not knowing what to do with my life in light of a job, Rebekah and I and our one-year old baby Mary were living in my parent’s basement. By the grace of God, they let us live with them for a year. Then they thought we might be able to support ourselves with me just being a security guard. So, out we went! First, we lived in a trailer park, which was not pleasant for several reasons: possible criminals, unfriendly neighbors, far out in the country, long drive to work, etc. So, then through an older lady at work, I found an “equal opportunity” apartment complex in Raleigh called The Palms Apartments. We lived there around 2010-2011, about a year: Mary was 1-2 years old. The downside of that place was not only the noisy and pot-smoking neighbors, but there was a co-sign that was required for the lease, because my \$10/hour security guard job was not enough income to satisfy the landlord.<sup>30</sup> I don’t believe in co-signs now (Proverbs 22:26, NLT), but then I didn’t know any better, and my dad was gracious enough to co-sign the lease for us.

What level of work ethic could be applied to being a security guard, which at times, is not much—I tried to apply. However, there were books I read on my shift, which at times

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<sup>30</sup> If only we had known then about [ratracerebellion.com](http://ratracerebellion.com), [sykes.com](http://sykes.com), and [flexjobs.com](http://flexjobs.com)—Rebekah could have been doing a customer service job or something online, she could have comfortably supplemented my low income, and we could have lived in a better quality rental home; but that’s all part of the school of hard knocks. You live and you learn.

presented no problems, and at other times did, because of secularist people commenting on my Bible or Christian books, and giving my supervisors a hard time over it. But really, there was no problem.

During this time I felt led to start a book project called *A History of the Prophetic*, which I am still working on now 5 years later. I have tried to narrow down prophets in the history of the church and read their biographies; and especially their personal accounts of miracles and prophetic experiences. I started out by reading Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, and in this study, although there were many unwelcome references about prayers to dead saints, worship of the Virgin Mary, and other strange medieval Catholic things, what I found in the lives of some of these Catholic saints—were what appeared to me—genuine experiences of the Holy Spirit. *Visions, dreams, and voices*—these seemed to be the primary way that God spoke to these saints in the past. And it helped me to hone in on these experiences for *prophetic accuracy* and spiritual guidance in my own life.

A lot of the people in the “prophetic movement” prior to the fall of Todd Bentley in 2008, seemed to lay a strong emphasis on spiritual feelings and impressions—as if they counted as words of knowledge. But what I saw in the Catholic saints is that dreams, visions, and voices were the norm. Then I found this was the Biblical norm for the prophets: “When there is a *prophet* among you, I, the Lord, reveal Myself to them in *visions*, I speak to them in *dreams*” (Numbers 12:6); and also, with the archetypal Biblical prophet Elijah, the famous verse in 1 Kings 19:12: “After the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire *a still small voice*.”

I began to closely study the lives of the saints: Paul of Thebes, Antony the Great, Patrick of Ireland (St. Patrick), Brigit of Kildare, Benedict of Nursia, Columba of Iona, Hildegard of Bingen, Dominic of Osma, St. Francis of Assisi, Vincent Ferrer, Ignatius of Loyola, and Teresa of Avila. I still have some closer inspecting to do, but singling out prophetic and mystical Protestant saints who had similar experiences and miracles on par with these Catholic saints—has been a really hard task, and has taken years of sifting and reading and rethinking. But at this stage I think I’m going to then include: John Knox, George Fox, John Wesley, Charles Finney, William J. Seymour, and Smith Wigglesworth. As far as I can see, after Seymour’s death (d. 1922), the quality of Pentecostalism just got worse and worse, especially through the influence of John G. Lake,<sup>31</sup> positive confession, and prosperity gospel ideas beginning in the 1940s-50s Healing Revival. There are *very few* Pentecostals that I would consider to be on the same level with the Catholic saints; but perhaps Wesley and Wigglesworth came close.

**Catholic “mystical theology”** is still to me the greatest production of theology on **the miraculous gifts** the church

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<sup>31</sup> Lake believed Mohammed was a prophet of God (*John G. Lake: The Complete Collection*, pp. 911-912), that “God intends us to be gods” (as quoted in Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon’s *The Seduction of Christianity*, p. 219), he condemned the Assemblies of God, William J. Seymour, and associated with E. W. Kenyon (*John G. Lake*, pp. 474-479); he endorsed George Fox and Sadhu Sundar Singh—both universalists (pp., 365, 693), and he repeatedly condemned all use of doctors and medicine in favor of the prayer of faith only. Gordon Lindsay (d. 1973), who organized the Healing Revival, was a big fan of Lake. Today Lake’s legacy carries on through [healingrooms.com](http://healingrooms.com).

has produced.<sup>32</sup> But in the Protestant realm, it is convenient to find “mystical theology” if possible, without the Catholic errors. One such book was treasured by John Wesley: John Lacy’s *The General Delusion of Christians, Touching the Ways of God’s Revealing Himself to and by the Prophets* (1713). However, it wasn’t until 1750 that Wesley read it, regarding which he journaled on August 15, 1750:

By reflecting on an odd book which I had read in this journey, *The General Delusion of Christians with Regard to Prophecy*, I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected, 1. That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real, Scriptural Christians; and, 2. That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost; but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to RIDICULE WHATEVER GIFTS THEY HAD NOT THEMSELVES; and to decry them all, as either madness or imposture.

After seeing this quote referred to in at least three different books, today I am convinced that John Lacy’s *General Delusion* may very well be the first Protestant charismatic theology book to have a strong historical influence with regard to visions, dreams, etc in Methodism, the Holiness Movement, and Pentecostalism. From what I gather, Wesley was

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<sup>32</sup> For example, Augustin Poulain’s *The Graces of Interior Prayer*.

undecided about the French Prophets, and he was likely unaware of Lacy's sins and errors; but to give credit where credit was due, he saw his book as a good treatment on miraculous gifts.<sup>33</sup> In 1750, Thomas Church's *A Vindication of the Miraculous Powers* was published by a charismatic Anglican priest; and discussed miracles among the church fathers, healings, deliverances, dreams and visions, the gift of tongues, and a defense against Conyers Middleton, the cessationist. Another Anglican priest, Thomas Boys, published *The Suppressed Evidence* in 1832, one of the most remarkable studies in charismatic gifts. In here, he proves that Luther, Calvin, Knox, and a number of other 1500s reformers were actually what we might call "open but cautious" charismatics.

