



## Truth-Telling to a Fallen World: Christian Thought and Evangelism

*“There is wisdom required to suit things to the capacities and conditions of poor souls, to make dark things plain, and hard things easy...but they must suit all their discourses to the conditions and capacities of poor creatures, or else all will be lost: time lost, pains lost, God lost, Heaven lost, and souls lost forever.”*

*Thomas Brooks*

You will quickly determine nine things:

- 1) I will primarily be discussing evangelism.
- 2) I will be examining the formulaic evangelism prevalent today, and I will be asking you if it is Biblical.
- 3) I will be suggesting that a return to a more Puritan type of evangelistic thought is far better than all alternatives, because it is Biblical.
- 4) I have tweaked the Puritan approach in light of the differences in cultures between 1650 England and the United States of America in 2025.
- 5) My thoughts on discussions from *Atheists Say the Darndest Things* are equally helpful here. At least I hope they are.
- 6) I am but a common man speaking to people just like me. If I ask you to know a four or five syllable word or concept, it is because I think it is essential you know it.
- 7) Evangelism, for me, is the whole counsel of God for the whole man.
- 8) I find memorized, contrived, decision-driven, narrowly-compartmentalized, evangelistic sales pitches to be unBiblical.
- 9) I see every human being as an individual created by God to be unique. This causes me to abhor formulaic evangelism that is built upon the notion that we are all the same and therefore should be approached in exactly the same way. This foolishness allows for a “one-shoe-fits-all” evangelism to be sold.

Perhaps you can now better understand why the title isn't simply “Evangelism”. The whole counsel of God includes all manner of Christian thought and what I call truth-telling. I will expand on that later, but for now when I state that the Gospel is the person and work of Christ, you should assume that any verse from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21 may be utilized in a conversation or discussion to evangelize. You should also assume that topics like Providence, death, dreams, the new birth, Christ's kingdom, holiness, glorification, Hell and especially the proclamation that Jesus is Lord will naturally enter normal conversations. Christians are to be light-givers, something you will tire of me repeating. I will do so, because I want all Christian thought and all Christian truth-telling to be totally reliant on the Holy Spirit, the true evangelist.



This reliance on the Spirit will ensure we live and speak confidently, knowing that God alone is the life-giver.

I think of this view as “panoramic”. From my perch, I can see from when the first star was hung to a billion years into eternity. This perch forces me to remember that I should never forget that all I see and all I don’t see is God-centered. This world should never be conceived of as man-centered. “In the beginning” permits me to ask: Why? How? When? Who? The same is true of, “But Bill, I need to know why my eight-year old niece has cancer.” As a Christian, my worldview permeates all I am, all I say and all I do. **“I am a Christian”** is my identity. I know that I am presently a citizen of Heaven.

*But our citizenship is in Heaven...*  
*Philippians 3:20*

I am a pilgrim on his way home, as all true Christian disciples are. One day soon I shall see that face that was beaten and spit upon for me. On this foundation I live, and from this foundation I scatter Christian thoughts, speak Christian truths, and speak of Jesus, of who He was and who He is. My panoramic view allows me to meditate and converse about redemption accomplished and applied.

All is designed to glorify God, and I am a part of that all. This is God’s world, and Christ is King now. Our sovereign God has woven all into a seamless and beautiful tapestry. With these foundational truths as pillars, do you expect a contrived and memorized pitch to pass for evangelism? Heaven forbid.

## **Fallen Man**

Telling truths, sowing Christian thoughts, explaining the person and work of Christ, making disciples, teaching disciples obedience to Christ and proclaiming the Christian truth that Jesus is the reigning King is what the great commission proposes we do.

*And Jesus came and spoke to them saying,  
“All authority has been given to me in Heaven and on Earth.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;*



*and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”*

*Matthew 28:18-20*

The Lord commanded the apostles to go. **Love for our neighbor also compels us to go.** There is a continuing charge for His disciples to do likewise. Disciples are to be made. Clearly, “disciples” means devoted followers, obedient followers, as the Scriptures teach throughout. The task must have appeared daunting to the apostles the day Jesus gave the great commission, considering what they knew about themselves and what they knew about “all nations.” The consolation given them was two-fold: Jesus told them that all authority had been given Him in Heaven and on Earth, and Jesus promised to be with them always. One day when I see the disciples, I will ask Andrew, or maybe Peter, about the conversations they must have had that night and the next night after they heard these words.

When God first arrested me, I felt that grace was glorious and my resolve to explain what Jesus had done for me and to me was so great that I attempted to convert every criminal, pervert and miscreant I knew. I was limiting myself to my friends and cohorts. Most of them proved deaf to my words. I was mystified for two years until God providentially led me to Dr. John Gerstner, and he taught me what man, a fallen man, was like according to the Bible. The task of making disciples quickly went from daunting to impossible. Many of you will understand that statement, but for those of you who don’t, I will tell you what the Bible's view of fallen man is. I will not be exhaustive, however, I will be sufficiently thorough. We shall learn what all men outside Christ are like, but we must at the same time never forget that each man is also uniquely created.

A fallen man refers to every man or woman who has descended from Adam. Yes, that means everyone. Every human being, without exception, is born with a sinful nature. That means that your two-year old granddaughter, as soon as she can speak, will lie to you.

*“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”*

*Psalms 58:3*

It is her inclination. She is a born liar. Her inclination to sin and to love her sin will only increase as her physical strength and mental capabilities increase. Her nature is producing fruit. She will be selfish, angry and disobedient. She will only curb her selfish behavior when she figures out that she is not strong enough to overcome you and everyone else. Your granddaughter will switch to guile which she has learned has worked exceedingly well for perhaps her older sister or brother. Unless God sovereignly conquers her, as He did me, she will





produce sinful fruit her entire life and go to torment for eternity, which is just for such a relentless lawbreaker. Permit me a few scriptures that will explain fallen man more clearly than I just have.

*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man  
was great in the Earth,  
and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart  
was only evil continually.  
Genesis 6:5*

Yikes! Are you capable of being insulted? The old maxim holds, Christianity is no religion for a gentleman.

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,  
in which you once walked according to the course of this world,  
according to prince of the power of the air,  
the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,  
among whom also we all conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh,  
fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,  
and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.  
Ephesians 2:1-3*

Fallen men, your golf buddies, the ladies at the swim club, and the kind neighbor you like, since they have not been re-created (the new birth is called regeneration) are “dead” in sins and trespasses. They are all by nature doomed, and by their actions and thoughts condemned. These folks are walking according to the prince of the power of the air, Satan. They smile and work hard. Perhaps most of them are well-respected and easy to like. However, the inerrant, infallible word of God declares that they are daily conducting themselves in the lusts of their flesh, daily fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

It is important to note that “flesh” as it is used in the passage is not referring to skin and bones, but is referencing what we call “the old nature,” the sinful heart we were all born with. This nature is at enmity to God and to all things of God such as holiness, selflessness and the glorification of God. The created person has a nature, a sinful nature, which relentlessly strives to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Remember, the thoughts and intentions of the created man’s heart are continually evil. **The “re-created” person has a new nature, one sovereignly bestowed by God which has Godly inclinations.** The re-created man’s heart and the remnants of his old





nature will be at war for the remainder of the born-again man's life. The new nature, if the man is truly born again from above, will gain ascendancy as life goes on, but the Holy War will continue until the man dies. Then, only the new nature will remain.

When I am tempted, I remind myself that the Holy War is real. I fight. Most of the time I win. Some of the time I lose, and I willingly sin. I should say I willfully sin to be more accurate. I repent. Such is a day in the life of the re-created, regenerated man whom God loves. The created man has no such war raging inside, he or she faithfully fulfills the lusts of his or her flesh, sometimes with a wicked deed and sometimes with a good deed. An outwardly good deed to be more precise. Unless one has truly been born again, even one's good deeds are bad deeds in God's eyes - the eyes that perfectly assess the heart and its motives. Out of love for one's self, one may do a string of good deeds. But, without God's glory in mind, even outwardly good deeds are displeasing to God. Without faith, the Bible teaches, it is impossible to please God. Bad people do indeed, at times, give good gifts. Such good gifts are nevertheless merely "bad" good deeds. I will discuss this further elsewhere.

*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children ...*  
Matthew 7:11

All once-born men and women are, by nature, children of wrath.

It grows more bleak.

*But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart,  
you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath  
and revelation of the righteous judgement of God who will  
render to each one according to his deeds.*  
Romans 2:5-6

Everyone who has not been sovereignly re-created has the hard and impenitent heart they were born with. Everyone is daily storing up additional wrath for the solemn day of justice the Bible calls the Day of Judgement. Every thought, word, and action will be assembled as evidence regarding the life each individual soul has led. What was thought, said, and done will be measured against the law of perfection. The result will be justice without a whiff of mercy. Tears, howls, shrieks, and sobs will be disregarded. Every mouth will be stopped and no defense will be heard as no defense will be offered. The man's conscience itself would cry out if asked to speak: "Not one drop of mercy for him, here stands the Devil's slave who fell in love with his master. Pity him not!"



Every human will make himself or herself available for the tribunal. Each one's inability to stand against such perfect judgement as will be rendered will not argue against his or her standing before this august tribunal. Each shall receive a just reward.

*But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth,  
but only obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath,  
tribulation and anguish...*

*Romans 2:8-9*

The Creator of all I've ever seen, the upholder of my moment by moment breaths as well as of all planets and stars will express indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish. It is the Almighty's wrath. It will be justice rendered.

*Who knows the power of your anger?*

*Psalms 90:11*

Infinite, immeasurable anger will prevail. Justice, pure justice, will have no regard for trembling and whimpering. If one sin is deserving of eternal and limitless wrath and suffering, what will a mountain of sin deserve? **Yet, God stands with arms open, imploring this beast, fallen man, to come to Him for safety.** Instead of fleeing the wrath to come, fallen man runs away from God rather than to Him. Oh how dark, perverse, and deceived is every man who has not been born again by the mercy and grace of God!

The thought of such a judgement and its certainty will cause 10,000 Sampsons to quail. The demons asked Jesus if He had come to torment them before the time, their time of torment, the time they knew awaited. But the wicked man pridefully moves on, oblivious to the truth that each day he closes the distance between where he is at present and the great tribunal. Are you yet attempting to find good in a fallen man? Really?

The Bible has much more to say about fallen man and his wickedness, however I shall limit myself to two more Bible truths. The first truth comes from the lips of Jesus.

*"...But he who does not believe is condemned already,  
because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.  
And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world,  
and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

*For everyone practicing evil hates the light  
and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*

*John 3:18-20*







Reread God's assessment of him. This grotesque creature hides what he is, but not well. But you prefer fantasy to reality so you see your friend as you wish him to be, not as he is. The one who sees perfectly knows His creation best. The Bible has many more equally damning things to say about a man who is outside of Christ, and each is true. But we've heard enough already. Any man who is not born again by the Spirit of God stands deservedly damned, and the truth is that every wicked man ought already to be presently in Hell. Justice insists upon it. No, I should say that justice cries out for it. Christianity is clear, it condemns all men from birth.

Why then are wicked folks not in Hell?

*God is a just judge, He is angry with the wicked everyday.  
Psalm 7:11*

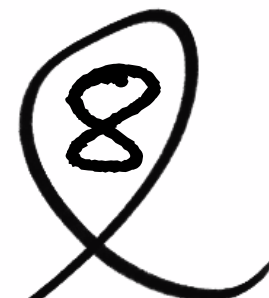
We see that it is not because God isn't angry. Why then are God's enemies, who with every breath spit in His face, given breath by the Almighty? Mercifully, God restrains His hand. Justice has no desire to restrain God's wrath. Mercy and pity do not insist that God show pity and mercy. But God, in mercy and with infinite wisdom, restrains His hand. All glory be to God alone.

**In light of this scathing indictment of fallen man, how can you and I successfully evangelize any man?**

First of all, a word about "successfully" evangelizing. **The privilege of evangelizing must be understood to be a matter of "faithfully" evangelizing, not successfully evangelizing. Listen closely please.** We shall see our efforts judged as faithful or unfaithful by God. We explain, teach, reason and persuade. We do everything within our power to bring truth and light. However, we realize we can give light, not life. You see, the success in evangelism depends **entirely** upon God. God providentially uses our reasonings and pleadings, but we know that while our faithfulness matters, it can never convert anyone.

Perverse, sin-loving, light-hating souls without a scintilla of good in themselves are physically able to hear my words, and they can comprehend my reasoning, but they are spiritually unable to hear me. They are dead in sins and trespasses. Only God can call the dead to life.

*But the natural man does not  
receive the things of the Spirit of God  
for they are foolishness to him;  
nor can he know them,  
because they are spiritually discerned.  
I Corinthians 2:14*





My best efforts cannot open a single soul's eyes. I can agonize over sinful souls, but I cannot give the soul a new heart with inclinations to good. **If God is to find good in a man, God will have to bestow it!** Look, what I am giving you is simply what the Bible, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the Puritans held to be true. Yes, I know that you have been told that you bring life to men, but being told something does not make it true. Well-meaning people are not always Biblical. What you have been taught is a modern invention, it is not even 200 years old; 400 years ago it was deemed a heresy. Why are you surprised? This age, our age, is the most Biblically illiterate of all time.

God sovereignly calls the dead to life spiritually, much like Jesus called Lazarus back to life from his tomb. Jesus commanded, and Lazarus came forth. God commanded, and I came to life spiritually. The Scripture has not hidden this truth.

*Nicodemus said to Him,  
"How can a man be born when he is old?  
Can he enter a second time  
into his mother's womb and be born?"*

*Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

*Nicodemus answered and said to Him,  
"How can these things be?"*

*Jesus answered and said to him,  
"Are you the teacher of Israel,  
and do not know these things?"*

*John 3:3-10*

This passage is familiar to most of you. When I first came to Christ from Atheism, I was told that if I listened and had faith, then God would give me a new heart and I would be born again. I agonized over whether or not I would faithfully follow Christ. One long night, for six and a half hours, I wrestled with myself over making a commitment to Christ. I believed that if I confessed my faith to God, I would **then** be born again.





Please notice, I believed that my faith came before the new birth/regeneration. I believed my faith procured regeneration. I believed that faith, my achievement, necessitated God's regeneration of me. Most of you likely agree with the proposition. This is a pernicious belief. It is a demonstrably unBiblical teaching. I shall explain more fully as we proceed.

### Regeneration Precedes Faith

Let me be frank, faith does not precede regeneration. How do I know? *The Bible tells me so*. I should, rather, say that the Creator of the universe, my Savior Jesus, told me so.

Jesus, in the John 3 passage referenced above, clearly and unequivocally stated that a man must be born again before he can see or enter the Kingdom. This bewildered Nicodemus, which I do understand. Jesus was precise in explaining the new birth.

*"The wind blows where it wishes  
and you hear the sound of it,  
but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes.  
So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."  
John 3:8*

Your Bible undoubtedly capitalizes the "s" in Spirit. It should, as the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is referred to. Jesus plainly states that the Holy Spirit, like the wind you are accustomed to, blows where He wishes. Where the Spirit comes from and where the Spirit goes, no mortal knows. The Holy Spirit is the supernatural version of a natural, earthly wind. In other words, no man summons the Spirit, He comes when He wants to, and to whom He wants to.

In summary, Jesus is teaching Nicodemus that "*a man must be born again before he can see the Kingdom*," (John 3:3). In verse 5, Jesus teaches that "*a man must be born again before he can enter the Kingdom*," (John 3:5).

Jesus continues, "*that which is born of the Spirit (Holy Spirit) is spirit*". In other words, Jesus is speaking of a spiritual rebirth, not a fleshly rebirth. Everyone, He says, who is reborn, is reborn of the Spirit. Do you see any evidence that man summoned the Spirit in the Scripture? Do you find any evidence that God rewards a man's faith with a supernatural rebirth by the Holy Spirit in the John 3 passage?

No. What you do find is that Jesus is teaching that:





### **The new birth precedes faith.**

Does this sound backwards to you? If it does, it's not because you have misread the passage. No, the problem is, you read into the passage what isn't there. Like me, you were told by a Pastor, Evangelist, or someone you liked and respected that faith comes before the new birth. Folks who teach this are well-meaning. However, they are dead wrong. It is a fearful thing to misstate God's truth. Read the passage again. Jesus is very clear, but you stubbornly search for a way to retain how you've always thought. Stubbornness is the fool's shield. Alexander Pope taught me an oft-repeated verity: "A man should never be ashamed to admit when he has been wrong, it's just another way of saying, I am wiser today than I was yesterday."

**Regeneration precedes faith.**

**Being born again precedes faith.**

**Faith is a gift from God.**

**Regeneration is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.**

**The Spirit decides whom He will regenerate, and when He will regenerate.**

If this shakes you up, I will be pleased. You see, when Dr. John Gerstner, graciously spending his time talking to me, informed me that regeneration precedes faith, I was quite certain I hadn't heard him correctly. The old man, likely tittering inside, was pleased to repeat it again. My world was turned upside down. I had been very energetically telling people that all they had to do was have faith (yes, I sold cheap grace and mere mental assent as well) and repeat a prayer, and God would reward them with the new birth/regeneration. Few exceeded me in zeal and ignorance. I had to change. I had to become Biblical. It is foolish to stubbornly rail against the Bible's clear teaching. If you wish to stubbornly remain unBiblical, then please at least stop doing what you call evangelization. Later I will examine the Romans Road and the Bridge Illustration in the light of Biblical truth, in order to persuade you to abandon all formulaic evangelism.

My view of John 3 is the understanding of Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and the Puritans. In other words, those giants of the faith all agreed with what I've said about regeneration preceding faith. Perhaps they are all wrong and you are right. But I doubt it. Do think of fallen man once more. Dead in sin and trespasses, deceived, wicked, light-hater that he is, natural man would never, of his own volition, choose the God he hates. No, God must choose him. God must bestow good to the man before good can be found in the man. **Salvation will need to be of the Lord**, as fallen man cannot do anything to help himself, because he doesn't want to. Fallen man loves his sin and depravity. Sin has absolute dominion over him. **Sin has absolute mastery of him, and fallen man loves that it is so.**



*But God, who is rich in mercy,  
because of the great love which He loves us,  
even when we were dead in trespasses,  
made us alive together with Christ  
(By grace you have been saved...)  
Ephesians 2:4-5*

Ephesians 2:1-3 teaches that though once dead, the believers were now alive, made so by God alone. Those children of wrath were now, as verses four and five state, children of grace. This is my story and yours as well, if you are a truly born-again follower. This foundational understanding concerning the depth of fallen, natural man's depravity, greatly alters our view of truth-telling and evangelism.

Truthfully, in light of what the Bible teaches about fallen man, shouldn't we have guessed that God would need to initiate reconciliation if reconciliation was to be had? If it's any consolation, Nicodemus was also completely dumbfounded to hear Jesus speak of the Spirit sovereignly initiating a new birth.

*"Are you a teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"  
John 3:10*


Lest you begin to acquire a dab of consolation, I would remind you that Jesus rebuked Nicodemus. Nicodemus smarted I am sure, but he should have known. If you are smarting, be like Nicodemus and change.

### **Bill, Does Anything I Say Really Matter Then?**

The good news: you are asking the right question.