Smith Wigglesworth's *Ever Increasing Faith* (1924), it seems, was the first official Pentecostal (Assemblies of God) teaching on miraculous gifts, soon followed by Donald Gee's *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (1928) and Harold Horton's *The Gifts of the Spirit* (1934). In the 1940s and 50s, there were a lot of spurious healing revivalists, which to me, might be hard to peg down for authenticity and integrity. But if there was anything real, or any true teaching on miraculous gifts that could be trusted in any degree from that era, it might be from Gordon Lindsay: *Commissioned with Power* (a total of 513 pages). I've read Dennis Bennett's *The Holy Spirit and You* (1971), which was okay—but it seemed a bit dry; it didn't seem to overflow with guidance on prayer or

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<sup>33</sup> John Lacy, *The Spirit of Prophecy Defended*. Edited by J. Ramsey Michaels (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), p. xviii, note 6.

visionary experiences, like I've found in Catholic mystical theology.

Books on miraculous gifts seemed to get more vision-oriented and mystical theology-like when we reach John Wimber (founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches): *Power Evangelism* (1986), *Power Healing* (1987), *Power Encounters* (1988), and *Power Points* (1991). Wimber made such an impact that the seminary culture was really stirred up over the charismatic claims of signs and wonders going on in the Vineyard. John MacArthur's *Charismatic Chaos* (1992) was the Reformed cessationist response to all of this, in which he ignores all the good, and only focuses on abuses of televangelists, and highlights the mistakes committed by charlatans, and Pentecostal and charismatic preachers. The following year, Jack Deere's *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (1993) was published as a unique charismatic reply to cessationist reasoning; and he occasionally grapples with MacArthur's book in particular.

At this point in my historical reasoning on the miraculous gifts, I had a dilemma when comparing MacArthur with Deere as theologians and men of God. There is nothing more delicate than a discussion on the Holy Spirit and the power of miracles that proceed from prayer in Jesus' name. **Soteriology** was at the basis of my dilemma. Although I am a Wesleyan, as such, I am a lordship salvationist, and tend to lean in MacArthur's direction, as expressed in *The Gospel According to Jesus* (1988). Although I affirm conditional security, I'm right there with MacArthur in affirming that obedience to the commands of Christ are necessary for salvation. Deere, on the other hand, comes from a long career with Dal-

las Theological Seminary, renowned not only for its dispensationalism and cessationism, but also for its no-lordship antinomianism. Deere comes out as an ex-cessationist in his book, which is very encouraging and insightful; but I still had this lingering question in my mind about Deere's soteriology. MacArthur rightly observes:

Nearly all the leading advocates of the no-lordship gospel were associated with Dallas Theological Seminary. In fact, Dr. James M. Boice, who wrote powerfully in defense of "lordship salvation" long before I entered the fray, referred to their view as "the Dallas Doctrine."

The pedigree of no-lordship doctrine at Dallas Seminary is traceable back to founder Lewis Sperry Chafer. The doctrine apparently stemmed from Chafer's misguided attempts to develop a uniquely dispensationalist soteriology. Chafer (together with other early dispensationalists, including C. I. Scofield) was so zealous to eliminate every vestige of law from the dispensation of grace that he embraced a kind of antinomianism. That was the seed from which the no-lordship gospel sprouted.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "A 15-Year Retrospective on the Lordship Controversy"  
<<http://www.gty.org/resources/articles/A100/a-15year-retrospective-on-the-lordship-controversy>>

The essence of the no-lordship view of salvation is that sanctification does not play any role in salvation from Hell; and especially that the moral law of God plays no role in salvation. In the Dallas Seminary view, the only thing that saves is justification by faith alone in the cross, only: as if this were the only ingredient in a believer's conversion, perseverance, and final salvation from Hell. Aspects of holiness are side-issues; for this reason, it has been called "easy-believism," especially when coupled with the "once saved, always saved" idea.

So, now when turning to Deere as a charismatic theologian, considering these things, I had some questions. Deere affirms repeatedly, with John Wimber, that miraculous gifts such as healing are given for multiple reasons, not the least of which is authentication of the "gospel" message. But just what is the gospel message according to Jack Deere? Upon a further reading of his book *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, my fears were relieved, as I not only lift up justification by faith alone (which was to be expected), but also many occasions when he rebukes pornography, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, and refers to deliverance from other specific sins such as lust, anger, and fear (pp. 72, 79, 81-82, 109). Although Deere has times when he refers to a misuse of God's law or man-made religious rules (pp. 79, 189)—on page 91, he sounds quite Wesleyan as he quotes Psalm 119:120: "My flesh trembles in fear of You; I stand in awe of Your laws." Deere also favorably refers to Paul Cain as an example of a man who demonstrated and taught him about the gift of healing; but after the book was published,



however, Deere withdrew his fellowship due to Cain's drunkenness, homosexuality, and hypocrisy.

My view of Deere is much less skeptical and much more favorable now that I have read this book; I believe he puts a high priority on sanctification and deliverance from sin, but I would personally like to see more Puritan influence in his writings. Nevertheless, his other two books *Surprised by the Voice of God* (1996) and *The Beginner's Guide to the Gift of Prophecy* (2001) are amazingly Biblical, clear, experiential, and explain miraculous gifts very clearly. I highly recommend you read and pray through them! I also recommend Wayne Grudem's *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today: Revised Edition* (2000), Sam Storms' *The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts* (2002), and Max Turner's *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* (1997). I also recommend Michael Brown's *Authentic Fire* (2015), which is a pro-charismatic response to MacArthur's *Strange Fire* (2013).

I know I sort of digressed into a **charismatic/mystical theology** side-track for a few paragraphs here, but in this time period there has been a lot of thought along these lines. But from 2011-2014, my theological mind became more occupied with **SOTERIOLOGY** than ever before. I had been listening to Andrew Strom ("Are You Walking in Romans 8?") and Paul Washer ("Modern American Christianity") since 2006; and every once in a while the thought would come back to me: *The true Biblical Gospel is not being preached by today's pastors; and further, there are also many open air preachers who are not preaching a balanced Gospel message.* In 2010 this was especially the case; most street preachers were just LAW PREACHERS; only naming sins,

but never coming around to the message of God's forgiveness of sins through justification by faith in the cross. On September 11, 2011, I unleashed "A Friendly Rebuke to Open Air Preachers: Balanced Gospel Preaching with Law and Grace" on my YouTube channel, because I was so aggravated by this. According to one fairly well known street preacher, that video caused quite a stir in the open air preaching community. To me, the true Gospel of the New Testament was not being preached in either the pulpit or the street. The pulpiteers were PREACHING SEEKER-SENSITIVE GRACE and street preachers were just preaching law and Hell; but neither were PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

So I went through a sort of crisis of Gospel-searching: *what is the Gospel preached in the Bible?* The true Gospel. God saw the unspoken prayer of my heart, and gave me a **dream** that totally transformed my mind; and brought almost absolute clarity concerning the New Testament message of salvation. On July 14, 2011, I had a dream that revolutionized my spiritual life. Being a firm believer that God speaks through dreams (Acts 2:17), I dreamed that my wife and I were at a Methodist summer camp I worked at for several summers. I had in my hand *The NIV Study Bible* and **Steve Harper's *The Way to Heaven: The Gospel According to John Wesley*** (2003). As I came out of the car in the dream (at night), I saw the camp director and someone else looking out the office window at me. (In real life, this camp director was eventually fired for misusing the camp's money to start his own private sports camp.) I felt the dream meant the body of Christ is desperately in need of hearing the Gospel that Wesley and the Puritan reformers preached during the Great Awakening. Eventually I studied a series of Wesleyan books on soteriology,<sup>35</sup> and developed a good understanding of *repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, judgment, and eternal*

*punishment*:—and generally the “order of salvation.” I also went street preaching in Raleigh, NC whenever I could. As I embarked on my evangelistic quest, I got connected with another street preacher whom I will call George. He leaned more to the Calvinist (George Whitefield) view; and I more to the Arminian (John Wesley) view; but we balanced each other out by mid-2012; and decided that predestination is a doctrine that can be set aside for the common cause of evangelism. God made it clear to us that *repentant faith in the cross saves from Hell and empowers holy living*; and on this Gospel we could agree. Influenced by “New Calvinists” like John MacArthur, John Piper, and Mark Driscoll,<sup>36</sup> and his passion for apologetics, eventually George balanced me out, and enabled me to develop a respect for aspects of Reformed and Puritan theology. But I am still very Arminian; and he’s not a “card-carrying Calvinist”; and we would give each other brotherly gibes.

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<sup>35</sup> Steve Harper’s *The Way to Heaven: The Gospel According to John Wesley*; Kenneth J. Collins’ *Wesley on Salvation and The Scripture Way of Salvation*; Harold Lindstrom’s *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*; Albert Outler’s *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*; Thomas Oden’s *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*; also Reformed books such as Christopher Morgan’s *Hell Under Fire and Is Hell for Real or Does Everyone Go to Heaven?*; Martin Luther’s *Commentary on Romans*, chs. 3-8; and most of Joseph Alleine’s *A Sure Guide to Heaven*. Hence I renamed my site [wesleygospel.com](http://wesleygospel.com).

<sup>36</sup> I am personally not a fan of Mark Driscoll.

By close study of John Wesley's sermons "Salvation by Faith," "Justification by Faith," and others on salvation, I developed the view that according to Wesley ***"the Gospel of Jesus Christ" is the message of justification and sanctification explained in Romans chapters 3-8.*** Like Martin Luther, when he first realized the true Gospel message as revealed in Romans, all the pieces of the soteriological puzzle began to come together for me; I knew now that God was really commissioning me to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Like the apostle Paul, the dream and the study that followed it, were just like the time when the apostle said, "I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the Gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). When John Wesley first heard this Gospel communicated in a Moravian meeting, while someone was reading from Martin Luther's *Commentary on Romans*, he journaled on May 24, 1738:

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, *I felt my heart strangely warmed.* I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

The dream experience I had, the experiential and even charismatic nature of John Wesley's encounter with Luther's

view of salvation, became to me a DIVINE REVELATION ON SALVATION: that *between John Wesley and Martin Luther, the Biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ can be found in the middle*. There is supernatural evidence to back this up. Somewhere there is a middle ground between these two Gospel prophets; and I wished to strive to enter it as through a narrow gate (Matt. 7:13). In the back of my mind, I couldn't shake what I read years ago in Rebecca Springer's *Within Heaven's Gates*: "Not long after this, Frank said, 'We will go to the grand auditorium. Martin Luther is speaking on 'The Reformation: Its Causes and Effects.' This will be supplemented by a talk from John Wesley. There may also be other speakers.'"<sup>37</sup>

I came to accept virtually 90% of Wesley's soteriology (or theology of salvation); however, I came to reject his doctrine of entire sanctification, where original sin is said to be exterminated by the Holy Spirit; so, Luther and his view of progressive sanctification appealed to me as a settlement; also Jonathan Edwards' views of Hell completed the full picture for me, because I felt both Wesley's and Luther's views of Hell were too weak, and needed to be supplemented by Edwards (and by John Bunyan).<sup>38</sup> By now, I had put together my own "order of salvation" in my e-book *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: Salvation from Hell and the Way to Heaven* (2014), which was graciously commended by Greg Gordon, the Founder of SermonIndex.net:

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<sup>37</sup> Rebecca Springer, *Within Heaven's Gates* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Edwards' *The Wrath of Almighty God* and John Bunyan's *Sighs from Hell*—both edited by Don Kistler.

*In a day of superficial gospels, and seeker-sensitive churches, John digs deep into church history, giving us many choice excerpts of what godly men in the past preached and believed. He sets the plumb line from Scripture; and shows how this current generation is needing a correction in its gospel. I recommend this volume for saints to read and share with others.*

I couldn't have received a bigger boost of encouragement. Because by the time I completed the manuscript, around February 2014, I had just been **rejected and disqualified** by a new pastor friend for a potential Youth Pastor position that I was inquiring about at a Christian & Missionary Alliance church. *The issues at stake were sacrificing time with my family; and not preaching about Hell, repentance, and practical Biblical holiness.* The pastor wanted a "GOD'S LOVE youth pastor" who would develop RELATIONSHIPS with the youth and do lots of YOUTH EVENTS. So, Biblical teaching on sanctification and fearing sin and its consequences, was not in the scope of "THE MINISTRY."

It was frustrating and hard, but in a way I wasn't surprised; in another way I was. I thought **the Seeker-Sensitive Movement** was bad and widespread, but for years I entertained the thought: *what if there are exceptions?* Well, I learned the hard way: a tolerant, comfortable, and non-controversial ministry model that avoids revivalism and evangelism concepts—is basically the kind of lukewarm spirit that **Pharisee pastors** and their **church boards** want (see Matthew 23,

etc). And I would have none of it! That's not God! That's not what He's calling me to preach! God's calling me to *preach Hell, repentance, and faith in the cross!* The pastor almost always looked guilty and ashamed when I mentioned these things,<sup>39</sup> but he knew he was stuck and that he had a comfortable church board to please.<sup>40</sup> Galatians 1:10: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."

I was really depressed after this experience, but the Holy Spirit assured me with signs and communications that I was on the right track, and that I was doing the right thing for sticking to the Gospel message and not watering down Hell or compromising the repentance message one iota. Clearly the pastor wanted a ***"love and relationships only" ministry model*** to work with; no Hell, no repentance, and no holiness (he could barely be shaken from the view that EVERYONE IN HIS CHURCH IS SAVED). One elder even preached: "Everyone in this church is saved, so there is no need for an evangelistic sermon." C'mon! *Everyone* is saved in your congregation...without a shadow of doubt? There were at least 30 people in regular attendance! It was an **easy-believism** spirit for sure. I was glad to leave that ungodly church, although there were one or two people I was going

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<sup>39</sup> Once he said, "I don't even know if God has forgiven me of my sins." I replied, "You need the witness of the Spirit in Romans 8."