- 1) Men are so wicked and depraved that no one, not one single man, would ever choose to follow God. All men love self and sin much, much more than you've been taught. **However, not knowing how dead in sin man was is your fault. The Bible told you plainly what every natural man is like.**
- 2) God must sovereignly intervene. **What is needed is a divine and supernatural light.** The Holy Spirit must open blind eyes, unplug deaf ears, and change a man's very heart so that a man's inclinations change. When a man is effectually called, regenerated, a man is not forced to be willing, he does not choose against his will. The man's inclinations change, he now wants the light rather than the darkness. The man chooses





the light because his desire is for the light. A man must be regenerated/ be born- again. A born-again man will comprehend what a true sight of sin and shame for sin are. True repentance is also a gift from God. This conviction, wrought by the Holy Spirit, may, at times, stagger a man. Discovering how perverse you are and revisiting what you've said and done can wither you. A born-again man can see the light he once hated, he can see this world as it is, and he can see Christ's beauty. **The cross becomes, at the same time, hideous and wildly beautiful.** Heaven opens to the born-again man. Faith and repentance are gifts, and once received, **God's former enemy is conquered by grace.** An enemy is reconciled.

- 3) What you and I say and do, wielded by God, alters a man's final destination. You and I pray for blind men to see. We study and strive to present sin and Christ as they are. We plead often with God, and at times, with fallen men. We do so completely understanding that all we say and do will never change a man or woman, **unless** God sovereignly pierces a man or woman's heart with our words and actions. God has chosen former beggars, you and me, to call out to beggars, God's avowed enemies, to be reconciled to God who is presently dreadfully angry with them. We warn men. We reason with men. We explain both life and eternal life to men. We implore men to consider life's brevity. We beseech men to peer into eternity. We entreat men to do what is best for their souls. **We aim to be faithful. We can be faithful.** The efficacy of what we say and do depends entirely upon God. We desire to see God sovereignly regenerate men. We also hunger to make disciples. You see, all truly born-again men will be disciples, devoted followers of Christ Jesus, the King. Our age abounds with mere professors, and you and I warn mere professors that they will hear Christ say, "I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

### **But Bill, I Want to be Successful When I Evangelize!**

We should aim to be faithful, not successful.

By successful, I assume you mean that the listener becomes a disciple. We hope to be successful, we aim to be successful, but we know that we shall not be if the Holy Spirit does not intervene. We pray that souls will be affected and converted by what we say, but we know that God is sovereign in dealing with men's souls. Again, we aim to be faithful. We do what's within our power and only what's within our power. Why? **God uses what we say to break one man's heart and to harden another man's heart.** Does the idea of God hardening a man's heart stun you? Perhaps it may, because I recall the moment I learned it. I was on my weekly call to Dr. Gerstner, and I said, "Doctor, you've been employed for most of your life by seminaries, but you seldom speak of seeing souls come to Christ." Dr. Gerstner replied, "Mr. Moore," softly, with a kind sigh, "God has used me more to harden hearts than He has to soften hearts."





In a split second, many of my errors, misunderstandings and specious ambitions flooded my mind. My heart sank low and simultaneously soared. All the questions I wasn't quite able to put together were answered. Dr. Gerstner wisely went on to remind me of the Exodus and the hardening of the Pharaoh's heart. This history is a perfect tool for Biblically understanding divine sovereignty and human responsibility. My desire is to undertake a comprehensive examination of God's actions and the Pharaoh's actions in Exodus, but I must deny myself this desire. I wish to explain this Biblical truth to you; however, I will limit myself to a cursory peek. My primary goal is to help you understand that when you and I express Christian truths and thoughts about souls, the danger they are in, and Christ's redemptive work, God will, at times, use our words to soften and melt a heart. God alone can do this. We can be wise and earnest, and we must strive to be both. But **re-creating a heart is a work only God's omnipotence is capable of. It is true as well that God may use what we say to harden a heart.**

Here is a brief explanation, an introductory one, but one that is sufficient I trust.

*“ You ( Moses ) shall speak all I command you. And  
Aaron your brother shall tell the Pharaoh to send the  
children of Israel out of his land.  
**And I will harden Pharaoh's heart,**  
And multiply my signs...”  
Exodus 7: 2&3*

*... But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And **Pharaoh's heart  
grew hard ...**  
Exodus 7: 12&13*

The Lord brought the first plague. The rivers turned to blood. The magician mimicked the sign and **“Pharaoh's heart grew hard.”**

God brought a second plague, everywhere and in every house, but **the Pharaoh, “hardened his heart.”**

*Exodus 8:15*

How about a third plague? Lice were throughout the land. “ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘this is the finger of God’. **But Pharaoh's heart grew hard.”**

*Exodus 8:19*



The Pharaoh remained stubborn. There was a plague of flies. The Pharaoh pleaded with Moses to intercede for him. Moses did so. God relented. **“But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time.”**

Exodus 8:32

Not weary of plagues yet, Pharaoh? Okay, diseased livestock should suffice. Nope— **“But the heart of the Pharaoh became hard.”**

Exodus 9:7

The Pharaoh persisted, but I can’t. God brought the plague of boils, the plague of hail, the plague of locusts, the plague of darkness, and the death of the firstborn of Egypt.

Of the sixth plague we read, **“But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.”**

Exodus 9:12

The record of the seventh plague ends with, **“He ( the Pharaoh ) hardened his heart.”**

Exodus 9:34

The plague of locusts, the eighth plague, terminates with, **“ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.”**

Exodus 10:20

The ninth plague was one of darkness for three days. The account culminates with, **“But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.”**

Exodus 10:27


The hardened heart must endure one last burden, the death of the firstborn of Egypt. But first, the Lord speaks to Moses, “Pharaoh will not heed you, so that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; **and the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.**”

Exodus 11:10

**Self- hardening and divine-hardening are interwoven; however, God’s sovereign hand is primary.** The Apostle Paul wisely reflects on the implications of Pharaoh’s hardening in Romans 9:16-18. Paul wants us to see God demonstrating His power and mercy over the human will. Paul includes Exodus 9:16 as he reflects on God’s purpose in hardening Pharaoh’s heart.

*So then it is not of him who wills,*





*nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy,  
for the Scripture says to Pharaoh,  
“For this very purpose I have raised you up,  
that I might show My power in you,  
and that My name might be proclaimed in all the Earth.”  
So then He has mercy on whomever He wills,  
and He hardens whomever He wills.  
Romans 9:16-18*

Pharaoh's hardening is, in the end, to glorify God. That is also the chief end of my life, your life, and every life. I promised you that all would be God-centered rather than man-centered. That's just my way of saying that we will see lives as the Bible does. Paul does forbid any notion that God was unjust in dealing with the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh's hardening allowed us to learn of God's omnipotence through the plagues. It is wise to recall that this incident led to God's Word being proclaimed in all the world! **You may want to ask, “Bill, does this hardening pertain to perhaps nations, their histories, etc, only, or does hardening also pertain to the destinies of eternal souls?”** Let me remind you, the Pharaoh was a man, and his eternal destiny was in view in our discussion of his hardening. That eternal destinies are on Paul's mind and heart is evident from Romans, chapter 9. Do you think Paul grieved for his hardened Jewish brethren's souls when he wrote that he could wish himself “accursed” for the sake of his brethren? ( I will discuss hardening again later, as I realize this may be the first time you have encountered a discussion of it) Eternal destinies were at stake. Please remember and reflect on Dr. Gerstner's words to me:


*“Mr. Moore, God has used me more to harden hearts than he has to soften hearts.”*

***A note about evangelistic formulas. They are discussion killers.***

When I speak with a man or woman, I attempt to understand them in order to find an opening for a conversation and/or discussion. I have no formula because I know that no two people are alike. The person I'm speaking to may have a broken heart, a medical concern, a damnable pridefulness, or be envious of every living being. Why would I stuff my formula down their throats? Fallen people are a marvel to me - they are tortured, twisted, deceived and deceitful. They are blind, yet they are certain that they understand everything. When I was blind, I was all of the above plus I was angry, violent and cold-hearted.

**Since I am a Christian, any discussion will be filled with Christian thoughts, Christian truths,** what I was, and what Christ has made of me. Because I am a Christian, all topics, questions, and musings will pass through my mind, which is a Christian mind. If you pity the poor, fearful, yet arrogant creatures, God has me meet, you are wise. You see, eternal matters





are the only matters that matter, no matter what is said to the contrary. Unbelievers should see the world differently than you do; blind people describing mountains they have never seen are bound to give regrettable descriptions. You and I must learn to converse more wisely, I feel, if we are to engage the fallen world. We must be faithful witnesses to God's truths, and we must anticipate that God will use our words to soften some hearts, break some hearts, harden some hearts temporarily, and harden some hearts eternally. Nevertheless, we must spend ourselves on behalf of all men, striving to simply be faithful. We must do what is within our abilities, and we must rest, understanding the limits of our own abilities. **We must allow God to do what only He can sovereignly do - melt and harden hearts and govern His universe as He sees fit in order to glorify Himself.**

### Formulaic Evangelism

Before I lay out the principles I find to be Biblical regarding evangelism in more detail, I think it is best if I explain to you why I believe formulaic evangelism to be unBiblical. Some of you will be offended, and that is good. I, too, had to be offended before I could change my thinking and admit that my evangelism was salesmanship rather than Christian truth-telling. If my critiques of the Romans Road formula and the Bridge Illustration formula strike you as rational and Biblical, then you may feel that I've left you empty-handed. It may seem that I've taken away what you've known and haven't given you a replacement. You are not empty-handed. You have a pants pocket you may not know you have. I will tell you about that pocket and its contents following my critiques.

It is my contention that the ship of the Church, for the past 225 years or so, has taken on the water of the world. Foolishly attempting to accommodate the world became stylish, and such accommodation is still in vogue today. Folks, the Church, by nature, is counter-cultural. Why, oh why, is that difficult to see? Look to the Master, does our beloved Jesus appear to be one who seeks cultural approval? Jesus is our example. There is a cosmic war raging and a cultural war boiling. I say good. I say thank you, Lord. If you and I are in a spiritual stupor now, imagine how intoxicated we would be if the wars were merely simmering. Darkness hates light, therefore the world should hate us without a cause, just as it hated Jesus. But you see, we so accommodate the world that it tolerates us. The differences between the Church and the world are negligible today.

**Fortunately, by God's grace, there is a remnant that hasn't forsaken the old ways. This minority understands that we were born on a battlefield, and that we will battle many foes on our pilgrimages through this foreign land, this wicked world.**



It is my conviction that this accommodation of the world and its culture, beginning about 225 years ago, as I said earlier, birthed the “cheap grace” being peddled today. “Easy believism” eschews true discipleship. In this age, merely referencing the cost of discipleship and its connection to evangelism will get you arraigned on charges of “works righteousness”! **The Church today, in the main, sells a man-centered, cost-free evangelistic formula that adores mere mental assent to simple truths about the historical Jesus.** Once mere mental assent is procured by magic prayers, or a mere profession of faith, assurance of salvation is guaranteed by today’s peddlers of “cheap grace”. One passage comes to my mind when I ponder “cheap grace” and “easy believism”:

*“ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord,Lord’, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.”*

*Matthew 7:19-21*

Does God bid a man to come to Christ and to die to self-interest? Nothing appears more rational to me than the forsaking of self-interest. Yet, this forsaking is something I still find difficult to do. Each week, in my Daily Planner, I write this note anew: “smothering self-interest is purely logical.” I will need to do this each week until I die, of that I am quite certain. Does Christ teach us that when we find the pearl of great price we should sell all we have and purchase it? Doesn’t the Bible repeatedly insist that there is a cost to being Christ’s disciple? Why then do we not explain this clearly to people who proclaim an interest in Christ? If we were clear about carrying the cross and loving Christ more than mothers, fathers, wives, children, and our own lives, folks who merely assent to basic facts about Jesus would instantly flee. They want the benefits, not a Master who is Lord as well as Savior. Luke 14 finds Jesus addressing this issue. Jesus asks, if a man plans to build a tower, wouldn’t it be prudent to count the cost to see if the man has the funds to complete it?

*For if you lay the foundation  
and are not able to finish it,  
everyone who sees it will ridicule you,  
saying, “This person began to build  
and wasn’t able to finish it.”*

*Luke 14:29*

When I am truth- telling, explaining Christian thought and evangelizing, I **always** address Matthew 7:21 and the cost of discipleship. Jesus warned mere professors, and we should as well. Please see if the Romans Road formula and the Bridge Illustration formula thoroughly apprehend and probe the cost of discipleship.



Though well-intentioned, both the Romans Road formula and the Bridge Illustration formula, still enormously popular today, seriously depreciate the effects of “the fall”. Fallen man has the “natural, physical ability” to hear and to reason. But, sin has mastery over him. Sin has dominant, unquestioned rule. **What fallen man lacks is “moral ability”.** All natural men have a dominant drive, an inclination to sin. **Listen closely please:** Everything a man who is not born again and re-created by God does displeases God. How do I know this?

*... the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it  
is not subject to the laws of God, nor indeed can be.  
So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.  
Romans 8:7&8*

*And without faith it is impossible to please God,  
because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists  
and that He rewards those who seek Him earnestly.  
Hebrews 11:6*

If true access to God is by faith, it necessarily follows that all fallen men, faithless men, men in the flesh, are objects of God’s displeasure. A firm and fixed faith is stipulated in order to please God. **So, fallen man can do two types of works: bad-bad works and bad-good works.** Both, however, are displeasing to God. Bad-bad works are self-evident, they are adultery, murder, slander, theft, etc. Bad-good works require a moment of thought. Mathew 7:11 speaks of evil men giving good gifts. Evil men who continually displease God, His enemies, can give funds to feed the hungry, as I noted earlier.

While we term this a “good” thing, God is displeased. Wonder why? It is because to be a “good” thing in God’s eyes, it must be a thing done for God’s glory, and it must be a thing prescribed by God. I include this verity, at this point, to further establish the truth that all men before they are born again, sovereignly re-created, are morally unable to do anything to please God and are morally unwilling to truly seek God. With these Biblical truths in mind, let’s examine formulaic evangelism. I must reiterate that all formulas, by design, depreciate individuality. Formulaic evangelism, with its one-shoe-fits-all approach, evidences a low esteem for God's creation of unique beings. The Romans Road method was invented by Pastor Jack Hyles. He was an Independent Baptist. As far as I can determine, Pastor Hyles first used this method around 1950.

## **The Romans Road**

### **The Five Stops Along the Romans Road**





- 1) **Romans 3:23** *“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”*  
~We are all sinners by nature and by choice.
- 2) **Romans 6:23** *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ, our Lord.”*  
~We receive eternal life as a free gift!
- 3) **Romans 5:8** *“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*  
~God demonstrates His love for us, his enemies.
- 4) **Romans 10:9-10** *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*  
~We must trust and surrender to Jesus as Lord.
- 5) **Romans 5:1** *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ,”*  
~Relationship of peace with God

#### **A sinner’s prayer for forgiveness**

*“Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I know my sin deserves to be punished. I believe that Christ is the Son of God, who died for me and rose from the grave. I want to turn from my sin and trust Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. Thank you for your forgiveness and everlasting life now that I have faith in Jesus. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

- This formula is simplistic, and it distorts Paul’s thought in the letter to the Romans.
- This formula may be well-intentioned, but it is guilty of selling “cheap grace”.
- This formula inevitably elevates the individual’s faith into a meritorious work.
- This formula distorts what God is like and what man is capable of.
- This formula lacks warm-heartedness, and its one-shoe-fits-all approach assures that the listener will never be seen as an individual.
- This formula promises eternal life and never hints at the cost of following Jesus. True repentance is replaced by, “I want to turn from my sin.” Turning from sin is a part of repentance, but most certainly is not the whole, as I will explain more thoroughly later.





This formula has an utter disregard for sanctification and the Holy War each true believer knows all too well. Throughout this war, “life” is continually increased and strengthened in Christ’s sheep. The greater the progress in faith, the more closely a man comes to fullness of life, because the Holy Spirit conforms him more and more to the image of Christ. The formula's determination to wrangle a confession of faith from the listener causes it to neglect all talk of being a disciple, one who follows Christ. You see, a true believer is united with Christ. A true disciple is a man or woman who has been rescued from the power of darkness. Sanctification is a process, and we do well to remember that in a true disciple, the indwelling Spirit immediately begins conforming the believer to the image of Christ. Mere professors of faith do not concern themselves with sanctification, but disciples do. In the end, this formula has engendered antinomianism (a lawless lifestyle).

Justification, being declared righteous by God, is by faith, but it is not by a mere profession of faith. Let me be crystal clear, we must distinguish between justification and sanctification. Sanctification, the process of growing in grace and perfecting holiness in the fear of God is never the grounds of justification, but if there is no sanctification going on in a man’s life, that is the clearest evidence that there is no justification. The Bible is clear: if there is life in the root, there will be sap in the branch. That is, if a heart is changed, a man’s life will always produce fruit. Conversely, if a man’s life evidences no fruit of the Spirit, there is no reason to believe he has been born again of the Spirit of God. Listen closely please, sanctification follows justification inevitably, immediately, and necessarily. Why don’t these formulas deal seriously with discipleship? **The formulas do not seek disciples, they seek professors, or as they see them, converts.** I caution you to consider that Christianity has a long history. “Convert”, for centuries, referred to a man who was being conformed to Christ’s image and forsook his own interests to follow Him who died for him. Convert is a term that does not mean today what it has meant historically.

This formula ensures that millions will go to their judgement and hear:

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’  
shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven,  
but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.”  
Matthew 7:21*

I am being as kind as I can be. The thinking engendered by this and all such formulas will lead little ones to thinking that profession assures salvation and that holiness would be nice but is not integral to salvation. Surely the idiotic heresy of the Lordship controversy of the latter part of the past century was fueled by this and other such formulas. They sought “professors” of faith by a scheme constructed to drive ill-informed and often ignorant souls into a “decision”. How they convinced themselves that God would applaud such deadly drivel is beyond me.



One final failing of all such formulaic evangelism must be noted. Go to YouTube and watch the disciples of the Romans Road formula in action. The disciples follow the script impersonally as I noted, but they, almost every time, give the bare-bones outline as the gospel in its entirety. Dealing with precious immortal souls in such a cavalier manner is egregious.

I will quickly measure the Romans Road formula against Bible teaching.

Romans 3:23 - It is true that we have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God, but wouldn't it be fair to explain that human depravity and actions, as Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 3:10-20, Jeremiah 17:9, Genesis 6:5, I Corinthians 6:9-10 and other Biblical passages detail them, give a far deeper insight into the hopelessness of mankind's position? Puritans, and all the faithful in concert with them, plainly taught what a natural man is like, and they did not apologize for the Biblical portrait of man as deceived, desperately wicked, and hopelessly unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God.

Romans 6:23 - True, the wages of sin is death. Why not detail the wages for the listener? Jonathan Edwards' plain preaching about Hell, its terrors, and the sword of divine justice every moment being brandished over the heads of rebels, was used by God to bring about the "Great Awakening". As Edwards famously said, "They deserve to be cast into Hell...justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of sins...arbitrary mercy, and God's mere mercy ...hold it back." Why not tell the man, the already condemned man, what the wages are he has earned? In turn, the sacrifice of Christ is depreciated.

The urgency to speak of the gift of eternal life is paramount, and the rush to speak of it comes at the expense of sanctification and the cost of discipleship. I, too, bless God for His grace, and I concur that it is a free gift. It is free because believers pay nothing. **But no gift was as costly.** The Creator, the Sustainer of the universe, paid for the individual sins of every recipient of the gift - Christ kept the law perfectly and earned the robe of righteousness true believers are now clothed with. God hasn't made a single promise of eternal life or preservation from eternal death aside from the gracious promises given in the Mediator, the Lord Jesus. Eternal life holds a beauty that any man, including a man seeking to understand God, can spend a lifetime contemplating. But when you wield a formula that has as a goal the desire to elicit a quick profession of faith, contemplations of all stripes are damned.