<sup>40</sup> See John MacArthur's *Ashamed of the Gospel* and Gary Gilley's *This Little Church Went to Market...* which substantiate that this view is **the reality of the pastoral ministry situation today**; it's not a self-delusion. Others may find this hard to understand, but the evidence is right there in your face!

to miss. The pastor even fell into a porn addiction shortly before I arrived, and confessed it to the elders, but they kept him on as their pastor—with no disciplinary period. It was convenient that he stay.

I listened to Christian music at work for hours to lift my spirits; the company I was working for was owned by a Christian. I also re-evaluated my view of **praise and worship music** at this time: so much of the CCM worship music, like Chris Tomlin, was just too girly, mushy, SAPPY, romantic, and BORING to me. I agreed with John Wesley:

Especially odious to Wesley was a *sentimentalist hymnody* that tended to deal with Christ overfamiliarly, neglecting His deity. Wesley urged the avoidance of “every fondling expression,” and especially the impertinent<sup>41</sup> use of the word “dear” as addressed to God...<sup>42</sup>

I came to appreciate **Robin Mark, Hillsong, and the Vineyard’s “Touching The Father’s Heart”** series, as my favorite modern worship artists. Some of their songs are so anointed, and serious, and great for worship!<sup>43</sup> And they don’t sound half bad either; not that ALL of their songs are in any way perfect, as none are; but I think that other than

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<sup>41</sup> Disrespectful; ill-mannered.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 213.

<sup>43</sup> Robin Mark’s *Revival in Belfast I and II*; and Hillsong’s *Shout To The Lord (Special Gold Edition)*.



Wesley's *Collection of Hymns* (1780) or other Methodist hymnals, Robin Mark, Vineyard, and Hillsong serve as good modern examples for praise and worship music, built on solid theological and musical principles.<sup>44</sup> Styles of preaching and hymnology have pretty much been set in stone for me at this point; I also explored black gospel music a bit, and I settled on **John P. Kee** as my current favorite.<sup>45</sup>

## God's Call to Independent Revival Ministry?

I had experienced in the natural what God had already been speaking to me in the spiritual. The rejection and disqualification of the pastor at that church seemed to be in keeping with God's will. In fact, it brought a sense of resolve and assurance that God is actually calling me to be a *revivalist* instead of the regular seeker-sensitive pastor.<sup>46</sup> What this means and entails specifically is still hidden from me in God's mysterious plan. But through dreams, visions, and signs, God has made several things absolutely clear to me. At the risk of sounding like a self-deluded fool, I will share a few of these experiences (2 Corinthians 12:11). At this point I am fairly settled that these revelations are from God; and not of myself, nor the devil. I feel the need to share these revelations for my future edification; and to confirm the

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<sup>44</sup> Though sometimes their lyrics can be too "lovey-dovey" and sappy; and should be filtered through New Testament theology.

<sup>45</sup> *The Essential John P. Kee*.

<sup>46</sup> See "40 Judgments Against Modern Pastoral Ministry" (April 16, 2014) | "The Teachings of the Pharisees" (September 27, 2014) – on [wesleygospel.com](http://wesleygospel.com).

message for other men of God who feel the Holy Spirit has been speaking similar things to them.

2/3/11 – **True Life Ministries.** Rebekah had a dream where she and other people were wearing blue t-shirts that said “True Life Ministries.” I think this is what we should call our ministry.

12/30/11 – **Leonard Ravenhill’s Spiritual Grandson? A Call to Holiness Preaching and a High-Level Prayer Life.** I dreamed that I was on a fast kiddie bike; and I rode it down a beachfront highway two times back and forth. Both times there was a foreboding dark storm cloud hovering off to the left side over the city. I was afraid of getting rained on, or struck by lightning—but I made it safely to my destination each time.

Then I made it to an airport with my little bike. I saw Leonard Ravenhill! A little English boy greeted him in the hallway—about 8 years-old; perhaps his grandson. I played on the bike in the hallway, saying, “Meditation leads to revelation, and revelation to awakening.” I forget what they talked about, but it didn’t matter. Ravenhill was very fiery and energetic with the boy, and was preaching against some sin they both were against. The little boy was a “chip off the old block.” As the boy went to the bathroom, Ravenhill stood by the door, and smiled at me.<sup>47</sup> When he did this I examined

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<sup>47</sup> I have the impression that the 8 year-old boy is me. Because I was riding a little kid’s bike; also, when I was about 8 years-old, Ravenhill was in the last year of his life. To me, it might be God’s way of saying in spirit I’m like one of Ravenhill’s grandsons.

his face and thought: “Is this man the real deal? Or just another glitz-and-glam conference speaker?” (Because he was coming home from a conference like a lot of these “prophetic movement” guys do at these prophetic conferences.) Then the boy came out, and Ravenhill said, “I’m going to spend the night in PRAYER!”

Then I was transported to a forest. It was beautiful, during the Fall, with colored leaves everywhere. Like on the front picture of Whitaker House’s paperback edition of Brother Lawrence’s *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Up on a ledge or branch, Ravenhill was kneeling on his shins. It seemed more like contemplation than intercession. Nevertheless, I think it was both types of prayer. I was frustrated and challenged by what I saw. How or why could he pray so much? I walked away from him, seeing how high and lofty he had been exalted in his prayer life. I was convicted and challenged. Then I woke up.

**4/24/12 – I Am Called to Be a Ravenhill-Finney Revivalist?** I dreamed that I was in a large mansion in Heaven. The walls were all white; and the mansion was being prepared; it was not ready yet. Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Perhaps it was my heavenly mansion I saw. There was a lot of fine, luxury furniture all over the place, but the furniture was covered with cloths or plastic. I saw Leonard Ravenhill! He greeted me and we talked; and walked around the mansion in various rooms, and then we settled in one room. And I had a face-to-face conversation with Leonard Ravenhill; it was *so* real. We

were standing about 10 feet apart. He gave me a special edition of *Why Revival Tarries*, with an ornate design on it. I said, “I’ve read *Why Revival Tarries* and *Revival Praying*, should I read anything else?” “Yes,” he said. “Read ALL of my books; and read all of Charles Finney’s books too. **You are called to be a revivalist.**” I said, “There are modern abridged versions of Finney (the Parkhurst versions); are these okay?” “WHAT!?” he said. “THEY’RE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT!? No. READ ALL OF CHARLES FINNEY’S BOOKS IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT.” “Okay,” I said. End of dream.