Again, we seek devoted disciples not nominal professors. Bleached-out justice and the neglect of the moment by moment possibility of it from an incensed God is weak, and I fear, intendedly so. Weak utterances produce weak responses, and weak responses mean



weak “professing” disciples who do not cherish grace or count the cost of and necessity of losing one’s life for Christ. Christianity is radical. The cost?

*“Then he said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me, for whoever desires to save his life will lose it.*

*But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.’”*

*Luke 9:23-24*

A flush of affection will not do. True converts must be told that they must take Christ’s yoke upon them. True disciples must be told there is no limit to Christ’s claim on them.

Romans 5:8 - Yes, Christ did die for us while we were God’s ardent enemies, and it does truly demonstrate God’s love for His own. But let’s be clear - Jesus died only for born-again men’s and women’s sins. Jesus did not die for unbelievers’ sins. Unbelievers pay for their own sins in Hell. What every presentation of the Romans Road I’ve listened to lacks is truthfulness about unbelievers being God’s enemies both by nature and by actions. Faulty doctrine misstates what man is like and allows the listener to still see himself as “somewhat good” and as an excellent candidate for mercy and eternal life.

*The Bible exclaims,*

*“... He who does not believe is condemned already...”*

*John 3:18*

Why not be plain with condemned men? These condemned men have in their very nature the very tinder that, if God did not restrain it, would burst into Hell Fire. Natural man is so wicked and so stubborn that even the knowledge that God might require his soul this very minute does not move him. The man hates God and has no interest in the Mediator. The Holy Spirit must sovereignly regenerate a man. The Spirit must change a man’s inclinations and must give him a new heart that is willing to faint at the danger of remaining God’s enemy. This heart-changed, re-created man, can see the beauty of the Mediator. Faulty doctrine, regarding what a man is like, robs God of His glory. That Christ would die for such creatures is true, but unimaginable if it were not true. **To God alone be all Glory and Honor.**

Romans 10:9-10 - Confession and belief are set out here. Especially important is the matter of “heart belief”. The context shows that justification by works is being set against justification by faith. With that in mind, Paul first sets forth the vanity of any attempt by fallen man to achieve righteousness by keeping the law perfectly. Man’s conscience itself testifies to the impossibility of such an endeavor. But, I want you to note the curious order of profession and faith. Verse 9 has profession before faith, which





is an unnatural order. Paul does so to adhere to Moses' statement in Deuteronomy 30:14, which Paul is appealing to. Verse 10 restates Paul's promise in its natural order, and says:

*For with the heart  
one believes unto righteousness,  
and with the mouth  
confession is made unto salvation.  
Romans 10:10*

The Bible teaches that the tongue wags when the heart instructs it to. What we profess is the fruit of what we believe. We learn now what justification by faith is. But **we must remember that it is a matter of the heart, not the head alone. I'm speaking of true justifying faith.** If one **only** has faith in one's head, it is not justifying faith, but mere mental assent to facts about Jesus. The difference is crucial. Devils mentally assent to the lordship of Christ, and they resent it. Mere mental assent, I reiterate, is not justifying faith.

*"You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble!"  
James 2:19*

The heart refers to innermost being, and in its weakest sense in this passage, speaks of sincere and wholehearted feeling and belief. True justifying faith trusts completely, relies completely and clings entirely to Jesus, His person, and His work (all He accomplished). Empty faith will not justify, yet mental assent alone is all that is necessary if you look at the prayer a listener to a Romans Road presentation is asked to agree to along the Romans Road. You are asked to "acknowledge" you are a sinner. You agree you deserve to be punished. You believe Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose from the grave for you. You agree to turn from your sin. You agree to trust Jesus as Savior. You then agree to thank God for forgiveness and eternal life.

**"Acknowledging" that you are a sinner who deserves to be punished isn't the same as the Biblical idea of sorrow and shame for sin.** True conviction and true repentance are works of the Holy Spirit and are heart affecting. What must I do to be saved?, the cry of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, can come from deep within a heart. It is also a phrase that can be uttered by a man who simply wishes to obtain insurance against the possibility that Hell might be real. **Merely repeating that Jesus died and rose again for you is a far cry from a faith that clings to Christ alone for salvation. Agreeing to turn from sin is not akin to a grief for and hatred of sin.**



**Mental assent, which will deceive you but not save you, is all that is asked for.** Sadly, history has proven that “mental assent professors” have been plentiful. They have no intention of picking up the cross and following Jesus. These are truly “counterfeit jewels”. Folks, I know that some true conversions have been produced by the Romans Road. The Holy Spirit may regenerate whenever He wishes, but it **will be in spite of and not because of this presentation** which proceeds to promise assurance of faith with no regard for sanctification as the fruit of regeneration (the new birth).

Turning from sin does not equal Bible repentance - it’s not even a shadow of it. The difference between the agreement to merely turn from sin and true Biblical repentance is the difference between a paper cut and an arm amputation. **Admission of sin is not contrition for sin.** Please discard this contrivance. God will not be mocked, imaginary faith is not justifying faith. The Romans Road is designed to get “quick decisions” and it succeeds. True faith that justifies is radical and is produced by the Holy Spirit. Mental assent “decisions” are primarily the work of the presentation, not the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

Sinful men, who are truly convicted that they are sinful, seek reconciliation with the God they have offended. No offended and sensible wife will reconcile with an estranged husband who thinks his “okay, I did commit adultery; I said I was sorry, my bad” should suffice. Yet, look at the Romans Road. Where is true repentance? Apparently, God lacks the judgment an offended wife does not. In the prayer you are encouraged to repeat, “I want to turn from my sin.” I keep staring at that phrase. I am trying hard to understand who would think that God would consider the speaker contrite and that repentance is even suggested in such a short, trifling repetition of someone else's written statement. I know that there are pastors out there parroting the “repentance means a change of mind and nothing more” mantra, but they are hawking faux repentance.

I looked at numerous definitions in numerous dictionaries, and even the simplest definitions of repentance are as follows:

**Repentance:**

- Definition: “Deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for past sin, wrongdoing, or the like” (dictionary.com).
- Synonyms: “Grief, guilt, remorse, sorrow, contriteness, self-reproach” (thesaurus.com).

All of these include a “change of mind”, but **none means only a change of mind.**

King David when repenting wrote:





*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,  
a broken and contrite heart -  
these, O God, you will not despise.  
Psalm 51:17*

Can you see why I charge that the Romans Road formula seeks shallowness with a vengeance?

Thomas Watson, a Puritan who has helped me immensely, wrote about repentance. He had withering insights on each point. Watson's view and the Romans Road view appear to be addressing two different topics. They are not.

**Watson's breakdown of true repentance:**

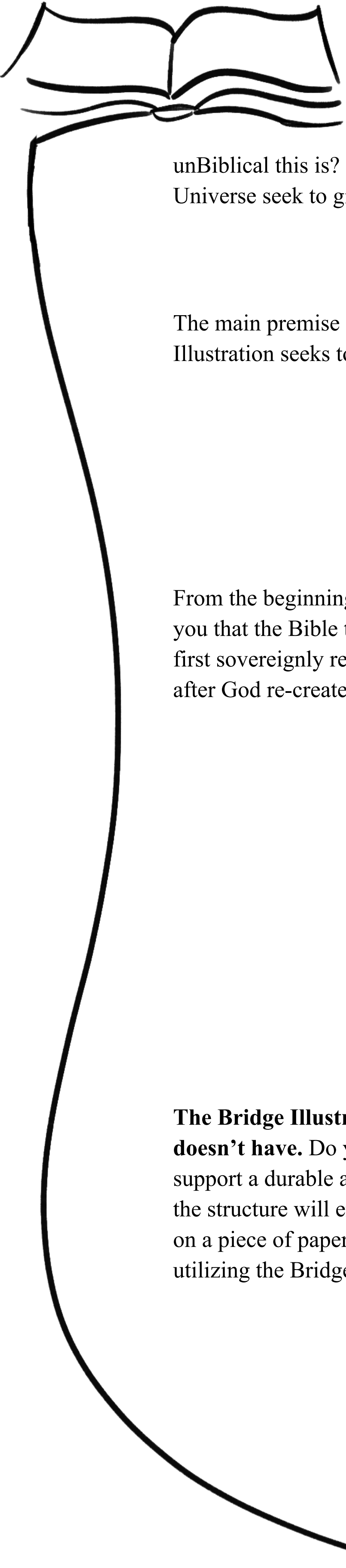
- 1) Sight of Sin
- 2) Sorrow for Sin
- 3) Shame for Sin
- 4) Repentance
- 5) Turning from Sin
- 6) Hatred of Sin

Please do not mistake a lame admission of sin for true, heartfelt repentance. A \$50 bill drawn with a crayon on a Domino's pizza box by my grandson will not be accepted for a purchase at the Dollar Store. The cashier insists on real U.S. currency. Yet God, who is all knowing, apparently can't distinguish between a mere admission of sin and true repentance. This twaddle is part and parcel of "cheap grace", and folks relying on it will hear the Master say, "*I never knew you.*"

Look, pangs of conscience are not convictions. True convictions may produce sorrow, but often, only worldly sorrow is produced. As an old Puritan friend once said, "True repentance does not grow in nature's garden." True repentance is a gift from God, and it produces godly sorrow.

*"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted;  
but the sorrow of the world produces death."  
2 Corinthians 7:10*

All along I've labored to remind you that God is sovereign. God regenerates those He desires to. A good evidence that you have been born again is that the gifts of faith and repentance have been given to you. True grief for sin and true repentance are on the heart and tongue of the man who has a new heart that has been given to him by God. On the other hand, the Romans Road formula leads a man to think that any gimpy admission of one's sin will be met with an immediate dispensing of grace and mercy by the Almighty. Can you not see how ludacris and



unBiblical this is? Does God seek a *quid pro quo*? In other words, does the Ruler of the Universe seek to give favor (eternal life) in return for the repetition of a formulaic prayer?

### The Bridge Illustration

The main premise is that man's greatest problem is "separation" from God. The Bridge Illustration seeks to explain and solve this problem.

*"When you're not sure if friends  
have surrendered their lives to Christ yet,  
this is a great way to help them make that decision."  
The Navigators*

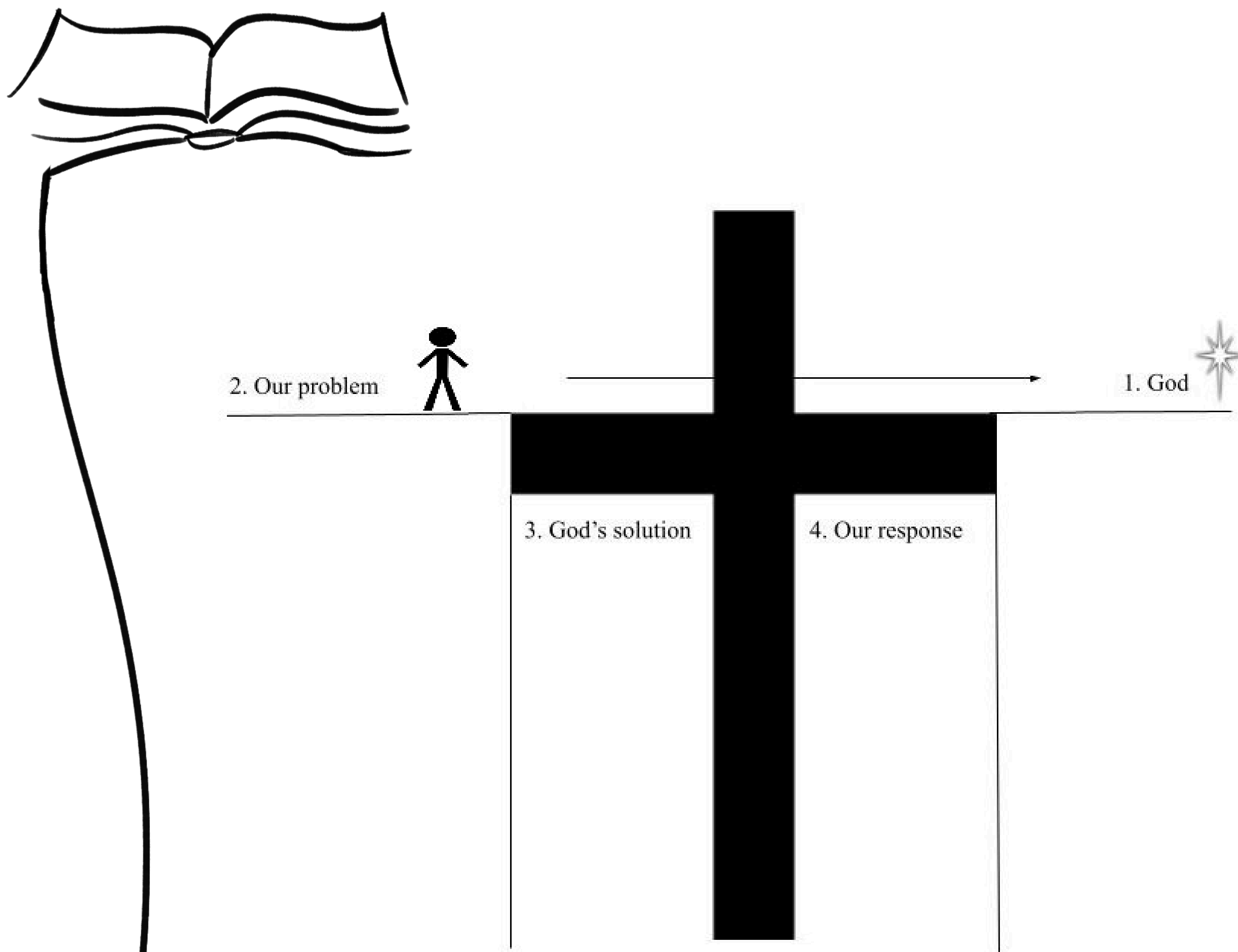
From the beginning the Bridge Illustration formula assures that it will be unBiblical. I remind you that the Bible teaches that fallen man will not and cannot "surrender," unless the Holy Spirit first sovereignly regenerates the man. God alone, who created man, can re-create a man. Only after God re-creates is man able to surrender.

*"... 'Most assuredly, I say to you,  
unless one is born again,  
he cannot see the Kingdom of God...  
do not marvel that I said to you,  
you must be born again.  
The wind blows where it wishes,  
and you hear the sound of it,  
but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.  
So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.'"*

**The Bridge Illustration assumes fallen man has abilities that the Bible flatly states he doesn't have.** Do you expect that this illustration, built on an unBiblical foundation, will support a durable and sturdy structure? Contradicting the infallible, inerrant Scripture ensures the structure will end as rubble. The Bridge Illustration formula instructs us to draw a diagram on a piece of paper. My bride, Lois, draws an excellent diagram, as she was taught to evangelize utilizing the Bridge Illustration formula. Lois has now changed to a Biblical approach.







*“God created us with a purpose, to be in a relationship with Him  
and to enjoy all the fullness of life with Him.”*

It takes but a moment to see that the Bridge Illustration formula contradicts historic Christian understanding. Creation is God-centered, not man-centered. This man-centered emphasis is a product of this age.

**Section 4, of creation,** of the Westminster Confession of Faith states the truth about creation: *“It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.”* The Confession goes on to inform us that after God created all other creatures, He created man after His image, and God created man with the possibility of trespassing. **Man was given a free will, he could choose to obey or disobey. By use of his free will Adam mangled his free will and became enslaved. Thus the separation, which has historically been called the enmity between man and God. Such is the once-born man’s situation.**



God created to manifest His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness. Creation glorifies God alone.

**Creation is God-centered, not man-centered as the Bridge Illustration implies.**

God, knowing all, created man knowing that Adam would sin, and that all men born of Adam would be born dead in trespasses and sin. Since Adam, men have been born God's inveterate enemies who hate the light and love their darling, the darkness. All men are born condemned.

*And this is the condemnation,  
that the light has come into the world,  
and men loved darkness rather than light,  
because their deeds were evil.  
Jesus speaking, John 3:19*

God created man knowing that no man would love the light unless God changed the man's inclination by re-creating him (regeneration, the new birth). **God also knew that he would not re-create all men.** The Westminster Confession of Faith also states this Biblically and beautifully: *"By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death."* For the manifestation of His glory, God decreed, before the foundation of the world was laid, that He would predestinate some men to everlasting life. Others He foreordained to everlasting death. God gives mercy to some and some God passes by, and they face justice.

I feel I must, at this point, assure you that God did not create evil or sin, as many spuriously, furiously, and curiously assert. God gave Adam a freedom of will that permitted Adam to either sin or not to sin. God did not coerce Adam in any way. Adam, because he had a free will, chose to disobey. Of course, God knew Adam would sin. Of course, God also knew, before anything existed, that the Second Adam, Jesus, would come into the world, live sinlessly, and would be crucified. God also knew that He would resurrect Jesus and that Jesus would ascend to His throne. I will explain this more fully in the videos, but I am inserting this now to refute the inane musings of some who unthinkingly imagine that God created sin.

The Bridge Illustration holds that God created with the intent that man would be in a relationship with Him and enjoy the fullness of life with Him. Obviously this idea contradicts Scripture. Those in Heaven glorify God, His grace, and His mercy. Those in Hell glorify God and His justice. Those in Heaven and those in Hell do have a relationship with God, and God is present in both Heaven and Hell. God's presence with those in Heaven is man's supreme joy. God's presence in Hell, in His wrath, assures that those in Hell will endure unimaginable and





endless misery and despair. Those in Hell were not created to enjoy the fullness of life with Him. **In short, God created to manifest His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness.** The creation is God-centered, not man-centered.

The Bridge Illustration formula highlights 4 steps:

### Step 1: God

The Bridge Illustration counsels us to look at John 3:16, and I am pleased to do so, as it glorifies God in that He gave His only begotten son.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

John 3:16

The “whosoever” that believes in Him will not perish, and I am grateful for that. But, you will notice that the Bridge Illustration formula does not address who the whosoever are. They do not, because a discussion of the bondage of a man’s will would ensue. The Illustration assumes salvation is to be had by any and all and that any and all will respond easily once they understand that God wants an “abundant life” for them. The problem is, the Illustration mistakenly assumes that every fallen creature has the ability to choose to follow God. As I have labored to explain, this fundamental error assures the Bridge Illustration will collapse. The folks who do believe are those God has chosen and sovereignly re-created. Let me be clear, God is not withholding Eternal Life, **the fallen creature doesn’t want Eternal Life.** He adores His darkness and his wicked deeds. If the Holy Spirit did not regenerate whom He wills to, not a single fallen human being would ever choose God and Heaven over his own dark, sin-filled world. Lusts are precious in the sight of a fallen man.

John 10:10 is now set forth. The question is asked, “what type of life does Jesus want to give you on earth?” - the answer? Before I give you the Bridge Illustration’s answer, I want you to know that I cannot imagine a more ridiculous treatment of this passage. The Bridge Illustration’s true colors are flying for all to see and hopefully flee from. What does Jesus want to give you? Their answer is “abundant life”, and by that they mean purpose, impact, meaning, peace, joy, love, and acceptance. The clear meaning of John 10:10, in context, has been mutilated to meet the Bridge Illustration’s insatiable appetite to cobble a man-centered, man-pleasing presentation together.

Read chapter 10 of John, and you will quickly discern that Jesus is warning against false shepherds and teachers. Jesus is saying that life is continually strengthened in those who stay near to the true Shepherd, Jesus, and flee from the wolves and thieves, the false teachers.