**7/17/12 – Paul Washer: Open Air Gospel Preaching. Don’t Be an Assemblies of God Youth Pastor. Be a Godly Parent.** I dreamed that I was walking down a big city street at night. Paul Washer was preaching with a microphone on the sidewalk. I thought, “This is so great he’s here.” He was preaching the Gospel mainly, but as I passed by him, he said into his microphone, “Assemblies of God has had some good things happen, but I wouldn’t want to get tied up in the work of the ministry with them.” As he said this, I floated into the air, and did a “bicycle kick” like Liu Kang from *Mortal Kombat*. Then I continued to walk down the city sidewalk (it might have been New York City).

And I came across kids about middle school age (or freshmen in high school). They were black, white, and maybe Hispanic. There was what I thought to be a young black man street preaching to them, just down the sidewalk from Paul Washer. At first I thought, “Okay, cool, they’re both spreading the kingdom of God in this area.” But then there was an aggressive black kid who jumped on him, and the young

black preacher had to kick him down off the ledge! Someone said, “Oh, he’s getting *angry* again!” It looked like chaos as all the city’s youth crowded around the young black preacher—listening but crowding him into an awkward corner.

Then I was with the kids listening to the youth preacher. At one point I wanted to get out of the crowd of young people, but my leg got hung up in one of the kids’ holding on to my leg. “What is this?” I quizzically asked. And he let go. I wanted to go out to hear Paul Washer again, but now he was at an outdoor city restaurant with a woman and her son (whom I had seen in another dream). I said, “This is a kingdom of God moment.” He told the woman, “Your call in life is to be the best mom you can, not your mother’s friend.” And I wrote a note: “Momlike.”

8/14/12 – **Churches Are Not Preaching the Gospel!** I dreamed that I was trying to make a loved one understand how churches, and their pastors, are not preaching the Gospel. And how this presents a real challenge for me at finding honest employment with a church. She did *not understand*; she rolled her eyes and shook her head, and shouted, “Why are you so difficult! It’s not really as bad as you say!” I said, “I would become *lukewarm*, lose my faith, and go to *Hell*—in order to maintain a pastorate in most of today’s churches.” She *didn’t understand*; and wouldn’t hear any of it; nor did she *want* to understand what I was talking about: “The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” (2 Timothy 4:3).

10/10/12 – **NO YOUTH MINISTRY. IT IS CARNAL.** As I was waking from a good dream, and my eyes were still closed, and I was groggy, or in a trancelike state, I heard a very loud clarion voice in my mind say: “I DON’T WANT YOU TO BE IN YOUTH MINISTRY. IT IS CARNAL.”

9/21/13 – **Dream of Leonard Ravenhill Class.** I dreamed that I was at UNC Pembroke in the Education Building where they taught me philosophy and religion classes. Leonard Ravenhill was teaching a class! And I was a student with about 6 or 7 others. Ravenhill said, “I want you all to review my books: *America Is Too Young to Die*, *Dying the Death*, *The Death of Sin*, and *The Death of a Christian*.” (Of course, in real life, only the first book is an in-print book.) A black man in the class, said with a skeptical look, “Why are all of your books about death?” Ravenhill replied, “When you review my books, review them for piety, holiness, and righteousness.” Class was dismissed; and I had my copies of Ravenhill’s books; but I was carrying them in an awkward way. Disorganized, I was holding them up to my chest, but they were pointing in every direction. I walked with the books out of the building, opened the exit door, and made for Pine Hall (my old dorm). One of the side doors was open. And I walked towards it. There were students laughing at me carrying Ravenhill’s books in such a clumsy manner; they were pointing at me and scoffing.

9/25/13 – **Be Patient for Ministry.** I dreamed that a loved one was questioning why I did not go into ministry right after college. It just didn’t seem to fit her cause-and-effect logic.

As a matter of course, the natural thing for me to have done, would have been to seek youth pastor jobs fresh after graduating from college. I told her frankly, “Because God wants me to be PATIENT and wait for when it is time for me to minister.” Then she said, “Oh, well I don’t want to talk about this—that’s enough.”

4/25/14 – **Strong Confirmation for an Independent Pentecostal Church Plant.** This evening, Rebekah and I went to a revival meeting at Dunn Church of God. A true prophet named Evangelist Danny Byrd was preaching. Tina, his wife with whom I work, invited me. There were many timely confirmations and prophetic signs that occurred when this man preached! It started raining (sign of Holy Spirit outpouring) just after they entered the church. All of this was a powerful added confirmation I needed to encourage me to continue in the direction of independent revivalist Pentecostal church planting.

1. His name was redemptive. It corresponded to the pastor who rejected me; and to a carnal elder in the church I just left. A sign that I should **forgive their sins**, because they *really were* in sin.

2. He preached about how **church demons** manifest when revival fire is stirred (Acts 28:1-6). (I had been studying Charles Newbold’s *The Harlot Church System* a few weeks ago.) Confirmation: I had called that church’s leaders to holiness; and both the pastor and chief elder reacted demonically.

3. He preached on the church demon known as **THE JEZEBEL SPIRIT** (Rev. 2:20) (see Francis Frangipane's *The Jezebel Spirit*):--he prayed for me an impartation with laying on of hands when I told him about my encounter with this spirit at the church I just left:--CONFIRMATION against that carnal pastor and a word of warning against George—a vision of a *control spirit* (my almost ex-friend by this point...and later to be totally ex-friend over this issue).

4. He preached against “**THE LOVE GOSPEL**” being preached by seeker-sensitive pastors everywhere to keep the tithes and numbers of their churches up to par. Ray Hughes Sr. (a Church of God leader) was cited as prophesying this would happen.

5. He preached with **zeal, anger at sins, repentance, Hell, tongues and interpretation.**

6. He preached against **THE MICHAL SPIRIT** as that which opposes Spirit-filled Pentecostal worship (2 Sam. 6:16).

7. He affirmed a need for **THE DELIVERANCE MINISTRY.**

5/10/14 – **From Gospel Tent to Church Building.** I told Rebekah, “The gospel tent is the means of finding that group of people” (who will be the startup congregation of a church plant). And she SAW AN ANGEL fly by the ceiling fan! Confirmation! This basically confirms what I read about A. B. Crumpler's founding of the Holiness Church of North



Carolina and Leonard Ravenhill's founding of the Calvary Holiness Church.<sup>48</sup>

11/21/14 – **Confirmation of My Call to Prophetic Ministry.** In a prayer meeting, the prophetic minister singled me out in the back, and prophesied to me: “You are so hungry for God! You are not called to be a teacher; **YOU ARE CALLED TO BE A MINISTER!**” And he said other very edifying things of a personal nature, such as me receiving a double anointing from him for prophecy, healing, and deliverance—in the way Elisha received from Elijah (2 Kings 2:9, 15). Powerful! Praise God!

### **Practical Conclusions About Ministry**

The practical conclusion of all of this is: *I am not called to be a denominational pastor*, which is actually the opposite notion I was under during my studies at UNC Pembroke. On the contrary, *I am called to be a revivalist*: which I believe entails gospel tent evangelism and revivalism; a small church plant; *independent, non-denominational, Pentecostal, pastoral ministry*; and appointing elders to assist me as the Holy Spirit leads (episcopal church government). I should look to found an interracial church; with special attention given to African Americans. There have been prophecies over me that I will also have a “ministry to the nations,” which might mean international traveling and preaching, if not just the international reach of [wesleygospel.com](http://wesleygospel.com). I have

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<sup>48</sup> See “Church Planting God’s Way: From Gospel Tents to Church Buildings” (May 10, 2014) – [wesleygospel.com](http://wesleygospel.com).

a burden for the homeless; and I can't shake this feeling that God wants me to do a work that is not only similar to Ravenhill and Finney, but also William Booth and the early Salvation Army. All of this is going to require lots of money, which means I need to learn the art of economic empowerment for myself first, before I go and teach and help others.

## **The Top Six Reasons Why Church Planters Fail**

Based on 5 articles written by church planters who failed, and who took the time to share the reasons why they believe they failed;<sup>49</sup> I have listed below the common denominators between them. May I have the wisdom and tact in the Holy Spirit to manage the Lord's money with care and patience; and be careful in guiding souls.

1. The pastor is **not prophetically guided**; he is just a copycat.
2. The pastor **lacks financial independence**; and so, he compromises with Jezebel spirits/big givers.
3. The pastor **didn't form the church into a theologically united community** that loves each other.

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<sup>49</sup> Perry Noble's "7 Reasons Your Church Plant Might Fail," Wade Hodges' "10 Lessons From a Failed Church Plant," Geoff Surratt's "7 Reasons a Church Planting Effort Fails," Steve Swisher's "5 Reasons Why I Failed," and Eric Starkey's "Why I Failed at Church Planting."

4. The pastor, if at one time prophetically guided, comes to **compromise the original vision** of the church.

5. The pastor was arrogant and **unteachable**.

6. The pastor was a **quitter**.

Conversely, a *successful pastor* would be guided by the Holy Spirit in visions, dreams, God's voice, signs, etc. He works a non-church job, provides for his family, and has enough money to spare for ministry and church pursuits. The pastor regularly preaches a practical theology of holiness and love (Puritanism, Pietism, and Wesleyanism). The pastor is open to Biblical correction; and doesn't just sit there and defend himself all the time. When God tells the pastor to do something in the ministry, he never quits, because he knows his salvation depends on his obedience, in a sense.

## CHAPTER 6

### JOBS AND MONEY

(2015 – 2020)

The few years leading up to publishing *The Gospel of Jesus Christ* in 2015 with Kingsley Press; and its endorsement by Greg Gordon from SermonIndex.net, definitely marked sort of an era for me. That was also the year that my second daughter Anna was born. The sudden arrival of my new child and the simultaneous conclusion of my manuscript being published was a high point, but also caused me to become more concerned about my economic growth. I was beginning to realize that I had given plenty of attention to theological truth-seeking; and with the help of dreams and angel sparkles, and reading, I was able to place my feet solidly within the Wesleyan tradition. So, that was a spiritually stabilizing thing for me. I really needed that. I didn't grow up with any *spiritual* stability; and things were beginning to be different now. But now I was feeling sort of panicky about *our family's financial future*. I had not been apprenticed or very much career coached; and I was more and more convinced that the Church was not a spiritually or financially safe place to pursue a career. Repeated experience and observation showed me that.

My sister-in-law had given me a good word for an interview at a Christian-owned durable medical equipment company in Dunn, North Carolina. At first I was in Accounts Receivable as a medical biller, but when they saw how talkative I was, they moved me in the corner for an inside sales role taking calls for CPAP supplies. My health insurance verification phone calls, the customer service conversations,

and the sales orders I processed, came up to about \$1 million a year for the company, or so my manager told me. I stayed there for about two years to gain the valuable job experience, even though I was being paid less than minimum wage! By the end of my time there, I was ready to embark on what would become a career in tech sales—or should I say, *cold calling for software companies* as a Business Development Representative (BDR). This had been the apprenticeship that I desperately needed, and should have begun about seven years earlier; but due to the poor direction I had received from various sources, I had to just learn things the hard way; and trust in the providence of God. Through temp agencies, I was now able to land decent sales jobs; although they were more like *gigs*, as I found out that my non-cussing Christian personality grated against the gratuitous profanity going on in most offices. I also ran into competitive, bullying coworkers: deceptive, gossiping Machiavellians who were jealous of my job and my hard work ethic. Back-stabbing job saboteurs! I also ran into certain female coworkers, who although they knew I was married and wore a wedding ring, were in the habit of flirtatious monkey business. It's always *after* the fact that you find these things out—*after* the interview, *after* you get hired. Welcome to the wolf pack! I didn't like how things were turning out. I hated this secular office culture. People's behavior was more under control at the Christian company. Shows like *The Office* and *Office Space* only begin to graze the surface of how seriously negative and non-Christian people can be in the workplace. It's a palpable evil! After about two years of working in various secular offices on sales teams, I wanted out. What had I gotten myself into, I said to myself. I wasn't about to be guilted into talk about

“longevity” with a company. The only way to get longevity on sales teams, is to say the f-word and flirt with girls. Oh yeah, and work at a *moderate* pace—never too hard. Don’t want to make everyone else look bad! The *office politics* were sickening, but I understood these were the things at least salespeople had to do, in order to remain in the same company for years and years on end. Productivity was a side-issue: the real sticking glue was if people *liked* you; and the only way to get people to like you, was to cuss and flirt every day. It’s the only way; and that was my repeated observation at various companies on various sales teams.

I wanted out of this *Wolf of Wall Street* sales culture; and I was praying for God to lead me to greener pastures, although I couldn’t see what the specifics of that would look like. I started to think that I could do honest Christian sales activity from my desk at home. I mean, all I did all day was sit at a desk, use a computer, and use a phone right? Why couldn’t I just do this at home? It would be less of a career threat, without emotional temptation, and without distraction. But I couldn’t figure out how to make this happen. I started thinking this way in 2017, but it was a thought that I didn’t know how to turn into reality. 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, *he will also provide a way out* so that you can endure it.” Yes, but *how* exactly was I going to escape from this? I trusted that God would have to eventually show me the way out; and that he had information about it that I was not yet privy to.