Abundant life is progress and steadfastness in faith. Fullness of life comes from the Holy Spirit's presence in a man. Can you find any reason for the distortion put forth by the Bridge Illustration? Only a disturbing man-centered gospel could account for this absurd mutilation. The Bridge Illustration formula goes on to ask if everyone you know is experiencing this abundant life. It is impossible to build a belief system with this blatant misunderstanding as part of your foundation. People who want their ears tickled will race to this teaching, but a wise man will flee. Now you know why I say that the Bridge Illustration formula is unBiblical. Yet, I know some very fine men and women who utilize this formula. It grieves me to be so frank, but this teaching is poisonous.

I have decided to skip most of the remainder of the Bridge Illustration's presentation. Like all formulaic presentations, a "decision" is sought and the gravity of sin and just punishment will not be forthcoming. I will skip steps 2 and 3 and discuss step 4.

#### **Step 4: Our Response**

Each of us needs to respond to what God is offering us. Revelation 3:20 is cited.

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock.  
If anyone hears My voice and opens the door,  
I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."  
Revelation 3:20*

Many believe this verse is speaking to unbelieving individuals of all ages. It is not. This is a call for The Church at Laodicea to repent for having departed from the Gospel of the Kingdom that Christ had given it to proclaim. The people addressed were professing believers. Revelation 3:19 states: *"Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten."* The Church at Laodicea thinks it is doing well, when it is not. Jesus gives a loving rebuke. Restoration is in view.

The Church at Laodicea considered itself to be rich and in need of nothing. They were ignorant of and blind to their spiritual poverty - they were, as Revelation 3:17 states, *"wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked."* The Gospel was being abandoned due to pride. The Church lacked dependence on Christ for spiritual life and all spiritual good. The ministry of reconciliation was being neglected, due to smug self-satisfaction. The misunderstanding of Revelation 3:20 has led to Gospel presentations that ask folks to accept Jesus into their hearts because Jesus is knocking, ignoring the fact that they are rebels who face a terrifying judgment. Unless he is first born-again by God's sovereign act, the unbeliever will never answer a knock from Jesus. This is, as well, a misuse of Scripture that makes a needy beggar of the King of Kings.



In summation, **the Bible does not ask unbelievers to accept Jesus into their hearts**, the Bible warns unbelievers of a just torment if they don't repent of their wicked ways and sins. In Acts 17, we find Paul stating that God "commands men everywhere to repent." Unbelievers need to heed this command. Unbelievers also need to believe that Jesus alone can die for their particular sins and give them the righteousness they so badly need. Sinners must forsake their sinful ways and determine to follow Jesus. This is what disciples, sheep, do.

It seems to me to be more profitable to speak to unbelievers from Matthew 11:20-30. Jesus rebukes the cities in which many of His great works had been done. The great works He did should have sparked repentance, but they did not. Capernaum was "exalted to Heaven," but "would be brought down to Hades." Jesus went on to say that it will be more tolerable for Sodom, "In the day of judgement than for you." Jesus proceeds to thank God for hiding "these things" from the wise and prudent. Jesus thanks His Father that "these things" have been revealed to babes, "for so it seems good in your sight." This is a far cry from the twisted meaning that has been wrested from Revelation 3:20. Why twist the Scripture? A profession of faith is sought, which for formula purveyors is the end-all-be-all.

Verses 28-30 of Matthew 11 must, I think, be allowed to speak for themselves.

*"Come to Me, all of you who labor and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you  
and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.  
For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."*

Matthew 11:28-30

This is so beautifully balanced. Whether weary and burdened by the rigor of religious rules imposed to encourage one to pridefully pursue self-righteousness, or whether simply wearied by sin and worn down by life and life's burdens, Jesus says come, and I will give you rest. **If you come, there is a yoke - Jesus' yoke to bear.** You find no "cheap grace" here. Jesus' calling is radical, however He promises "rest for your souls." Though a soul must take His yoke upon it, Jesus assures us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

### Next Steps

Accept Jesus, which is simple as A B C

**A - ADMIT** that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and ask God to forgive you and help you turn from sin.





**B - BELIEVE** Jesus died for you and rose again conquering sin and death.

**C -COMMIT** your life to following Jesus, putting your total trust in Him and giving Him decision-making authority as Lord of your life.

The Next Steps section, unfortunately, once again, distorts the Bible message. **Admitting you are a sinner is something a devil can do. Confessing you are a sinner, without contrition, is also something a devil can do. Contrition in confession of one's sin smells entirely different from a mere admission of one's sin.**

*You believe that there is one God. You do well.*

*Even the demons believe - and tremble!*

James 2:19

Demons can admit to being sinners, and that mere confession causes them to tremble. When the demons inhabiting the two possessed men in Matthew chapter 8, encounter Jesus, they cry out suddenly:

*“What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Son of God?*

*Have you come here to torment us before the time?”*

Matthew 8:29

The demons go on to beg Jesus to permit them to enter a herd of swine. What do we learn from this consideration of demons? They acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, and they tremble, knowing a day of torment awaits them. They know that Jesus has the power to torment them immediately should He wish to do so. Implicit is the understanding that torment awaits, due to sin. The demons tremble and are terrified. Yet, they have hearts that are not contrite. Why do we think that admitting we are sinners is commendable? That all men are sinners is obvious and our consciences convict us of it, no matter our repeated attempts to render them impotent. Why don't we simply tell sinners that they must acknowledge that Jesus is already Lord of all? **Why not ask sinners why they are not trembling? Why shouldn't they tremble, since they, like the demons, face the certainty of a day of judgement? Oh, I forgot, this formula seeks to hide the day of judgement except in a shadowland way.**

Why not mention to unbelievers that unimaginable, never-ending torment awaits all who do not earnestly repent from the heart and devotedly follow Jesus? Why not implore unbelievers to do what is in their souls' best interest?



Martin Luther spoke of bad news coming before good news. Until recent times, when formulaic evangelism was invented, evangelism without proper instruction on eternal torment was unheard of. It appears that evangelism changed following the death of that great New England preacher, Jonathan Edwards. Little changes, given 250 years, leave us with grave distortions. Again, admitting to sin, and I mean admission without contrition, is of little to no value. It's pitiful that demons are capable of trembling and our listeners are not. Our listeners are not capable either, in part, due to a lack of honesty on our part. To know a man must face an eternity of unspeakable misery and then to hide that truth from him is despicable. Before I renew my examination of the Bridge Illustration's A, B, C's, please take one more look at its cut-rate repentance. Now, permit me to give you repentance, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

*Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine of whereof is to be preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ. By it a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous Law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.*

*... None may expect pardon without it ...*

*As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation;  
so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.*

*... it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins particularly."*

Repentance and faith are truly gifts from God. The sight, true sight, of sin is due to God's grace as well. Oh how I bless the day I could see my danger and the filthiness of who I was and what I'd done. My heavy chest hampered my breathing. I grieved, and then I saw that mercy was possible, even for me. Personally, I feared that I would not keep my commitment to follow, so I hesitated to beg for mercy. I spent one long night counting the cost involved in following Christ, the loss of friends as well as the loss of the way I made money. But my new heart could only see rest in begging for forgiveness and forsaking all else to follow Jesus.

**The Bridge Illustration errs egregiously in selling admit, believe and commit.** I truly wish I didn't have to write that, but I do owe you the truth. If you have evangelized with this formula, I know how difficult you may find it to dispose of the formula, but you must. Folks, this formula produces "cheap grace". Please do not peddle it any longer. Please God, not yourself, your pastor or your friends. You may snap back at me, "Bill, God has given me success at times using this formula!" I am pleased you snapped back at me. Allow me to repeat and reinforce



## Truth-Telling to a Fallen World: Christian Thought and Evangelism

*“There is wisdom required to suit things to the capacities and conditions of poor souls, to make dark things plain, and hard things easy...but they must suit all their discourses to the conditions and capacities of poor creatures, or else all will be lost: time lost, pains lost, God lost, Heaven lost, and souls lost forever.”*

*Thomas Brooks*

You will quickly determine nine things:

- 1) I will primarily be discussing evangelism.
- 2) I will be examining the formulaic evangelism prevalent today, and I will be asking you if it is Biblical.
- 3) I will be suggesting that a return to a more Puritan type of evangelistic thought is far better than all alternatives, because it is Biblical.
- 4) I have tweaked the Puritan approach in light of the differences in cultures between 1650 England and the United States of America in 2025.
- 5) My thoughts on discussions from *Atheists Say the Darndest Things* are equally helpful here. At least I hope they are.
- 6) I am but a common man speaking to people just like me. If I ask you to know a four or five syllable word or concept, it is because I think it is essential you know it.
- 7) Evangelism, for me, is the whole counsel of God for the whole man.
- 8) I find memorized, contrived, decision-driven, narrowly-compartmentalized, evangelistic sales pitches to be unBiblical.
- 9) I see every human being as an individual created by God to be unique. This causes me to abhor formulaic evangelism that is built upon the notion that we are all the same and therefore should be approached in exactly the same way. This foolishness allows for a “one-shoe-fits-all” evangelism to be sold.

Perhaps you can now better understand why the title isn’t simply “Evangelism”. The whole counsel of God includes all manner of Christian thought and what I call truth-telling. I will expand on that later, but for now when I state that the Gospel is the person and work of Christ, you should assume that any verse from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21 may be utilized in a conversation or discussion to evangelize. You should also assume that topics like Providence, death, dreams, the new birth, Christ’s kingdom, holiness, glorification, Hell and especially the proclamation that Jesus is Lord will naturally enter normal conversations. Christians are to be light-givers, something you will tire of me repeating. I will do so, because I want all Christian thought and all Christian truth-telling to be totally reliant on the Holy Spirit, the true evangelist.





I plead with you to abandon both the Romans Road formula and the Bridge Illustration formula. They espouse “**cheap grace**”. These formulas seek “decisions” from ignorance, which history has proven, produce “gospel-hypocrites”/ “counterfeit sheep” who only “feel” they belong to Christ.

As I conceded earlier, God has, from time to time, made use of these formulas to truly awaken and convert souls. However, as I also said earlier, it is certain that many souls have followed the ABC’s of these formulas and have ended up unforgiven, with only a faith in their faith to rely on. These will hear one day, when it is too late:

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’  
shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven,  
but he who does the will of my Father in Heaven.”  
Matthew 7:21*

I can assure you that there are no folks more difficult to give light to than those who are “cheap grace” converts. They often stubbornly cling to the false assurance they were given the day they parroted a formulaic prayer. The Romans Road formula and the Bridge Illustration trivialize what is precious. Forsake them.

Additionally, all formulaic evangelism paves a path for men like Rick Warren. Here is a quote from this purveyor of very common but perverse formulaic evangelism.

“I believe you can lead anyone to Christ if you just find the right felt need.”

Mr. Warren is merely one of thousands who are selling such dung. Felt need? Felt need??? Rick Warren believes in a man-centered Christianity. Nothing is more unBiblical. Rick should be ashamed, but I assure you he is not. You may say, “Bill, you are too harsh, and you are being unchristian.” I am neither. Rick will lead eternal souls to Hell with such twaddle. Getting a man to repeat a formulaic prayer based on a “felt need” is not merely unBiblical, it is anti-Biblical.

If I have persuaded you to forsake formulaic evangelism, then please go back and look at the “plain talk” manner of the Puritans and Jonathan Edwards - theirs was a Biblical approach to truth-telling, the giving of Christian thought and evangelism. They did not delude themselves regarding the depravity and darkness of the man they were addressing. They strove to be faithful light-givers, and they trusted that God would prove a life-giver to those He had chosen to give life to.

Please remember, in the end, that all truly born-again followers of all ages have truly been **conquered by grace.**



## To God Alone be the Glory

Please, let's you and I, amidst this age of cancel culture, burgeoning Atheism, and Biblical illiteracy, forsake "easy believism" and commit ourselves to building up lifelong disciples whose entire beings, minds, hearts, affections and wills are devoted to Christ.

Let us not exchange "amazing grace" for "bargain-basement decisionalism". First John, chapter 4, verse 19 states,

*"We love Him because He first loved us."*

We are a part of the greatest love story ever told. Without meaning to, these formulas demand that we abandon "by grace alone" and "by Christ alone". I, for one, will not. I hope you will defend these truths as well.

I will now proceed to the "how to" of evangelism as I see it today. I think it's best if I switch to a question and answer format between me and my bride, Lois.

## A CONVERSATION WITH MY BRIDE

**Lois:** Bill, you have destroyed my view of mankind. You've convinced me it's impossible to convert a man who is in love with his sin and his darkness.

**Bill:** It is the Bible that has destroyed your errant view of mankind, not old Bill. The Bible destroyed my errant view of mankind 40 years ago as well.

**Lois:** So why even evangelize?

**Bill:** First, the Lord commanded us to, and that settles that. Second, souls are precious, and Hell is endless and terrifying. Also, nothing is as beautiful and wondrous as an eternity in Christ's presence. Lastly, love for our neighbor compels us to do what is in his soul's best interest. Also, we evangelize knowing that all who belong to Christ are not in the fold. How do we know? When the last soul chosen by God is in the fold, this world will end.

**Lois:** Okay, but what works?



Bill: I'd rather you'd ask how a man can ever be saved from Hell. But since you asked "what works," I will tell you how "salvation works," that is, how it is brought about. The Bible is clear. If you need to, go back to the section that contains all the verses that explain what a wicked man is like. All men before the new birth are blind, wicked, depraved, and love darkness. They hate God and they hate the light. All of them are God's enemies.

The most important thing for us to keep in mind is that we can save no one. But, you and I can be people of the Book, and we can pray more earnestly than we ever have, remembering that we strive for one goal. That is, **we strive to be faithful**. God will reward us if we are. We will hear "well done, my faithful servants." **God alone can save a man. God alone can change a heart. God sovereignly changes the hearts He decreed to change before one star twinkled in the heavens.**

Lois: But, doesn't who gets saved from Hell depend upon who listens to our faithful Bible talk?

Bill: Listen closely now, suppose you and I faithfully explain to a man what he is like, and we also explain to him that Christ alone can save him. Suppose the man is **awakened to his danger** and speaks of his twin brother who has also only walked in darkness. We suggest we all go talk with the twin. Brother #1 is grateful and agreeable. We discuss their plight, God's justice, the cost of discipleship, and the beauty of Christ. Sound good?

Lois: Yes, is this all in one night?

Bill: It could be, but normally we would meet several times for a period of time. Let me give us a bit of advice from J.I. Packer. He says,

"Evangelism must be rather conceived of as long-term enterprise of patient teaching and instruction, in which God's servants seek simply to be faithful in delivering the Gospel message and applying it to human lives, and leave it to God's Spirit to draw men through this message in His own way, at His own speed."

Lois: All of my life I've been taught that I should try to get a quick "decision" from people I evangelize, and you're telling me that what I was taught is wrong, right?

Bill: The Scripture is telling you that you were taught incorrectly, not me. I'm just the messenger, the message is God's. Let me ask you, is what Packer's prescribing, the





process of teaching Bible truths over a period of time evangelism?

Lois: Hmmm... I think you want me to say yes, but I am used to just saying that Jesus died for your sin, and God loves you, and wants a good and abundant life for you.

Bill: I understand. I was taught the same thing, but I've come to see that God normally has people, like our twin brothers, be taught many Bible truths so that they can comprehend how lost they are, how certain death, judgement, and torment are, and how hopeless their plights are. Then, when the God-man, the Savior, is presented, perhaps they may realize that He alone can save, because He alone can give them the righteousness they need, and He alone can die for their sins. Can you see that all such truth-telling and explanation of Christian thought (doctrine) are parts of the evangelizing of the whole man by the whole Scripture?

Lois: Maybe, but you actually emphasized "perhaps" in your explanation. That usually means "uh -oh" to me.

Bill: I think I do it automatically, but I'm glad I did, as it is "uh-oh" time. Suppose we thoroughly immerse the twin brothers in Bible truths. Let's suppose we saturate them. Do we then ask the twins for a "decision" about the facts we gave them, meaning, do they believe Jesus was the Son of God and was capable of dying for their sins? Or do we also ask them if they have counted the cost of "deciding" to follow Jesus? Additionally, do we ask them if they can see that they must perish in their sins if Jesus, the only one capable of saving them, doesn't save them?

Lois: So, you make a distinction between making a "decision" and making a "decision to follow Christ, no matter the cost of being a Christ follower."

Bill: Yes, the second type of decision takes real thought. Ponder these verses from Luke 9:23-27:

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me,  
let him deny himself,  
and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.  
For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.  
For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world,  
and is himself destroyed  
or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My  
words, of him, the Son of Man will be ashamed  
when He comes in His own glory, and in*



*His Father's, and of the holy angels."*

What is clarifying for me is that being a Christian is radical and costly. Just before Jesus uttered these words, Jesus told his disciples that He must suffer many things, be rejected by the Jewish authorities, be killed, and be resurrected. **Following Christ is not a decision to be made lightly.**

Lois: That is heavy. I am not sure I've taken it seriously. I just read through it quickly.

Bill: I have as well. But, it's sobering if you read it slowly. So, the point is "decisionalism" - also at times called "invitationalism" - which is in vogue today, is not Biblical. I do know that speedy conversions are possible. I'm thinking of the thief on the cross and Zacchaeus, for example, but exceptions do not make the rule, they are exceptions to the rule.

Lois: But I do know many "exceptions", people who didn't count the cost but decided and followed.

Bill: I know them as well, but that God saves someone **in spite of** "cheap grace Decisionalism" does not mean they were saved **because of** "cheap grace" decisionalism. Misrepresenting the Scriptures about the cost of discipleship is wicked. Also, please remember that the "cheap grace" converts we know must persevere to the end. Otherwise, they will prove to have only appeared to have been Christian converts. When persecution arises, many will fall away.


Lois: I know, I professed to be a Christian for 40 years, then God opened my eyes to see that I wasn't truly a Christian. If I had died I would have gone to Hell. So, I am no defender of "cheap grace" decisions based on the drive to get people to make "professions of faith".

Bill: **The old axiom is, not all professors are possessors.** Many professors will hear Jesus say, "I never knew you." It's best to recall that **the great commission commands us to make disciples, not professors.** Are you ready for another "uh-oh" moment?

Lois: Not really, but I am sure you're determined to give me one regardless of what I say. It's why I love you so... I think.

Bill: I will take that as a "please, Honey, I can't wait." (Back to the twin brothers) After thorough instruction, twin #1 has decided he'd rather have this world. Twin #2 has





decided that this world is fleeting, and he has known great sorrow for his sin. He also has seen his sin so clearly that he cannot see himself as a candidate for mercy. Why would God pity him, he asks? Twin #2 remembers our discussion about “justification by faith,” but he thinks I could have been clearer. What should we do?

Lois: First of all, twin #2 is right. You breeze through these things at times. Can you simplify it for him and your bride?

Bill: Yes, ma’am, I am happy to explain “justification by faith,” but let me tell you what I am going to say to twin #2. I am going to tell twin #2 to cry out to God for a new heart and mercy. I will also instruct him to do what he is capable of doing. He is capable of Bible study, church attendance, crying out to God for a new birth, and forsaking sin. I will implore twin #2 to sinfully seek God. When I say, “sinfully seek”, I’m reminding twin #2 and us that all he does before he is sovereignly re-created is sinful. He cannot truly seek after God, because his heart is wicked, but twin #2 can sinfully seek for mercy. Twin #2 must do all he can do, understanding that all he can do is non-meritorious. I remind you that seeking selfishly is sinfully seeking. But, sinfully seeking is better than not sinfully seeking. I will discuss this more fully later.

But the really good news is that twin #2 is awakened to his soul’s danger.

Oh, by the way, our story ends with God sovereignly re-creating twin #2. Actually, God had already, I think, re-created twin #2 prior to the conversation wherein he spoke of being unworthy. God had sovereignly used what we said, and the Holy Spirit had regenerated twin #2, he was born again. I might be wrong about the timing, but I believe his fruit will prove twin #2 to have been awakened, enlightened, illuminated (born again). Remember, all who are justified have been born again. They will also, one-hundred percent of the time, be sanctified and glorified. God showed mercy to another soul He did not owe mercy to. He is altogether glorious. So, tell me how you would explain justification since I’m not clear enough about it?


Lois: Wah, wah, wah. No sympathy should be expected from me. But I guess I’d say justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.

Bill: What you’ve said is absolutely true but it doesn’t adequately define “justification”.

Lois: Do I, truthfully, need to get this?

Bill: Yes you do, the dispute over justification was the cause of the Protestant Reformation. The world changed. Roman Catholicism’s error concerning how a man is justified by





God has damned millions, so, yes, you need to be clear about how a just God can declare a wicked man to be just. I do hope you also realize that if Rome is right, you and I are damned forever. Seem important now? Look, justification has to do with the justice and righteousness of God. God is the Supreme Judge of mankind, so we know His judgement will be perfect. It is beautiful that God is just, but it can be harrowing as well, because being just means that God is certain to punish the wicked, all of mankind who are not re-created.

Lois: One thing I've never asked figures in here, I think. When God forgives sins, does He then forget sins?

Bill: No, God has a perfect memory, so He doesn't forget my sins like you're imagining. He forgets by not holding my sins against me ever again, because Jesus paid for and suffered for my sins fully on the cross. This forgiveness is part of justification. The question we must consider is, how can unjust Bill be justified or be considered just in God's sight? Nothing is more important than this. I need to be reconciled to God—or else. So, I need my sins to be forgiven, and I need perfect righteousness. That righteousness can only be found in Christ.

Lois: Because He has always been righteous?

Bill: No, this righteousness is distinct from the righteousness Jesus has from all eternity. **Christ achieved perfect righteousness by His life of perfect obedience.** Remember, Jesus is the God-Man. The God-Man earned this righteousness. Christ lived a sinless life. Think about Hebrews 4:15:

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize  
with our weaknesses,  
but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

The Second Adam did what the First Adam could not. God transfers righteousness from Christ's account to the account of everyone who truly believes. God counts it as my righteousness and yours because we are "in Him", meaning we are in union with Christ. Love is the distinguishing feature of this union. Our marriage is the proper way to consider this union. This righteousness is "imputed" to us. Don't confuse "imputation" with "infusion", which is the Roman Catholic error. Imputation is Biblical and infusion is unbiblical and imaginary. I do think it is wise to view a born again man or woman as someone wearing the robe of righteousness Christ has given him or her.

Lois: So I am justified by imputed righteousness?



Bill: Yes, but there is a two-part justification. There is a double transfer, a double imputation. My sin and yours were transferred to Christ on the cross. Jesus hadn't sinned. He was the unblemished lamb. The full wrath of God was poured out on Christ because my sin and yours were imputed to Him. They were legally and justly transferred to Christ. Justice was fully and perfectly satisfied. In addition, Christ's righteousness was transferred, imputed, to us!

Lois: That is beautiful. God justly forgives my sins because Christ is punished for them, and the righteousness, perfect righteousness, I need is reckoned to be mine. Am I right?

Bill: Yes, you are, my love. In fact, you were right when you stated that justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. In other words, a justifying faith is not a dead faith.

Lois: Works, right? That's what we are talking about?

Bill: Yes. **Now I'm not talking about works that have merit.** Protestants do not believe in meritorious works, that is the Catholic error.

Lois: But we do "good works," right?

Bill: When we say "good works" we mean good in a relative sense. "Good" definitely does not mean "perfect", and meritorious works done by men is a damnable idea.

**But true Christians have a faith that produces good works, all the while knowing they are not perfect, meritorious works.** Yet, if a man says I have faith, and I find that no works follow, I know the man has made a false profession of faith. Frankly, this is usually the man who has been sold "cheap grace decisionalism". He professes to belong to Christ, and then he lives like a devil and sins as he pleases. If this man dies without true repentance, he gets the torment he has earned. True converts, justified folks, will manifest the fruits of a changed life. **This faith is a "living" faith, not a "dead" faith.** Lastly, as I said before, possession of faith matters, not mere profession of faith.

Lois: So, justification, as the Bible teaches it, is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone, as works will necessarily follow. It's a case of good trees producing good fruit, right?

Bill: No wonder I love you. You stated it beautifully. Let's take a break. Then I will give you the "uh-oh" I promised. Here is a hint - it has to do with why twin #1 chose not to follow Jesus and twin #2 did.



## Why Doesn't Everyone I Speak with or Witness to Come to Saving Faith?

Bill: Okay Lois, let's discuss the surprise we felt when twin #2 listened, was moved when he saw what a wretched sinner he was, and begged us to tell him there was hope for him to be forgiven.

Lois: I was caught off guard. I felt certain that twin #1 had been stung by the truth the first time we met him. He was under conviction, don't you think?

Bill: I do. But, it's a reminder that **being convicted by the Holy Spirit of sin is not the same as being converted by the Spirit**. Twin #1 felt guilt, but he was not brought to repentance by it. Twin #2 was convicted, shaken, awakened, and illumined in the way only the Holy Spirit can.

Lois: It still seems odd that twin #1 didn't come to Christ.

Bill: Actually, twin #1 walking away made me revisit what I know about mankind. Because men so love their darling sins and darkness, they suppress the truth, as Romans, Chapter One says. **What is actually startling is that even one sinner has ever turned from his beloved sins.** These twins remind us of the Bible's famous twins from Romans, Chapter Nine, Jacob and Esau. Rebecca conceived, and Scripture informs us that:

*The children not yet being born,  
nor having done any good or evil,  
that the purpose of God according to election might stand,  
not of works but of him who calls,  
it was said to her, the older shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob I have loved,  
but Esau I have hated.*

*What shall we say then?  
Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!  
For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever  
I will have mercy ... so then it is not of Him who wills,  
nor of Him who runs, but of God who shows mercy... Therefore  
He has mercy on whom He wills,  
and whom He wills He hardens...*





*does not the potter have power over the clay..?*

*Romans 9:11-18,21*

Lois: I know it's scriptural that all of us are so wicked that if God didn't intervene and give the new birth, that is, regenerate some, not a single soul would ever leave his/her beloved darkness. Though I've bowed my knee to this Bible truth, I still don't rejoice in it.

Bill: You should. I am sympathetic, but if you truly believed that man is as wretched and depraved as the Scripture reports, you would exult over the news that one soul repented by the grace and mercy of God.

Lois: I agree, and I know that God can choose to give mercy to Jacob and not to Esau. I know it is merciful, and I know it's righteous, but I'm still troubled by it.

Bill: One thing is certain, if the Bible didn't teach the idea that God must intervene without a sinful creature's permission and make the sinful creature willing, so that he willingly seeks and follows Christ, I could never have imagined it. The Bible is startlingly dogged in its attempt to have us, sinful and deceived creatures that we are, surrender to the truth that we are, by nature, cesspools of sin. I was drunk with the idea that mankind was basically good, and I will quickly admit that. I had too high a view of mankind. In fact, I was rather mulish about it for years.

Lois: So, this is how I understand it, let me know if I veer off course.

- A) All men are born in sin and deserve eternal punishment because they are born in sin, thanks to Adam.
- B) All men suppress the truth that may be known about God because they truly love sin and darkness.

God calls out to them by nature and by the law written on their hearts, their consciences, but they stick their proverbial fingers in their ears and cover their eyes, proving that they hate the light and hate God. I guess I should add that they are God's enemies and wish God did not exist.

- C) **God then shines a divine and supernatural light on some**, regenerates some (the new birth from above), and makes them willing to come to Christ. I know, I know, and once made willing, they come for mercy and forgiveness because the new birth enables them to see and desire the Kingdom for the first time.
- D) I guess God has you and me speak to people about life, Christian thought, what they are like, and the abilities they have and don't have.

But, I'm still confused. Why does God have us speak to people who hate truth



and light when we know for sure no one will hear us if God withholds His supernatural light? God could do it all without us, right?

Bill: You did wonderfully in your explanation. By the way, God mercifully sends us, former darkness dwellers and darkness lovers, to others. We, now freed from sin and the captivity of Satan, want desperately for others to be set free to be slaves of God. Slavery to sin is a horrific state to live in. It's a wonderful truth that we, the formerly enslaved, are heralds of truth to the presently enslaved. From slavery to final judgement is every man's story who doesn't come to Christ, and when I'm thinking rationally, it turns my stomach. We should say that in our own cases, someone planted, someone watered, and God gave the increase. **God alone conquered me**, and I am, and forever shall be, grateful for His conquering grace. **God came to me, that I might come to Him.** God could do all of this without any of us, but eternal wisdom knows best. God, the beloved First Cause, normally brings about salvation through our words. We are the second cause (more about this later). But for now, all glory belongs to and forever shall belong to God alone for any man's salvation. God bestows the divine and supernatural light on some and withholds it from others. He owes the divine and supernatural light to no one.

Lois: Does Romans 9:18 bother you at all, the hardening part I mean?

Bill: Let's say goodnight for now. I want to be thoughtful when I answer your questions about hardening, as most who read my answer will be startled to learn that God sometimes hardens sinners who are already hardened.

Lois: Let's go, but I also want to move on to what I am to say to lost people. I feel like the formula I've used my entire life no longer makes sense, but I don't want to sew my mouth shut either. However, it is hard for me to move on without a better understanding of hardening as I do sense that you feel it's a concept that is foreign to almost everyone. I have heard you say to someone, when talking about their soul, that they are either being enlightened or hardened by the conversation you are having. I cannot imagine ever saying that.

Bill: Alright then, let's make some coffee and continue. I think I will reply somewhat differently. We are to tell everyone Christian thought and Christian thinking when it's natural and not strained. When the opportunity arises, we discuss a man's depravity, and we present Christ's person and works as a man's only hope for reconciliation with God. We are also frank about the judgment and Hell. We offer all of this and Christ as the only mediator between God and man indiscriminately. Sometimes what we say will be used by God to warm hearts. At other times, what we say will be used by God to convict a heart. At other times, a soul will be converted. At yet another time, what we say to





someone will harden them. When you examine a case like the Pharaoh's, at the time of the Exodus, you do see that Pharaoh saw miracles and yet he turned away.

Let me be clear about hardening. **When the Holy Spirit withdraws, a man like the Pharaoh hardens. God does not create fresh evil in the man's heart, but He does give the man over to his already evil desires. It is an act of judgment.** The Holy Spirit's withdrawal from a man will inevitably find the man's heart hardening. The man, in truth, hardens himself. Can you see that?

Lois: So, God doesn't step in and harden a man, it's more like when the Holy Spirit withdraws and stops convicting a man, the man hardens because his love for his beloved darkness increases, and his hatred for God increases. Right?

Bill: That is succinctly stated. Right now I am watching a man repair a sidewalk in front of a building that will become your new shop. His helper keeps stirring the concrete mix. Why? It is the nature of concrete, if left alone, to harden. (I so wish I could remember where I first heard this example, so I could rightly attribute it, but I cannot.) Thus it is with the human heart. If left alone, due to sin, the heart will harden. If God withdraws common, restraining grace, the sinner quickly plunges into the sin he so loves. God, in effect, gives sinners over to their desires.

*"...therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth for a lie, and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator...For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lusts for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."*

*Romans 1:24-27*

Paul goes on to add that, "God gave them over to a debased mind." He then lists a litany of sinful behaviors. Without God's restraining grace, sinners' hearts harden and chaos and insanity blossom into wicked actions. Hardening is a judgment.

I remind you, that God did not create or coerce evil, He simply allowed the men and women Paul mentioned above to have what they desired. But to ensure we keep our balance, I must remind you that God's power, wisdom, and goodness are on display. His wisdom is unsearchable and undeniable. Everything that comes to pass is in some way ordained by God's sovereign will. That includes the fall of the human race and the judicial hardening of the Pharaoh. For God to allow it, God must choose it. When





choosing to allow what He has the power to prevent, then God has ordained it. Furthermore, it is wise, and it manifests His power and goodness. God has holy ends. Yet, man sins, not God, who cannot be either the author or approver of sin. The Pharaoh's hardening is infinitely wise.

Romans 9:17 and 18 state,

*"... for this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore, He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills to harden.*

"I have raised you up", in the passage, might better be understood as "I appointed". The Pharaoh's fury is no hindrance to God's design, the deliverance of His people. God ordained the stubbornness of the Pharaoh that the staggering illustriousness of His power might be evidenced. God knew that the Pharaoh would barrel into his frenzied folly. God ordained him for this purpose.

Lois: I want to be precise. I know we covered this quickly before, but I also know that we all have a slowness about accepting what the Scripture is plainly and unapologetically teaching. God not only permitted the Pharaoh's hardening, but God designed the wonders, plagues, etc. that led to the Pharaoh's hardening. **ALL THE WONDERS AND PLAGUES WERE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S WRATH.** The Pharaoh's ruination (the ruination of the wicked) was ordained by the counsel and will of God. At the same time, the Pharaoh's obstinance is stunning, considering the display of power God was exhibiting to him. Pharaoh blocked out the light he badly needed, in order to do what he longed to do, stay in his darkness.

Bill: As I stated earlier, we do well to remember that God was imploring the Pharaoh to make peace with Him. The Pharaoh, instead, runs to his beloved darkness.

But, I want to be clear, the term, hardens, when applied to God in the Scriptures means more than mere permission. The Pharaoh's role and ruin are not only foreseen by God, but are ordained by His counsel and His will. By the way, you wanted to be precise above, and you were. Well done, my beloved.

The Eternal Potter knows best. Proud souls clamor about, and wise souls rest in this truth. God knows best and is perfectly just and wise. God's will is superb, though often hidden from dust like Bill Moore. I stand back and admire God's sovereignty. It is unwise to do otherwise. Isaiah 45:9 warns:



*Woe unto him who striveth with His Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, what makest Thou?*

A potsherd was a shard from a piece of broken pottery. Potsherds may strive against and argue with other potsherds, but not with the Potter. Though God's counsel is incomprehensible, it is perfect. I apologize for such a diatribe, but I cannot countenance mere clay critiquing the Potter. God may do what He wishes with His creation and His creatures. One final thought about the Pharaoh and his madness.

*The Lord has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.  
Proverbs 16:4*

**Lois:** So, how does this apply to my normal conversation with my niece, for example?

**Bill:** Let's think about a normal discussion between you and your niece. Your niece hears your words outwardly, externally. It is the internal hearing that God alone brings about. When we spread Christian truths indiscriminately, we term it a "general call" by God. When a "general call" is heard outwardly and inwardly, we term it an "effectual call". That means that the Holy Spirit makes it effective. The Spirit's call changes a man or a niece. An effectual call is different from a conviction of sin. An effectual call changes the entire man. Conviction pierces a man's heart, but an effectual call changes a heart completely. Regeneration has been used, historically, as a synonym for effectual calling.

Nevertheless, if the general call is heard and rebuffed, your niece is hardened to some degree. But, in God's providence, you may be sowing seed or watering seed. We simply must be faithful. God alone can give an increase.

**Lois:** For now, I think I see that if I am faithful in telling truths, I have done all I can. The Spirit alone decides if a hearer is softened, effectually called, or hardened against the truth.

**Bill:** That is beautifully stated. We are accounted as faithful by God, when we do all we can by prayer and truth telling.

**Lois:** So why doesn't God "effectually call" everyone?

**Bill:** Let's revisit Romans 9:21 once more. The Scripture is plain, the Eternal Potter may do whatever He wishes, whatever pleases Him, with His clay. As Romans 9:21 states:

*Does not the potter have power over the clay,*





*from the same lump to make one vessel for  
honor and another for dishonor?*

I reiterate, God is glorified by those He re-creates and shows mercy to. But God is equally glorified by the damnation of souls who would not come to the light, those who adamantly defied inducements to seek mercy. These rebels screamed, some outwardly and some inwardly, “No God for me!” These rebels are fairly judged and the wrath they’ve stored up, and no more, is justly doled out to them. I often sit and ponder why God would ever show mercy to even a single sinful rebel. It is very easy to understand why a wicked rebel, on the other hand, would be dispatched to Hell. Why shouldn’t the rebel get what he has earned? He vowed that God would be his enemy, normally by his actions and often by his words. Why should a King tolerate such a subject? The fool who scoffs at the notion of eternal and infinite misery today will one day prove to himself that it is real.


Lois: Does God in some way blind those who go to Hell?

Bill: No, they are born blind and love their darkness. All men, in fact, are born blind in the sense that no one seeks God righteously. Some grope, as all men in darkness do, but no one seeks God for the right reasons until he is born again from above. God passes by some of these men and **they get what they want, a few years of insanity which they mistake for freedom.** Other darkness lovers are made willing by God to see the light, and they are given faith and repentance. Remember, God shows mercy, righteously, to whom He wills. God also righteously passes by the others, and they obtain the reward they deserve. Justice is wonderful, do not mistake it. Likewise, mercy is both undeserved and beautiful. There is no unfairness with God.

Lois: Bill, don’t most Christians today disagree with you? I mean they think God peers down the corridors of time to see who will choose to follow Him and then He helps those people, right?

Bill: You are right, that view is prevalent today, but you should remember that Biblical ignorance has never been higher than it is today. God has never learned anything; God has always known all things. That truth makes “God peers down the corridors of time to learn something” as silly as it sounds. Foolish men are forever making God appear to be one of them. Men, calling themselves wise, persist in contradicting what God’s Word says. Romans 3 says no one does good and no one seeks after God. In spite of this, some men teach that man is basically good, loves to do good things naturally, and seeks after God. I am awestruck by such arrogance. Ephesians 2 says men are “dead” in sins and trespasses and born that way.





Then men sit at a table with me and say, “No, Bill, men are not dead as God says, they are only sick.” Again, the Bible is infallible and these men twist the Scriptures. They think themselves wise. Only fools would boldly distort the inerrant Word of God as these men do. When I explain this foolishness to them they seldom thank me, but once in a while...

Lois: Okay, I know you are right, this is what the Bible teaches. But here is my question, if the way we evangelize today is based on the mistaken idea that men don't really love darkness, I can't figure out how I'm supposed to evangelize them. You've robbed me of all the possible ways of speaking to fallen men about coming to Christ that I can think of.

Bill: My love, I've done no such thing. It's God, by His Scriptures, who has robbed you of all your old methods, but God has not robbed you of all the ways possible to speak about Christ. But, God insists that you now take a Biblical approach to fallen men.

Lois: I think I am truly confused about evangelism, and it's your fault.

Bill: I agree with you, it is my fault you are confused, and I am pleased you are. Let's consider what you've been told for 50 years. You've been told that you are to string together a few scriptures, out of context, so that you can drive someone to a “decision” for Christ when they know nothing of what it means to truly repent due to guilt and shame brought on by Holy Spirit conviction. I used to do the same, and I successfully manufactured a truckload of converts.

**The problem is, they were Bill's converts, not God's.** My converts weren't true converts. What I did is damnable, I abused precious souls because I ignored the Bible and listened to men who taught evangelism in a way the Bible didn't. But enough for now, you may wish to go back and revisit my examination of the Bridge Illustration formula and The Romans Road formula, the two most popular “evangelistic formulas” today. But for now, I'd like to ask you, is America today, a Christian nation?

Lois: It doesn't feel like it.