I started to experiment with working at home by doing side-jobs for sales consulting. I even went back to being a

security guard at night, so I could do door-to-door burial insurance sales in the day. I just didn't want to work on a sales team in an office anymore. Anything but that. But the leads were dated and lousy; and I had to spend most of my day driving around in my car. Finding side-gigs for sales was challenging, because I didn't really know how to find these companies effectively. I relied on Indeed's "easily apply" feature, which enabled me to apply to about 60 jobs in one hour. I also relied on temp agencies. The problem with this, is these were *all* office jobs; and usually toxic work-places with high turnover that nobody wanted to work at. I started searching for companies on Google; and found out about the Atlanta Tech Village from a business networking event on meetup.com. I manually emailed all the startups on their website and landed my first true blue sales consulting position in September 2018. I only worked on Saturdays though, because I couldn't figure out how to work from home yet. I was still stuck in the office model.

I eventually came to realize that I could use GMass and Contabo as an SMTP in my Gmail and get my business emails from D7 Lead Finder. I could then bulk email software companies my cover letter and resume, do all interviews by phone and video calls, and land business development jobs quite easily from home. But that didn't start materializing until 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown, when I was forced to come to terms with working at home, for safety reasons. That lockdown forced and pushed me to find the answer; and I did! When it was time to file my taxes at H&R Block, and I had a bunch of 1099s from the year, the tax advisor kept saying, "And what was the name of your business?" *My* business. She had to ask me two or three

times for it to register; oh yes, my *business*! “Excellent Consulting” I told her. It was a name that I had been toying with for about six months, due to *Bill & Ted Face the Music* which had just come out. “Excellent!” Now I am offering an outsourced telemarketing service to software companies to anyone who will take me; and have learned that I can double or triple my income by keeping two BDR jobs for myself and one BDR job for my wife. We both work totally from home now! I also started to study Puritan economic ethics to ground myself spiritually with all of this. I came across R. H. Tawney’s *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, and Leland Ryken’s *Worldly Saints*, and realized that there were a few theological treatises that were written on business ethics by St. Antonino, Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Perkins, Richard Baxter, Richard Steele, Daniel Defoe, and John Wesley. I’m currently putting together material for a book I’m planning on calling *Biblical Economics*; and I am also being considered by some publishers for a compilation I just put together called *John Wesley on Money*.

All of these men helped me to see the business world through a more Biblical lens; and confirmed that I was not crazy—that there were really some serious vices in the business world that I had been observing; and which had been going on for centuries. I also learned that all of the godlessness and secularism that developed in the business world can be traced to the rise of *deism* in the Church of England during the late seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century. The so-called Age of Enlightenment, which enabled people like Adam Smith and his *Wealth of Nations*, to explain business processes in a purely scientific manner, without any of the traditional Puritan references to Biblical business ethics.



Smith was a deist and led many English businessmen to believe that *self-interest* and *competition* were necessary evils to allow for the sake of achieving business success. The Golden Rule, or the love of neighbor, was no longer enjoined upon businessmen as it had been in the previous centuries.

Richard Baxter, Daniel Defoe, and William Perkins all taught that *financial growth is possible by having two jobs*, or two “trades” or two “callings,” as they called jobs back then. As long as one doesn’t distract from the other, as long as you don’t have “too many irons in the fire.” Perkins even suggested that *it’s always good to have two jobs*, because one job provides financial security against the other job, in case you lose one. He said, “It is good for every man to have two strings to his bow.”<sup>50</sup> The idea is, if you’re bow-and-arrow string breaks, then you always have a backup string, so that you can re-string your bow with it, and return to hunting for food. He pointed to Acts 10:7 as Biblical support for having two jobs: “When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.” This last line, “A devout soldier who was one of his attendants,” was interpreted by Perkins to mean that this man had two jobs, or two incomes—one as a *soldier* and the other as a *servant*. There’s also support for two jobs per person in the Proverbs 31 woman, who was both a work at home *clothing manufacturer* and a *vineyard owner* (verses 13-18). Her husband was a *judge* (v. 23); and so, it appears that their family had three

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<sup>50</sup> William Perkins, “A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men,” in *Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), p. 54.

streams of income. Two jobs per person seems to be the economic ideal in the Bible. In all of my studies, I could never find support for the idea of three jobs per person. Only two; apparently three jobs per person is practically impossible.

## CHAPTER 7

### CALLINGS

(2020 – 2025)

After going back in time, and reversing the effects of the Industrial Revolution in my economic life, this period has been marked by a sense of *realignment with the Great Commission*. You see, the insidious and even demonic thing about full-time W-2 employment outside the home, which Americans have come to accept as completely normal since the early 1900s, is that it basically leads born again Christians to assume that God's providence only operates on the devil's terms: that the rules of Social Darwinism, competition, deception, cruelty, and one-upmanship are the system that God himself has arranged for family men to provide for their financial needs! But the reality is, the more Biblical and Proverbs-based view of economic activity directs the believer into a small family business, self-employment, a home-based business, or an entrepreneurial mentality that functions within the framework of the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule for its business ethics. Granted, there are still difficulties related to entrepreneurialism. Look at the famine in Genesis 47: being a self-employed person means that you are also more vulnerable to the ups and downs of the economy. So keeping that in mind should serve to check your pride. You just might have to take a night shift, if all of a sudden, you can't get customers anymore! And figure out how to recover your business and change with the changing moods and trends of the business world.

But remote, computer-based work from the home had opened the door for me to experiment with remote W-2 and 1099 side hustles, had removed most of the anti-Biblical attitudes, and *unethical business distractions* from my spiritual life, and allowed me to refocus on the personal mission that the Holy

Spirit laid on my heart as a teenager. In a sense, it's sort of been a "back to the land" experience for me, like an Amish guy or maybe a hermit going through a purifying process in the country, separated from the world, preparing himself for the master's use (see Matthew 4). It's been sort of like *Field of Dreams* in a way (never watch it without Clearplay), but I'd like for it to grow into more of a Desert Fathers experience if I can get away with it. I even went an entire year with an almost Santa Claus length beard, which was about three to four inches long at one point, in protest to my years of the mandatory dress code clean shaven look I was required to have in Corporate America, but it just got too big and wiry, and too difficult to manage, too much to worry about. Needless to say, I cut it off; and now I only shave occasionally, as needed.<sup>30</sup>

You might say, if God had laid the Great Commission on my heart in my teenage years, and even guided me into a state university to be able to do battle with the devil's ideas, why then did I never enter into ministry with a denomination, say the Southern Baptist Convention, Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland), or the Vineyard? Why all these years away from denominational ministry? Did you backslide and compromise? Why did you spend over fifteen years in the business world before recapturing your call to the Great Commission? Sounds like you were Jonah running from what God called you to. To some people, that narrative might work as an explanation, but it didn't work for me. I didn't feel like Jonah about it at all. I worked and street preached on weekends. I worked and then I wrote, blogged, and YouTubed. I did what I could, but I knew the problem was *not* with my failure to answer the Great

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<sup>30</sup> Irvin Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1954), pp. 168-169; Arthur Gish, *Beyond the Rat Race* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973); Richard Steele, *The Religious Tradesman* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1989).