Bill: I agree. Pew Research shows that in the 1990's more than 90% of adults in the United States identified as Christians. By 2022, that percentage had shrunk to only 65%. Christianity is in rapid decline, and of course, everyone identifying as Christian will not prove to be a Christian as well. As silly as it is, the famous Atheist, Richard Dawkins, calls himself a “cultural christian” these days. Dawkins loves Christmas carols, the



beauty of cathedrals, etc. I suspect that many who call themselves Christians, like Dawkins, are merely “cultural christians,” or what some have called “sentimentalists.” In Europe, many countries find that a majority of people identify as non--religious. The trend is obvious, secularism, in all its forms, is ascending and Christianity is descending. Ours is a post-Christian world. At this time in history, the culture has changed dramatically and quickly.

**Christianity is now counter-cultural, as it has been for much of history. Today's culture is aggressively secular, and we feel it.**

I have found that we recoil at the idea that Christianity is now in retreat, but the facts are plain, this country is not the God-fearing nation it once was. I think that this decline was inevitable. Starting about 1830, Christian leaders began diluting historic Christianity to make it more palatable to the masses. **For 200 years, the church has been turning wine into water.** The watering down has steadily continued to this very day. We have consistently diluted the truth with the introduction of foreign and low-grade teaching coupled with poisonous, man-centered gibberish in an effort to put bottoms in the seats.

The Bible, on the other hand, constantly demands that anyone seeking to follow Jesus count the cost of being a disciple. One must forsake all, deny himself, and pick up his cross. A disciple must expect opposition from the culture and the main body of the Church. The Gospel is not in any way man-centered, it is God-centered.

The Bible clearly warns that suffering, ridicule, and persecution mark the normal Christian disciple's life. The road is narrow, and few find it. The Bible hasn't changed, but the Church has. The Church has assumed that God seeks large numbers. To bring that about, the Church sold its soul. Christianity has been transformed from a God-centered system of belief into a man-centered system of belief that is hardly distinguishable from the world's belief system. It is true, at the present time, that the Church and the world are nearly identical. Both have slogans, jargon, and truths that change from season to season and age to age.

I will limit myself, at this point, to the monstrosity we have created in my lifetime, the “cheap grace” formulaic hucksterism we call modern evangelism. Purveyors of “cheap grace” call mere professions conversions. I am appalled by the humbug passed off as Christian truth, in case you haven't noticed. There is a bright spot. Soon, when persecution arrives, the nominal Christians, who aren't Christians, will desert their pews, and I will delight in the truth that only the truly born-again disciples will remain. Then the Church will once again be God-centered and “decisionalism” will be recognized for what it is, another Gospel. So I rejoice in the tumult of these days, and I long for God's





winnowing of His Church.

Lois: Whew! I can tell that you needed to get that out. I will ask for details later. **I still wish to know how I'm supposed to evangelize.**


Bill: I will reiterate what I stated much earlier, the English Puritans, and others through the time of Jonathan Edwards in New England, were the folks who most clearly presented the Bible's truths to fallen human beings. **They confronted the whole man with the whole Bible.** They explained to people exactly how fallen, wretched, and hopeless they were. Then they explained the God-man, His history, His mission, and His glory. **Any subject could be broached, as the Puritans saw God's breath in every breeze, and His hand in every blacksmith's shop.** Even unbelievers had a fear of God's power, and God's providential power was understood to be the cause of hailstorms, good crops, starry nights, and untimely deaths. There were many Valiant-For-Truths in the age of the Puritans. Their lives didn't matter, God's cause did. A number were called on by God to die for Him.

Our time is not their time, but I have built my thoughts on their foundation, the one that they had built on Bible truths. I have tweaked a few things, but I believe in mirroring their plain talk and plain truth-telling. These men were unflinching in their belief in the infallibility of God's word. They were insistent on rightly dividing the word of truth. These men were fully capable of not only defending their beliefs, but were also well prepared to respond to the various alternative philosophies of their day. Every man in every age faces divergent beliefs, innovative philosophies, and troubling heresies. We would be wise to approach the defense of our beliefs and the battle with the prevailing cultural thought of our day with the same boldness, simplicity, and wisdom as these pillars of Protestantism did.

I have learned that the weakness inherent in the pseudo-atheist's understanding that I encounter is the door that is open for me to communicate with the new Atheism's aspiring disciples. That is, the open door is the very slogan-chucking we are all on the receiving end of in our daily lives. I have learned to make the slogan-chuckers defenders of their beliefs, their faith. *I make them apologists for their religion.* This is fertile ground, and it often opens the door to discussion.

In this cancel-culture era, these Atheistic prodigies do not permit a Christian defense of God's truth (I Peter 3:15). They not only don't care what a Christian thinks, they smugly parade their memorized, unoriginal slogans out as if they have presented you with a verbal Mona Lisa. As I've said on this website, we must engage unbelievers where they





are. The idea that God is a sham is not their original thought, it is a thought they've adopted and put forth as their own. Most folks are copies, few are originals.

Stunningly, the same is true for the pretend Christian disciple. The church has dumbed down Christian truth for him. **Now, our children, raised in church, know more praise songs than Scripture passages. Cheap grace decisionalism requires nothing of its converts, and that's exactly what the return has proven to be. Therefore, it is often more fruitful to inquire about a man's belief than it is to assume that he is well grounded in the basics of the faith. Our responses will then correct erroneous beliefs and fanciful notions as well as lay a proper foundation for true faith.**

Lois: Are you saying that we can't expect to discuss Christian truths with unbelievers because they cancel you after they shout their slogans at you?

Bill: Yes.

Lois: Are you also saying that scads of professing Christians aren't Christians, and that they know almost nothing of God's truths?

Bill: Yes.

Lois: This is depressing. No one wants to hear the truth, and the Church is in decline and will collapse, if you are correct.

Bill: Depressing? Not at all. I did say they don't want to hear the truth, but that doesn't mean we can't present the truth to them, only differently than we have in the past. Primarily, we need to communicate truths no less plainly than those Puritans did. Yes, the Church is in decline, and I do predict the total collapse of "cheap grace" Churches. That is thrilling news to me, the collapse of "cheap grace" Churches I mean.

Lois: I don't get it.

Bill: "Cheap grace" Churches are filled with professing Christians who have seldom heard true Biblical teaching. We, at this time, have the opportunity to tell the truth about God, His sovereignty, sin, death, judgement, Jesus, reconciliation, and the cost of discipleship to many poor souls who are starving for the old truths and sound doctrine. To be clear, I am not saying that everyone in a "cheap grace" Church isn't Christian, but I am saying many mere professors do fill their pews. Whether a true follower of Christ or a pretender, an examination of a man's belief system is fertile ground for a discussion.



Lois: But, you are saying that you think that the number of true Christians will be few in “cheap grace” Churches?

Bill: I fear so, and I hope that I am wrong. Perhaps I will prove to be mistaken. I do know this, God desires disciples who are truly devoted and armed with His truths.

Lois: So, if I am hearing you right, you’re saying that starting a conversation or discussion with someone by saying, “Why would God let you into His Kingdom if you died tonight?” or “Do you want to be saved” is a bad way to start a conversation? In your mind, are those questions to be discarded? And, I think you are saying that we should often be evangelizing members of Churches.

Bill: Correct. I’m saying that we should embrace the openings we have. In this age, that means we probe and discuss the doorways they leave open for us. Of course, I’m speaking in general. There may be a time when “What do you think about Jesus,” or “Do you want to be saved from Hell and sin’s power” fit in nicely. I’m simply beating the same drum, our repetitive slogans and questions must go, and yes, I am including formulaic, one-shoe-fits-all evangelism. We should also avoid approaches based on God’s benefits, etc. **We want to make disciples**, exactly what the great commission calls for.

Lois: Can you give me a few examples of what you might say?

Bill: Yes, but let’s begin with a visit to Acts, chapter 17. Paul, in these verses, encounters several different types of people. At Thessalonica, Paul, as was his custom, went to the synagogue and reasoned from the Scriptures with the Jews. Trouble ensued, and what Paul said regarding the “kingdom” was distorted by those who disagreed with Paul. We should expect the same. This distortion of the kingdom greatly troubled the authorities, and Paul moved on to Berea.

By verse 10 of chapter 17, we find Paul again in a synagogue of the Jews, this time in Berea. Paul again reasoned from the Scriptures. The Bereans were more fair-minded than the Thessalonians and “...they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

Let’s pause a moment. Paul, in both Thessalonica and Berea, found an audience of primarily Jewish listeners, and Paul proceeded to reason with them from the Scriptures. Why? Well, no matter how sound or unsound their reasoning was concerning the Scriptures, Paul’s listeners shared with Paul a foundational belief in the value and truthfulness of God’s Word. Paul knew his audience and Paul approached them as he





should have. Trouble followed for 50 miles to Berea, and the brethren escorted Paul to Athens.

Athens was different, far different from both Thessalonica and Berea. Athens was the leading city in Greece, and it was a great intellectual and cultural center. The city teemed with diverse thinkers and it also teemed with idol worshipers.

*“...his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore, he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him.”*

*Acts 17:16-18*

The diversity we spoke of was on full display. Once again, Paul began at the synagogue, but Paul was quickly reasoning with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the marketplace. My point is, Paul adapted his approach to his audience. We should be as wise. This approach eschews all things formulaic. Paul dealt with individuals within diverse groups, and Paul reasoned with each in the way he felt would be most effective, always keeping their beliefs in mind.

Our time closely mirrors what Paul encountered at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens, as today's landscape is filled with a variety of religions and philosophies as well.

Lois: Where it says “reasoned with them,” my Bible says, “disputed with them.”

Bill: I'm quite certain that the reasoning, at times, blossomed into disputation. This would have been a multi-participant back and forth. Paul likely asserted, in the power of the Spirit, that this Jesus, Mary's son, was promised long ago by the Prophets. He may have proclaimed that Jesus' life and death provided satisfaction for sin and that His resurrection brought righteousness. I imagine that Paul referred to Isaiah 53:4-8 and other Scriptures since he was reasoning with religious people, Jews.

In such a dispute, Scripture alone should have decided the issue. But, as is the case to this day, men give lip service to the authority of Scripture, and then when disputing, prove that it is not authoritative for them. I find this in all types of Churches today. If one reasons with Charismatics, for example, inside or outside the Church, one will find that Scripture's inviolable authority is often not revered as such. I have found this to be true in Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches and their members as well.





Do you imagine those Sabbath visits to the Synagogue were short or lengthy? Short visits would be a poor guess. Paul would have aimed at humbling these men, that their pride might be set aside, enabling them to embrace reconciliation and Christ's cross.

Does this sound like "cheap grace" decisionalism? Of course not. Do you suppose Paul had a rigid formula, like the Romans Road or the Bridge Illustration that he followed? That's absurd! PAUL WOULD HAVE SPOKEN AND RESPONDED TO OBJECTIONS RAISED OR QUESTIONS ASKED. Paul would have listened and replied, always taking his cue from what his audience said and the questions that were raised.

As I always say, "**How will I know what I will say next until I hear your reply?**" I may have a rough outline of where I hope a discussion will go, but that outline is meant solely to help me restore order to my thinking if a discussion goes far afield, as so often happens. Don't you imagine that Paul followed essentially the same line of thinking?

Do you think the tenor was placid? If you do, you must never have attended even a school board meeting where nothing important was being discussed. The Synagogue reasonings and or discussions would have been lively. By lively I mean the type of dispute that arises in a dog kennel when two new pit bulls, three new dobermans, and one old mastiff join the kennel on the same day. Certain of them believed. Many did not, and they remained in their beloved darkness even as the blinding afternoon sun was shining directly into their eyes and blazing through their minds.

An interesting note is that a multitude of religious Greeks joined them. Greek philosophers had obviously wearied some Greeks sufficiently, and they fled to Jewish thought for stability.

Lois: Well, that does make sense to me. Of course, it does help me if I imagine I'm invisible and standing in their midst listening when I read a section of the Bible that is describing a group setting.

Bill: Let's take a little closer look at Paul's approach in Athens. No stagnant, trite formula for Paul, and no haste to get a "decision" either. Paul sought to persuade his hearers that Jesus was on a mission and his life, death, and resurrection proved it. At Athens, Paul disputed in the Synagogue as was his practice. But daily, in the market, Paul disputed and conversed with folks who held all manner of philosophies and embraced myriad religions.

Epicureans faced off against Paul. These men were materialists, meaning there is no



supernatural for them. Atheism today has a slew of such men (perhaps I should have said a slough of such men). Epicureans are a branch on Hedonism's tree. The goal is and was pleasure, so escape from pain coupled with pleasure is a fuller way of thinking about this philosophy. Do you think that Paul began his discourse with these folks the very same way he dealt with a Synagogue full of devout or God-fearing Jews? Of course he didn't. Paul tailored his approach to his audience. We should do so as well.

Look, formulaic evangelism is foolishness, it always fails to look at individuals as individuals. Formulaic evangelism demonstrates, by its approach, that it views all folks as identical. How so? Think of getting a new job at a tire factory. Do you assume that you will speak the same way to everyone? Of course not, some are Spanish speaking, some are of a younger generation, and others are an older population suffering from arthritis. You see them as individuals. A canned evangelism repeats the same sentences, oblivious to individual differences. Acts 17 also mentions Stoics. These chaps aimed to meet pain, sorrow, and trials with a proverbial "stiff upper lip". Pain was met with little or no display of feelings and without complaint. A belief in fate accompanied this philosophy.

Let me weary you once more with my same question - do you think that Paul addressed the Stoics and the Epicureans, who featured warring philosophies, identically with a canned approach? Again, of course he didn't. Paul would listen, reply, listen, perhaps question and then wait for a response. At times he would have likely discussed only their worldly philosophies, and at times, he would have spoken of man, sin and Christ.

**Christian thought and talk is about truth-telling and necessarily includes the discussion of many subjects. Pain, pleasure, death, the supernatural, meaning in life, the crucifixion, and morality would all play a part in Paul's exchanges and reasonings. Would all of this be evangelistic in your eyes?**

Is it possible that Paul, despite his best efforts, was misunderstood?

*... some said "what does this babbler want to say?"  
others said, "he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,  
because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection."*

Acts 17:18

Paul, providentially, was invited to speak of these things on Mars Hill where a large audience was sure to be assembled. This crowd loved novelties of all types.

Lois: It's funny to think that Paul, as brilliant as he was, would be misunderstood. I get that





the people who didn't believe in the supernatural would hate any talk of the resurrection.

Bill: I bet you are right. Imagine yourself standing there, invisible again. The clamor, the sweat, and the foreign voices must have mixed to make it difficult for Paul to speak. But by the appointment and power of the Holy Spirit, Paul was magnificent. Let's stand in the front row and listen to Paul.

*“...men of Athens, I perceive that in all things  
you are very religious.”*

*Acts 17:22*

Paul went on to bring up an altar inscribed with “To The Unknown God”. He explained that he knew the unknown God. Paul continued.

*“... Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world  
and everything in it,  
since He is Lord of heaven and earth,  
does not dwell in temples made with hands...  
He gives to all life and breath, and all things...  
And has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings...  
For in Him, we live, and move  
and have our being, as also some of your poets have said, for we also are His  
offspring....  
we ought not to think that  
the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by man's devising.”*  
*Acts 17:23-29*


I bet Paul chose his words carefully when he said,

*“... these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands men  
everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day on which He will judge the world  
in righteousness by the man He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by  
raising Him from the dead.”*

*Acts 17: 30 & 31*

Does this sound like formulaic evangelism? Of course not, but is it truth-telling,  
Christian thought-giving, and evangelism? Certainly. Paul concluded with talk of  
repentance and judgement by Jesus who God resurrected. Some took the time to mock  
our friend, Paul. A few believed, and yet others asked to hear from him again. You were





there invisibly sweating and listening, right? Tell me, did Paul say more than Luke relates to us? Of course he did. This was undoubtedly a lengthy discourse. Was he interrupted? I'm uncertain. Was Paul sneered at throughout? I just don't know. Were there multiple distractions and a variety of mocking voices? I just don't know, but when I meet Paul, I intend to ask him. This seems a good time to remind us all of a note by John Calvin when commenting on Acts 13:28.

“Luke, in a few words, sets down, after his common custom, things more largely declared.”

In other words, Luke is summarizing and hitting key thoughts, Luke is not writing exhaustively of all that was said and taught that day.


Lois: I get it, formulaic evangelism is unBiblical and does not value individuality. It's designed to elicit quick decisions from people by hawking the benefits of God. But, didn't I “decide” when I came to faith in Christ?

Bill: As a little girl, your parents spoke often of Hell, and they herded you into a false profession of faith. (There is nothing wrong about telling children about Hell; it is the herding them into a profession of faith by talking of Hell that alarms me). When God graciously opened your eyes through regeneration 50 years later, **you decided to follow Christ**. That little girl was sold “cheap grace decisionalism”, and it is damnable in that it produces a forest of false professors who think they are born again, when in fact, they aren't. They are still in their sins. Yours is a life that reflects that you now understand that a true following of Jesus entails suffering, self-denial, and cross-bearing. **Yours is a costly grace**. All glory be to our most gracious Lord.

Lois: Bill, you have bludgeoned me into submission, and I regret selling “cheap grace”. But, I'm asking again, **since I've jettisoned the counterfeit, what am I to do to share the truth and faith?**

Bill: **Okay, but it's important to me that you understand the approach I'm recommending.**

- 1) Remind yourself that no two people are alike; God created each of us, and each of us is unique
- 2) Truth-telling, Christian thought giving, and evangelizing are often long-term endeavors
- 3) Patience and reliance on the Holy Spirit are essential (He is the Great Evangelist)
- 4) We must strive to be faithful witnesses, teachers, and listeners

- 
- 5) We must never forget that we are light-givers, not life-givers - God alone can do that
  - 6) We seek disciples, not quick decisions
  - 7) Saturate your life with prayer (I am speaking to myself here)
  - 8) Take the panoramic view - at times you plow up hard ground, at other times you plant, at other times you water - God alone gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:6-8)
  - 9) Never forget how great the unbeliever's darkness is and how deeply he or she loves the darkness – sin has complete mastery and dominion over him or her
  - 10) Be sober-minded; in the wisdom of God, sometimes God will use what you say to harden hearts - do not quail at this, submit to eternal wisdom
  - 11) Remind yourself of the things that every unbeliever loves or fears: death, fame, ease, riches, losses, failure, frailty, final judgement, and Hell ( all are starters for fruitful evangelistic conversations which often morph into discussions). Topics that might not, at first glance, appear fruitful and evangelistic often turn out to be both. In an Acts 17 environment, a discussion of compassion and my lack of it, at a dinner, if I'm earnest and not being a game-player, will often provide for thought-provoking discussion. Any discussion of ideas, will, when I mull a topic over, reveal my Christian viewpoint. If you don't believe me, tell your friends, at dinner, that you sometimes wonder at your lack of compassion. Tell them what you think is hindering you, and ask what they think. If you are not sincere, don't bother, as you will disgrace yourself.
  - 12) Be intent on "playing music, making music," your music - eschew cookie-cutter formulas - be you - be authentic—by playing music. I mean don't simply play the notes you learned, relax and play your music, relying on the Holy Spirit to be with you while you are being you - your music will be different than mine as we are each uniquely made.

Please permit me two J.I. Packer quotes before I proceed. The second of which I mentioned previously:

“All devices exerting psychological pressure in order to precipitate “decisions” must be eschewed, as being, in truth, presumptuous attempts to intrude into the province of the Holy Ghost.”

“Evangelism must rather be conceived of as a long-term enterprise of patient teaching and instruction, in which God's servants seek simply to be faithful in delivering the Gospel message and applying it to human lives. Leave it to God's Spirit to draw men to faith through this message,





in His own way, at His own speed.”

Before we discuss #11 above, which I’m anxious to do, as I find it often to be a place to find my response to the first sentence in a conversation/discussion, I want to persuade you that we live in the Acts 17 culture I spoke rather quickly of earlier. Acts 17 finds Paul interacting with synagogue attendees at Thessalonica and Berea. These were God-fearing folks in the main, not too dissimilar to the Acts 2 listeners. These were people who believed in God but had to be taught about Jesus. We are no longer living in an Acts 2 culture, as Ken Hamm tagged it. Acts 2’s culture was predominantly God-fearing. Our culture has much more in common with the culture in Acts 17. The group I refer to as the Acts 17 culture are the folks Paul encountered at Athens in verses 15-34 of Chapter 17 of Acts. That is, we live in the midst of a culture that is no longer predominately God-fearing. We are daily assaulted by Atheism, pseudo-Atheism, Materialism, Transgenderism, Hedonism, Moralism, and a host of other diverse philosophies. **So, let’s embrace the Acts 17 culture. Even the all too prevalent “cancel culture” affords ample opportunities for us to proclaim Christ’s truths.**

I’m no expert, but neither am I totally inexperienced at penetrating today’s darkness. **We have truth and the power of the Holy Spirit - why should I fear any man, any mob, or any moment?**


Lois: That makes sense. In Athens, Paul faced many varied philosophies, and he began by recognizing, for example, how religious the people were while in their darkness. Actually, they were superstitious and given to idolatry. So, Paul doesn’t begin with Jesus as he addresses them, but he ends up discussing Jesus, His resurrection, and the judgement. This discourses’s summary, which is what Luke’s account is, shows that Paul has no rigid formula that he adheres to. Paul addresses the Jews one way, the Stoics another way, and the Epicureans yet another way.

Bill: Exactly. There were Athenians and foreigners in the marketplace as well as on Mars Hill. It is a bit ironic that Mars was the Roman god of war, don’t you think?

Lois: I’ll bet the irony wasn’t lost on Paul, he was at war with the darkness.

Bill: Yes, he was. It is the marketplace that intrigues me the most, next to Pauls’s brilliant cruise through creation, history and judgement on Mars Hill. Paul understood that those people, at that time, the Athenians and foreigners, *“spent their time in nothing else but either telling or hearing some new thing.”* I want us to see that Paul, in other passages, speaks differently to Jews than he does to gentiles. This is what you and I do every





single day if we are wise. Not to do so is to fail in life, business, and personal relationships, as well as in truth-telling to a fallen world. A thoughtful look at Paul's approach ought to suffice when it comes to forsaking any and all formulaic approaches.

Lois: Okay, but since I am personally persuaded that ours is an Acts 17 culture, can we now take a peek at #11 above? You see, #11 speaks of items every unbeliever fears, like death, ease, riches, loss of riches, failure, fame, frailty, final judgement, and Hell. I can find a few of the items on the list in Luke's account, but I am curious, what items on the list do you see addressed by Paul at Athens?

Bill: First off, my list is not meant to be a list of all the possible items unbelievers might be fearful of or hold too dearly. It's merely the short list I refer to in my head if I start to become distracted in a conversation or discussion. At Athens, I would say Paul touched on death, ease, loss of riches, failure, frailty, final judgement, and Hell.

Lois: But, that is the entire list except for fame and riches.

Bill: Precisely, but even fame is delivered a blow by Paul. Please remember that we have Luke's factual but abbreviated version of all that Paul said. I can easily see that death, one's frailty, the final judgement, final punishment, and Hell traveled together, and I know from experience as well that they still travel together. Failure always ties in when you point out to a man or woman that he or she is wrong about anything. When Paul told the philosophers he knew the unknown God and went on to give details, his listeners understood Paul was saying they were either ignorant or wrong. That would have been a blow to prideful men whose fame lay in their philosophies. Paul was saying that they failed. Sir Frances Bacon's quote on fame says, "Fame is like a river that beareth up things light and swollen, and drowns things weighty and solid."

Paul would have loved Bacon's thought. In conversation, I often paraphrase this quote and add a thought from Alexander Pope that asks, "What's fame? A life on another's breath." It would do us all good to remember that the audience that is praising us is a dying audience. Why would that audience's applause be sought and valued?

Lois: Whoa, I don't think I'm following you well. Neither of those quotes turned a light on for me. What do you mean?

Bill: Okay, I apologize. At times, I'm walking around inside my head as if you are walking in there with me. All I meant by using the Bacon and Pope quotes was that earthly fame is sought by fools. It is earthly. That is enough to make the pursuit of it damnable to me. Paul, speaking of teachers to the Corinthians asks,



*What do you have that wasn't given you?*

**This question should be asked by everyone about everything, talents, riches, comforts, opportunities, and even heartaches.** Whatever you were given that brings you fame is, in the end, given. All glory belongs to the giver, God, not the recipient of the gift.

Fame belongs only to this world. That means it is transient. I will not seek nor treasure transient things; eternal matters are all that matter. I seek God's smile, and in this world, your smile, my love.

“The rust will find the sword of fame, the dust will hide the crown;  
Ay, none shall nail so high his name, time will not tear it down.”  
John Vance Cheney

“ Definition of oblivion— fame's eternal dumping ground”  
Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary

Lastly, I offer you the wisdom of Thomas Watson:

“Those who want the honors of this world, want the temptations of it. The world is a flattering enemy. The world doth never kiss but with an intent to betray us.”

Lois: Yes, I think I understand what you mean, fame is a complete waste of time which makes it a trap rather than something to be sought. It is , after all, praise from the lips of men who are soon to be in the obituaries.

Bill: Yes, let me ask you, what I was saying before the excursion into fame, but including the excursion, do you believe all I've said just said about fame, riches, final judgment, etc.is truth-telling, giving Christian thought, and evangelistic?

If you subscribe to the whole Book to the whole man notion, you will answer yes. Paul may have quoted Isaiah 53 that day in Athens, or he may have paraphrased Isaiah 53, or Paul may not have used it at all, but do you think he absolutely utilized Isaiah 53 every time he walked into a new Synagogue?

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet, we esteemed Him smitten  
by God , and afflicted.*

*But He was wounded for our transgressions,*





*He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
and by His stripes we are healed.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned,  
everyone, to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

Isaiah 53: 4-6

Paul knew all the chords, but his music was different every time, if only slightly. Why?  
Paul examined his audience and found no two to be identical.

Perhaps a clearer example that I alluded to earlier in my “play your own music encouragement” is how we learn to dance. I was taught the steps to the Tango as a boy, but I’ve never tangoed. I only know the steps. There is a difference. When I speak from my heart in a discussion there is a passion present. Examples, points of emphasis, and truth flow from my heart. I am dancing, not merely recreating steps 1,2,3,4, and so on. Although I learned the steps, I’m not concentrating on the steps; I am just dancing.

\*Please refer to the videos section if you wish to hear a fuller discussion of points 1-12 above. I am already embarrassed that this written section has become so lengthy.

Lois: So, you are saying “be yourself” within a general framework of ideas. You don’t mean that your list in #11 is exhaustive.

Bill: Exactly. Your God-given thought processes, your God-given wit, your God-given parents, etc., all explain who you are. **Be YOU, don’t try to be me.** Play your music, dance to it. But begin by asking yourself, with whom am I speaking, what do I know about this person, what do I know about his or her troubles, dreams, etc.? Allow all of the answers to these and similar questions to be the basis of your music. Then dance to it. Today it may begin with a bass note, perhaps a child has died, a divorce has shattered a dream, a moment of truth has taught that beauty is fleeting, etc.

Lois: I understand your gist, but how do I fit the gospel in?

Bill: When I say that the gospel is the person and work of Jesus Christ, does that seem deep to you or shallow? Or, perhaps it is better to ask, does it seem too narrow or too broad?

Lois: I guess I think of the gospel as “Jesus died on the cross for my sins”. I’ve said that my whole life. I’ve never thought about it being deep, shallow, broad, or narrow.





Bill: I completely understand, and while it is true that Jesus died to pay the debt owed because of your sin, it is not a comprehensive statement about who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. Let's start narrowly and broaden our view as we go. Jesus died for your sins if you are a truly born again disciple. Did Jesus also give you the righteousness you need? Are you wearing His robe of righteousness?

Lois: Yes, I am wearing His robe of righteousness.

Bill: Are His atoning death and the righteousness you have due to your union with Jesus?


Lois: I guess they are.

Bill: Was your new birth part of your salvation? Is your sanctification part of your salvation? What of the effectual call, the internal call, which changed the disposition of your heart through regeneration, was it part of your salvation? Was your newfound ability to see your need for the Savior part of your salvation? Are forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, redemption, adoption, and perseverance all a part of your salvation?

I'm bombarding you to demonstrate that salvation is like looking at an exquisite diamond and studying it from various angles enhances the beauty of the diamond. This is even more true of salvation. I'm speaking of its beginning in eternity before anything visible existed. Study it from all angles, all of them enhance its beauty. Cheap grace decisionalism robs you of the loveliness of salvation. It is like viewing a mere photo of a diamond. A traditional brilliant cut diamond has 57 or 58 facets. Each is like a window into the diamond. The person and work of Christ has an eternal number of facets. Nothing can match its beauty. Did God love you before a single star was hung? Was it always, meaning before anything was created, God's plan to have an inheritance waiting for you in Heaven? Is this a panoramic view of salvation coherent to you? All the facets belong to the same diamond. Might I begin anywhere in the chain of salvation and evangelize? Might human sin and depravity, spiritual life and spiritual death, Heaven and Hell all find their way into a normal discussion? Since salvation is spoken of in the past tense, the present tense, and the future tense, everything that pertains to the natural life and the supernatural life might enter into a discussion with an unbeliever. Would I, like Paul on Mars Hill, be evangelizing?

Lois: You are saying that the gospel, as I explain it, should run hand-in-hand with a discussion of salvation.

Bill: It is the term salvation, in its broadest and fullest sense I want to get at. Though I vehemently disagree with Charles Ryrie on many things, I do find his broad definition of



salvation to be true and useful. He writes: “...the doctrine of salvation, must be the grandest theme in the Scriptures. It embraces all of time as well as eternity past and future. It relates in one way or another to all of mankind without exception...it is the theme of both the old and new testaments...it centers on...our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

The gospel is the “good message”, it begins in eternity past and never ends. The “good message” or “good news” is the Evangel, the good tidings of the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ. Can you see why the Puritans felt they could evangelize beginning anywhere between Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 22:21?

Lois: I do. So, salvation may be used in a broad sense thus opening up almost any topic to become fodder for a conversation or a discussion about God, man, sin, sacrifice, etc, right?

Bill: Yes, but before we explore how this broad sense of salvation opens up conversation about truth-telling and Christian thought, does it also open up discussion about the Evangel, the Good News?

Lois: So, the short answer is yes. I do see that the person and work of Christ in rescuing me from my sin and sinful state is central to all of Scripture.

Bill: Again, I have labored to turn you against the trite, narrow, formulaic evangelism that has no regard for individuality, because the life of every man is ripe with fruit to talk about, and God’s sovereignty, man’s condition, and the beauty of Christ are all a part of every man’s life as I see it.

Lois: Yes, the unbeliever’s loves and fears, you mean.

Bill: Yes, but listen closely, one doctrine I just mentioned is always front and center when I meet anyone. **Providence describes how God rules His Kingdom.** Allow me to quote the Westminster Confession of Faith:

“God the Great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct,  
dispose and govern all creatures, actions,  
and things, from the greatest even to the least,  
by His most wise and holy providence,  
according to His infallible foreknowledge,  
and the free and immutable counsel of His own will,  
to the praise of the glory of His wisdom,  
power, justice, goodness, and mercy.”





Just reading it again invigorates and humbles me. I am so grateful God opened my eyes so I could see His invisible hand in my life and in the lives of everyone I know and meet.


Lois: It has helped me to understand life. What do you think you lose if you don't understand Providence?

Bill: **You cannot understand the past, present, or future without an understanding of Providence.** Nor can you understand the lives of the unbelievers we wish to talk to. This will be a fairly long answer to your question, but I am happy to answer it. As you know, **a simple question like one of the following can be useful in striking up a conversation that may become a discussion. Providence may be prominent in a statement, be buried in a statement, or undergird a statement.**

Lois, I think it's best if I address an imaginary group of people at this time. Don't fuss, you can be one of the group.

- A) Now that we're older, do you ever wonder what your life would have been like if you'd married that blonde from Pekin rather than Carol?
- B) You know, I'm wondering if I've learned more from my failures than my successes. Ever think about that?
- C) The world has gone crazy, hasn't it? What do you think has gone wrong? Morals maybe?
- D) You and I have been blessed financially, but do you find yourself worrying about the I.R.S. or "unforeseen things" unfairly taking your money away when you are just starting to feel secure?
- E) My friend, you and I have been blessed with good health. I sometimes play realist and ask myself, "When is the hammer going to drop? How about you?"
- F) You know my daughter lost a leg. She was run over by a train. She sort of brought it on herself. But here is the funny thing, losing her leg caused her to turn her life around. It was a blessing. Anything like that ever happened in your life?
- G) I ask myself, late at night, if my life has had an impact for good. That causes me to think about meaning in my life. Then I come to my senses, and I know that God has caused my life to have purpose. When I was an Atheist, I didn't give a rat's hind end about finding any meaning in life, and now it's practically all I can think about. You're a bright person, what's your take on meaning in life?
- H) You are wealthy, you have two vacation homes, and you play golf every day. I don't envy such a life because you are rich enough to keep riff raff like me out,





but you've actually ended up fencing yourself in. You've built your own prison and locked yourself inside it. Ever think about that? You may think I'm crazy to say such a thing. Who knows, maybe I am. Still, what do you think?

- I) Ever notice that when a man dies, the first thing you think about is whether or not their child will lose all the father lived for?
- J) Sometimes, when a man's cell phone rings in a noisy pub and I, along with three other old guys, reach for our phones, I wonder if God is not just firing a warning shot over all of our heads. Know what I mean?
- K) You're an honest woman, tell me, if you had to find one fault with yourself, what would it be?
- L) What would you say is the worst criticism anyone's ever leveled against you?
- M) Since your next chapter in life will be your last, what should we title it?

Let's look back at my examples to see where Providence might fit. Before I proceed, I want us to be clear about Providence. I meant it when I said that without a clear understanding of Providence, you cannot understand your past, your present, or your future.

**God either initiates the trials that come into your life, or God permits the trials that come into your life.** God is sovereign over His creation. God is in absolute control. God is omniscient, all-knowing. God has never learned anything, God has always known everything simultaneously. God is eternal. Time is an invention for this world, and it is useful for folks like us who live a limited number of days. When this world ends, time will be no more. Eternity has no clocks. I use phrases like, "a billion years from now" to make a point. A billion years from now, the billion years gone by will have had no effect on eternity.

God sovereignly chose the day I would be born, and He has chosen the day I shall die. I derive great comfort from both. You see, like some of you, I had a father who could have been better. My father left early, and I handled it poorly to say the least. I wrote a little book once titled, *A Strange Thing Happened on My Way to Hell*. It is my way of reminding myself, Bill Moore, that God governed it, all of my life I mean. God chose my father, and God protected me even while He was watching me spout off about being an Atheist. Yet, my free will was intact. I did what I wanted to do, went where I wanted to go, and said what I wanted to say.

Yet, God sovereignly governed my life. If that bewilders you, tell me, and I will send you a copy of another book I wrote titled, *A Bartender's Guide to Providence: How the World Really Works*. Let's be clear, I understand that I'm not a great writer. I write trying to communicate plainly with folks just like me, common folks. So, if eloquence is on



your wish list, contact almost anyone else but me. But if you like to sit at the dining room table and discuss the things of God late into the night, then you are my kind of person, and my plain talk writing may be a help to you.

God has governed your life as well. God permitted your heartaches. God initiated the “accidental” meeting with your husband. Yet, you’ve done what you have willed to do. Providence is the way God sovereignly governs His world. Every molecule is under His control. The story of Joseph in Genesis is the clearest example of Providence in action that I know of. Please read it, and then re-read it.

I see God’s invisible hand everywhere and all day long. Providence permeates my thinking, and it should permeate your thinking, too. **Life is an adventure in a foreign land to me, and soon I will be home.** But oh the wonders I see because I understand Providence. To realize that you’ve never had an “accidental” meeting is exhilarating.

I could go on, but I won’t. My comprehension of Providence regulates my statements, questions, and replies in the 13 examples I gave labeled A-M. I must add one other foundational understanding I have that you may not have. Henry David Thoreau wrote that, “*The mass of men live lives of quiet desperation.*” I know this to be true. Most people, by age 35, secretly fear that they are mediocre. They bluster about how much meaning they find in their lives. However, they don’t believe it and neither does anyone else.

Providence assures that every life has purpose. Every unbeliever and every believer was born at a precise moment in history, each plays an important role in God’s story. You see, all that truly matters is the role each of us plays in God’s story. I play my part then exit stage left. It is why I take a panoramic view of history. From my mountain perch I watch me - Bill Moore - and **it is evident to me that history is simply God’s story.** This view makes Providence beautiful. This perspective insists that I view every man and woman as individuals who have crossed my path in history for a reason.

**I often explain my view of Providence to an unbeliever because I truly believe that his or her life matters; it has eternal purpose, the very thing she or he longs for.**

I will briefly touch on a couple of the examples labeled A-M and go into more detail in the accompanying videos. Do try to see how my view of Providence would influence my thoughts in examples A-M.

I want to remind you that it is important you listen and then reply whenever you are speaking with anyone. Listen closely and carefully. Your reply depends on what is said





to you and how it is said to you. **Careless listening and all formulaic, scripted approaches prove to me that you care more about yourself than you do the person you are speaking to.**

**Example A:** It is probing a crossroads in life, a crossroad everyone comes to. A crossroads might be a blonde not chosen or a sales job taken to pay the rent, or a decision to attend a junior college rather than the University of Illinois. A crossroads changes a life dramatically. I can better understand the person I'm conversing with by asking about a key moment in the person's life. I also know that everyone longs for weighty conversations. Conversations about the meaning in folks' lives, purpose in folks' lives, heartaches in folks' lives, and oaths taken in folks' lives matter to folks leading lives they are not at all certain about.

Since I am hoping for a conversation that leads to a discussion, I find that asking a question about a man's path in life, a man's goal in life, a man's shattered dream in life, and a man's worst moment in life all open the door to meaningful, personal conversations and discussions.

*“A Christian mind is not one that is trained  
to think only about Christian topics.  
It is a mind that has learned to think about everything  
from a Christian perspective.”  
Alistair Begg*

**I don't pretend to be interested, I am interested.** The individual I'm conversing with was created by God, and now is providentially crossing my path. This individual may prove to be the most influential person I've ever met in my life, or the worst enemy I've ever made. I'm aware that our paths have crossed by God's Holy Providence. God's invisible hand governs both of us.

I ask myself, am I watering? Or am I planting? Or am I plowing a rocky soil? Might I be used by the Holy Spirit to open a man's eyes, or might I prove to be hardening a man's heart? Eternal souls surround us, and only a born again believer who sees God's invisible, governing hand in all lives can ask a question, listen, and then reply with whole-hearted interest and concern.

Without a formula to follow, you will naturally listen and respond. My view of Providence will influence my responses, however what is that saying but that **my Christianity undergirds and permeates who I am? My identity is found in my union with Jesus , my Lord, my Savior , and the King.** As Alistair Begg counseled, it





is wise to see everything from a Christian perspective. That perspective is found in any man whose identity is found in his union with Christ.