Commission.

In my point of view, the problem was with church leaders. Preachers like Leonard Ravenhill, David Wilkerson, Paul Washer, and Andrew Strom helped me to see, as early on as 2005 or so, that the evangelical and charismatic churches were far gone into mission drift from old-time Gospel preaching, and had embraced positive preaching, self-help messages aimed at stress relief, and seeker-sensitive non-judgmental ideas long before I was born in 1985. By the time I graduated college in 2008, Rick Warren's apostate theology in *The Purpose Driven Church* (1995), which taught pastors to not preach against sin, had well become the manual for how to be a pastor.<sup>31</sup> Long gone were the days when Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* was the manual for ministry. It took years for me to get over the grief and frustration, of knowing that I had spent years in Bible classes, only to find that most pulpits had overseers that forbade strong preaching on Hell, sin, and the blood of Jesus. This is what they had come to call "negative preaching." Even the Bible-based denominations, like the

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Abanes, *Rick Warren and the Purpose That Drives Him* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), p. 83. Although this book actually sets out to defend Rick Warren's seeker-sensitive concepts, and establish that Warren isn't technically an anti-repentance preacher, it does succeed in showing the reader the debate within evangelicalism, and allows the reader to draw his own conclusions. I personally do not agree with Abanes' conclusions that Rick Warren's ministry model is harmless. The difference between Rick Warren and Paul Washer is immense and vast; and both of them are preachers in the Southern Baptist Convention. The point is, that while Warren might occasionally give lip service to Baptist doctrine, in practice, the *sentiment* he created in the pastoral ministry was to favor positive preaching above traditional gospel preaching, and to view Hell, repentance sermons, and atonement sermons as negative. After David Wilkerson died, even the leaders of Times Square Church came under Warren's influence, and invited him to speak there. I would agree more with Gary Gilley's *This Little Church Went to Market* (Evangelical Press, 2005).

Southern Baptists and Church of God (Cleveland), had become liberal in their preaching and sermon content, with the main focus on business administration and church growth. What a grief it was to receive this revelation! For several years I thought it was just a lofty weeping prophet concept that was occasionally fired off by devout preachers; but after attending about twenty five churches, it became a settled conviction that resulted from my own personal observation. The sermons of our American pulpits were only marked by “positive preaching.” And I knew it was on *purpose*.

The only time I saw strong preaching on sin, Hell, and the blood of Christ were at a few revival services in Church of God (Cleveland). These were small country churches in North Carolina. I sat under one such preacher for two years; and he was a fan of Ravenhill and Spurgeon. Only recently I found the same Gospel preaching sentiment held by an evangelist turned pastor in the Independent Fundamental Baptist (IFB) movement. It took me a year to swallow my pride about eternal security and cessationism, but I knew that I needed my family to sit under good Gospel-based and Bible-based preaching. I also found out that some of these IFB churches are what you would call “Bapticostal,” because they allow people to raise their hands, close their eyes, and worship Pentecostal style to feel after God’s presence. Listening to this preacher has been inspiring and frustrating, but mainly inspiring. Frustrating because he started sound boarding with me in late 2023, gleaning from my YouTube posts for his sermons, which I found incredibly *encouraging*, but also *frustrating* because he’d sometimes preach against things I said, and wrongly thought I was insulting him personally, partly because I voiced many of my grievances against Baptist doctrine, such as easy believism, eternal security, cessationism, authoritarianism, Southernism, and extreme views about shunning people who don’t believe in 100%

Baptist doctrine.

But after about a year of that, I eventually came to see this Baptist preacher as a blessing more than anything else. He continues to sound board with me today. “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). I have changed many things on my site, my statement of faith, and my messaging because of things I’ve accepted as reproofs from his sermons. I changed my channel to WesleyGospel Radio and started recording Charles Finney’s sermons in obedience to the Ravenhill dream I had back in April 2012. I finally felt a divine call that was specific enough, where I saw that dream had a practical purpose, because I had the ear of a preacher. I also had the ear of Ray Comfort! I started listening to their podcast out of curiosity; and found out that they were sound boarding my podcasts twice a week! I’d podcast a subject, then they’d do a podcast on the *same* subject. The Living Waters guys did this with me all the way through 2024 and it’s *still* going on! And there’s a few other YouTube voices out there that this is the case with. That, my friend, was *very* encouraging!

“If you build it, they will come,” the voice of God vaguely spoke to Ray Kinsella out in the cornfield. In some way or another, I felt as if *I* were Ray, and that the thing I am currently meant to build is a subscriber following on WesleyGospel Radio. I had dreams of David Wilkerson, Leonard Ravenhill, Steve Hill, and Ray Comfort which all encouraged me in the mission. Working quietly in my home office, and podcasting godly content every day starting in 2023—for a few years leading up to this point, I heard a mental voice say, “I love you,” about a hundred times (Romans 8:16). I saw many white angelic lights once I started podcasting and listening to them again. I had so many charismatic experiences in this five year stretch that time would fail to tell, but one of the strongest ones I had was a series of *angelic shofar blasts* in the sky one night

outside my home! (Exodus 19:19).<sup>32</sup> It was the watchman's call to preach repentance on the brink of Rosh Hashanah. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet (*shofar*), and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1, KJV). A digital marketing firm called Winterplay Studios, got me to believe that I might be able to build a meaningful subscriber following, but I need to continue working at home, keep myself pure, and be patient about it. Then if this becomes substantial, and the daily views of the website also reach a certain level, then it may turn out that God will grant me the right to take my family along to answer *evangelistic invitations*. "The right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas" (1 Cor. 9:5). Family first, evangelistic invites second, and always keeping the Billy Graham Rule.

This period has also helped me to renew my respect for Sword of the Lord Publishers, their fiery sermon pamphlets, and the life and ministry of Dr. John R. Rice, which I had briefly become acquainted with during my college years. His sermon pamphlets *Why Preach Against Sin?* (this one opens with Isaiah 58:1), *Hell: What the Bible Says About It*, *Evolution or the Bible: Which?*, *The Unequal Yoke*, and *Adultery and Sex Perversion* are some of the most hardcore repentance preaching sermons I've read to date. Dr. Hugh Pyle's *The Truth About the Homosexuals* also helped me to find the words for that specific burden. I'm looking forward to recording repentance ser-

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<sup>32</sup> This happened on September 16, 2024. It reminds me of that scene where the angelic shofars come from Mount Sinai in the TNT movie *Moses* (1995). I think this was a divine call to record all of Charles Finney's sermons, which I found are mainly focused on repentance and God's law; and that I should review *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth* by David Wilkerson and *Hell's Best Kept Secret* by Ray Comfort.



mons by Billy Sunday and Dr. Joe Hankins, which were referred to by other Sword books as preachers that went very hard against sin.