It appears as I review them that all the random examples I've used are asked with a view to God's Providence and a man's crossroads, with the exception of examples C, K and L. I did not design the examples with anything in view, I just thought back randomly to things I've said, or things I wish I'd said. I particularly like questions like those in examples K and L. Folks tend to reply honestly to such earnest questions. But I might just as easily have asked:

“As humbly as possible, tell me what trait do you have,  
viewing yourself from a third-person viewpoint,  
that most people admire in you?”

**OR**

“Tell me please, what is the single compliment you  
have received in your life that you value the most?”

**Example C:** This is useful when two or more strangers surround you. Yet, every response will lead you to a follow-up question. A conversation or discussion is made of questions, responses, statements and even more questions. When I stumble, it is normally because my statements outnumber my questions.

I do think you may find it beneficial to read the section of this website that is titled “*A Discussion about Discussions.*” That section is a summary of my thoughts and gleanings. If nothing else, it may confirm your own thoughts on discussions.

**Lois:** Thank you, it's stunning really. People are hungry to escape pleasant but bland “drivel talk”. God's invisible hand inevitably becomes visible. I think people are intrigued by non chit-chat conversations. People are secretly trying to work out a way that the world at large and their lives in particular can have order, meaning and purpose.

**Bill:** Yes, though anxious to avoid God, they are equally anxious to talk about His invisible hand. It opens doors to talk about our own lives, conversions, meaning, morality, sin, peace, Heaven, false claims about Christianity, nut-case pretend Christians, and the list goes on. Conversations can be a smorgasbord if you don't trot out some trite, memorized formula. Piggybacking on what you said, this quote by John Calvin bounces around inside my head constantly:

“We must make the invisible Kingdom visible in our midst.”



J. I. Packer rephrased Calvin's quote and added to it:

“The task of the Church is to make the invisible Kingdom visible through faithful Christian living and witness-bearing.”

Lois: I did notice that none of your questions as conversation starters included, “If you died tonight, do you think God would let you into His Heaven?”

Bill: That is not on my list. I'd like to give a thousand examples of actual conversations, but that is impossible. Perhaps you can record some conversations for our video section? I do like candid, unrehearsed examples of conversations, no matter where they take place or when they take place.

Lois: Any final thoughts?

Bill: Only this. Every unbeliever is under God's sovereign rule and control, whether they believe it or dislike it. Truth-telling, Christian thought-giving, and evangelism should never be seen as narrow and compartmentalized. **Ours is a post-Christian culture, let's embrace that and be salt and light to a dark world filled with weary, disgruntled and frustrated souls.** Below are my final thoughts to remind us of how blessed we are to belong to Christ and be in Christ. These thoughts will help us sustain a love for the poor, depraved, and enslaved souls that surround us each day. We should:

- 1) Be grateful for God's grace in our lives
- 2) Strive to be faithful, not successful
- 3) Rely on the Holy Spirit, the True Evangelist
- 4) Never forget how blind and depraved fallen men are
- 5) Remember that we are light-givers, the Spirit is a life-giver
- 6) Utilize the whole Bible for the whole man
- 7) Seek disciples for Christ, not mere professors of Christ
- 8) Understand that we will, at times, be used to open eyes, and that at other times what we say will be used to further harden people's hearts; rejoice in both
- 9) Make the invisible kingdom visible
- 10) Never forget that being born again precedes faith
- 11) Recall that sin has complete dominion over and mastery of every being who is not born again, born from above, by the Spirit of God — let's never forget this

#### In Summary

Videos do accompany the written material, and additional videos will explain, in a



way I didn't here, how historical Christianity addressed topics like "sinful seeking" and "is preaching the Gospel preaching Christ"?

Thanks for your patience.

Questions I've Fielded About Evangelism  
And  
Questions I Should Have Been Asked About Evangelism

1) I'm used to making my gospel presentation simply and plainly, what is wrong with that?

Absolutely nothing, but I'm asking you to take your eyes off you for a moment. Turn the eyes of your heart and mind onto the person you are engaging. Are you seeing that person as a uniquely made individual? Are you seeing that person as an enslaved soul in whom the image of God has been disfigured?

More importantly, are you seeking a professor or a disciple? Are you satisfied with an explanation you make, or do you desire to see a transformation by the Spirit of God?


2) You seem to be saying that the direct approach I utilize is wrong. Am I hearing you correctly?

I am not saying your approach is wrong. I am asking **why** you think the same approach would be best at all times, in all places, with all people. Do you have the same relationship with a stranger as you have with your cousin? You see, if you repeatedly blurt out a rehearsed 4 point speech (your gospel presentation as you term it), it is bound to come across as cold and perhaps sterile.

If you are guilty of this type of presentation, I would suggest that your true emphasis is on you and not your hearer.

**Which do you think the person hearing you is impressed and persuaded by, the messenger or the message?** Of course, the messenger will be remembered better than the message. So, be earnest and be a good listener. Additionally, if you treat your message as if it is fiction or just a mantra you have, it will be received by your hearer as a matter of little importance, the opposite of what it truly is.





3) Your view of mankind is truly pitiable. It is so dark and discouraging. I'm glad I don't see the world as you do.

Well, that does not appear to be a question, but I would like to reply. I would ask you, is my view of mankind Biblical? If it isn't, then I will quit listening to me, too. But, if my view of mankind is Biblical, then calling it pitiable and being pleased that you don't see the world as the Scripture portrays it would make your view erroneous and a good deal worse than pitiable, don't you think?

Is the Bible portraying the world, due to sin, as dark, discouraging, chaotic, and disordered? Does the Bible paint the picture of an unbeliever as enslaved to sin, self, and Satan? Is the unbeliever blind and deaf to truth? Is the unbeliever deceived, self-deceived, and dead in sin and trespasses? Is this unbeliever storing up wrath, moment by moment, for God's day of wrath? Is every move an unbeliever makes and every breath an unbeliever takes an affront to our holy God? If so, my view of mankind may not be dark enough. Man is a pitiful and mean-spirited being, **but God, who is rich in mercy, withholds His justice and graciously changes the hearts of some of His avowed enemies.**

“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms.”

C.S. Lewis

*The darker a man's view of fallen mankind, the brighter the glory of God shines.*

4) To be honest, Bill, I sometimes wonder if what I say is true when I witness. That sounds awful to you I guess, but I'm being truthful.

I believe you are being truthful. I wish more folks were truthful with themselves and had the courage to voice what you have just voiced. I offer no simple remedy, but will offer advice instead. **You are likely asking yourself if you have truly been born again. You are asking yourself the right question.** Your precious soul is at stake. Perhaps you should phone me. I might be a better help if you do. If you don't wish to, then I advise you to write down in 2 columns what you do believe and what you are not certain you believe. Then ask your Pastor or a friend to go through the Bible with you looking into the passages that are relevant to both columns on your paper.

5) I think I understand about being able to preach the “good message”, the “good news” from Genesis 1 through Revelation, and I also see that salvation must be examined along with all its components to appreciate who God is as our sovereign Savior. But, do any



passages come to your mind that are fairly concise about salvation and what you call the “good message”, the gospel?

How about two examples? Just this morning I was studying Acts, Chapter 5, and the very thing you are asking for popped up. Verse 28 finds Peter and the other Apostles in front of the council. Previously, they had been told to desist from teaching about Jesus, His death, His resurrection, and His kingdom. They had been imprisoned. God dispatched an angel to free them. Peter and the Apostles had then returned to the temple to teach about Jesus. A guard was sent to fetch them from the temple to the High Priest and the council. The following dialogue took place.

*“... did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this man’s blood on us! But Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, “we ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses...”*

Do you see the message, the good message in short form? I do, but I must remind you that Luke has not recorded “all” that Peter and the Apostles said that day. Luke is writing about the heart of the matter. We learn that Jesus was crucified, died, and was resurrected by the power of God. We learn that Jesus was raised in power and endued with power to reign. “The position of authority” is in the phrase - at God’s right hand. What did Jesus accomplish? He could give the gift of repentance and remission of sins, and He reigns forevermore.

I hope this is what you are looking for. Other passages say simply “believe”, which is true also, but such instruction assumes an understanding of what is to be believed, about whom it is to be believed, and why it should be believed. That is why I so enjoy the Acts 5 dialogue.

My second example is found in a consideration of the letter to the Christians at Galatia. Verses 6-9 of Chapter 1 are as follows:

*“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel Of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*





Gospel-molesters sought to add to the Gospel, trying to make it more rigid. In verse 6 Paul terms it a different gospel, which is no gospel. I believe that Paul visited this region in A.D. 47. The reasoning is simple, as it is generally conceded that the Council at Jerusalem took place about A.D. 49. Since the Council at Jerusalem was not referenced by Paul in this letter, it is natural to assume that the Council took place after this issue arose. Otherwise, in my view, Paul most certainly would have invoked the Council's authoritative decision to address this issue. That would mean that the Galatian Christians had quickly ceased to believe in justification by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone. In Chapter 3 Paul is asking who has bewitched them. I will concede, however, that many scholars hold that Galatians was written five or six years after the date I hold to. Either way, the gospel-molesters were rebuked by Paul.

The Law was to be their tutor. It was to bring them to Jesus by demonstrating that no man could ever be justified by the keeping of the Law. Justification would, of necessity, be by the person and work of Christ. The Gospel is most certainly the Gospel of pure grace. That ought to be a satisfactory short-form explanation for you.

However, it assumes an understanding of sin and sinners, as sinners are law-breakers. It assumes God's Law is known. It assumes the hearer believes God exists and that God is active in the governance of His world and His creatures. Paul's simple explanation has these and other assumptions behind it. The cheap grace decisionalism I scorn does not aim at making disciples as The Great Commission in Matthew 28 does, it aims at drawing professions of faith from folks with the barest minimum of facts about all the matters that matter in God's word. A wise man once wrote that nothing is harder than for a man to rise above the thinking of his age. Formulaic evangelism is an idea of this age, it is not an idea for all time. Let's determine to rise above the thinking of this age, and let's further determine to be people of the Book, not people of our time.

6) Mr. Moore, I've been thinking about what you wrote. I am feeling convicted, and I'm not sure why. Perhaps I'm feeling that I don't care enough about lost souls. Maybe that's why I'm ineffective in reaching people. Any advice?

Compassion for the lost is lost amidst the busyness of ministering to everyone's worldly needs and troubles today. At least that is my fear. **A man-centered, needs-centered gospel will naturally become practical, pragmatic and surprisingly impersonal.** Much of the Church's thrust is now on programs to help people materially. That emphasis has its place as people do, indeed, have worldly needs, but we are losing or have lost the "let me help you". We have replaced it with "the Church will help you".

**Instead of focusing on compassion for souls, why not focus on compassion for a soul?** Life is personal, and we do well to mull that over. Do you have a lost sister or friend? Why not focus







on that one sister or that one friend? Imagine them standing before God at the Final Judgment. Imagine the awful sentence being pronounced. Imagine that individual's fear and trembling. Imagine the finality when the august King intones, "Yours is a sentence of never-ending torment that will produce never-ending weeping, wailing, and tears. Go to your reward." Such imagining is my way to rouse myself when I, too, grow indifferent to the plight of individual souls. I have learned to think of my lost children individually. Those dear faces restore reality for me. Compassion springs from somewhere deep, deep inside, don't you think?

Compassion affects one's heart, one's voice, one's prayers, and one's love. Have you ever felt compassion for someone and been driven then to be compassionate to that someone (and it's deep-seated compassion I'm speaking of), and that someone wasn't affected? Compassion moves my hands to help an individual, and compassion changes things even as it changes me. It almost always affects that someone as well.

Compassion does not permit you to simply look unfeelingly at a person or to look through a person as though you can't see him or her. Compassion has a startling effect on the giver and the recipient. Compassion often opens the recipient's ears. When an individual feels you love them and care for them, they are open to what you say, and many times God speaks to that soul.

Just today, I was discussing this with my bride. I reminded her of the medicinal nature of my now-long time ago daily coffee time at a Starbucks in Winnetka, Illinois. I would sit and read and write, and I would study the folks who shuffled and scooted through. I would attempt to guess what chains I could see around them. Were there chains of pride? Perhaps I should consider chains of lust, etc. It was medicinal for me, as the world as it really is was becoming visible for me. Compassion would fill me. Unbelievers are desperately wicked, and if I converse with them, they provide evidence of that truth. **If** I focus on them and their invisible chains, even my cold, cold heart can be warmed.

But just now I asked Lois if I should actually have seen that Starbucks as a burial ground filled with bones bleaching in the sun. Folks, every pub I walk into is more likely Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones than you and I have imagined. That truth moves me to compassion for wicked souls who are buried in earthly cares and ignorant of the desperate peril their eternal souls are in. Can't you and I change and be truly compassionate? Can't we speak wisely to them about what matters as well as addressing their worldly needs? If we care for them, they will almost always trust us and hear us. In my experience, Providence often appears in all its beauty. I intend to change. Do you need to change as well?

I often think of this simple idea—**live simply and with sincerity**. I move it forward weekly in my planner. Simplicity and sincerity in life are fertile grounds for compassion. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:12:



*“For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.”*

Paul was dear to good men because they recognized his love and compassion for them. Compassion makes a soul dear to us, and we become, in turn, dear to that soul. Focus on an individual and not on individuals in a collective sense.

7) My friends may not believe in God, but they have no overt hatred for the God they don't believe in. I think you are over-spiritualizing.

Perhaps I am guilty of what you term over-spiritualizing. If so, the blame belongs to the Lord, the King of Kings and His Book, the Bible. Let's look at 2 Corinthians, chapter, 4, verses 3-4.


*But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them*

I would conclude from this passage in God's Book that your friends can see with their physical eyes, but they cannot see that their minds are blinded. They are unaware how precious their darkness is to them, and they don't know that their hatred for God runs deep. You must recall that Jesus, in Chapter 3 of John's gospel says:

*And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

Romans, Chapter 5, verse 10 maintains that everyone, before they come to Christ, is His enemy. A once-born man hates his enemy. He wars against God. Romans 1:30 adds that unrighteous men are...“backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters...” **Additionally, Psalm 14 declares that the fool says in his heart, there is no God. It actually may be read as “no God for me.”**

So I reiterate, your friends actually do hate God, and they do not know themselves. An old friend of mine, before I came to Christ, was H. D. Thoreau. Near the end of his life, in his last battle with lifelong tuberculosis, when his Calvinistic Aunt Louisa asked if he had made his peace with God, Thoreau joked, “I did not know we had ever quarreled.” You see, history is filled with men whose minds are so veiled that they do not even understand themselves.



8) Mr. Moore, I'm an older Pastor, and I've found the Bridge Illustration to be essential to successful evangelism. I think you should be more careful with your criticism. What type of approach were you taught in seminary, and are you the Pastor of a Church?

It's always nice to hear from a Pastor, especially an older one, a more seasoned man. I'm not surprised that the Bridge Illustration formula is dear to you. I will, however, renew my assertion, with all due respect to you, that the formula is unBiblical in all the ways I previously pointed out. If you find one of my points to be misguided, then please call so you can help me correct my error. No man should take pride in being wrong, right? I do not criticize unless I feel I must. I am, I think, very collegial. But, souls are at stake, and my allegiance is to Christ and His truths alone. The twisting of the John 10:10 passage should deeply disturb you. Frankly, I am surprised it hasn't.

I am not a seminarian. I once attempted to enroll, but I was rebuffed because I gently inquired of the soon-to-be seminary head about a sermon he gave on Jonah. Reality is, indeed, stranger than fiction. Rebuffed is not correct perhaps. I was told that I could enter the seminary on probation if I agreed not to ask a question for the first six months. I politely declined. Providentially, I believe, of course, that it was best. I do read extensively, at least by today's standards, and in the end my thinking has been shaped more by the Puritans and a wonderful man named John H. Gerstner than by anything else.

My approach is my approach. Jonathan Edwards and Dr. Gerstner and their evangelistic approaches differ from mine, but I do believe our foundations are very similar. The faulty thinking you find listening to me is all mine, not theirs.

The point I raised about ours being an Acts 17 culture rather than an Acts 2 culture weighs heavily on my mind, and much less so on Edward's and Gestner's minds, I think. These men were giants. I, comparatively, am a munchkin. I am an ordinary man, the type of man who might be seated next to you in Sunday School or at a home Bible study.

I am not a Pastor, though I was, long ago, a licensed Baptist Pastor. Primarily that led to my becoming interested in prison ministry. When asked to speak, I have. When asked to teach, I do. If you find you need someone who is passionate about *Pilgrim's Progress*, call me. However, I will not promise not to examine you about the Bridge Illustration formula when I am there.

9) Why isn't it fine to simply say that the Gospel is the theology of the cross?

Actually, that is nearly a verbatim quote from my friend, Martin Luther. The theology of the cross is the Gospel, but if you say that to a man who has never held a Bible in his hand and has led the kind of life that should make the Devil himself feel revulsion due to its perverseness,





you will have done minimal good. Luther actually meant, I believe, that the hidden wisdom of God was revealed in the cross, Christ Jesus crucified; sin, justice, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—the wisdom of God made known that we might glory only in the Lord.

Preach and teach the cross and all that is revealed in it and fear not to pluck truths from every page of God's wisdom to us, the Bible. Do not simply show a photo of a tree, but examine an actual tree and allow your hearer to take a bite from each piece of fruit on the tree.

10) Mr. Moore, your assumption that Atheists spend their days pondering God and His possible existence is nonsensical. I have been an avowed Atheist for thirty years, and I assure you I do not see God as my enemy, as I am certain your God is a fiction. An Atheist is a reasoning person who doesn't require a crutch, like God, to lean on.

I do so love such notes. I wish I could get you to agree to write a note to me every other day for a year, as such notes sharpen my thinking. I have a standing offer for you. I will pay you \$50 for every thoughtful note you send me. I will pay you \$5 for every unthinking diatribe you send as well. I would like to know what you think about a thousand topics, and I'd also like to know "how" you think as well. I hope your return address is truly your return address. That your note was written on a cargo ship manifest intrigues me as well.

Your first point was that I imagine Atheists sitting around all day pondering God's existence. I can't recall ever saying or writing such a thing. In fact, it is my contention that Atheists, in the main, fight like the Devil to put thoughts of God out of their minds. God intrudes constantly with beauty, order, meaning, purpose, truths, etc., and Atheists spend parts of each day plugging their ears with their pinky fingers, covering their eyes with their hands, and rubbing doubts out of their minds with their index fingers. All of this is arduous for a man with only two hands, so they are mostly unsuccessful. So, they suppress the truth as well as they can, deceive themselves, and write letters on cargo ship manifests to men like me. Paul wrote in Romans, Chapter one that men suppress the truth in unrighteousness because God has made Himself well known in His creation, the beauty and order you are presently seeing and living in.

You also raised the old "God is not my enemy, HE IS A FICTION" zinger. You are not the first to float this idea. Paul writes in Romans:

*... for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen,  
being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and  
Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*

*Romans 1:20*



This is a fuller statement of what I said above. Paul goes on to say that men like you have chosen not to glorify God and are an ungrateful lot. So, they have become futile in their thoughts and their hearts have darkened. Such men are simply deluding themselves and screaming with their mouths shut, “NO GOD FOR ME”. On such men the wrath of God will be revealed. My friend, I, too, was such a man. I was deceived and self-deceived. My thoughts were futile and wild. I was storing up wrath for the day of wrath as purposely as any man I knew was. I vehemently denied that God existed, despite all I saw with my eyes. If you had asked me how the world works, I would have filled the air with my maniacal thoughts. Asking a self-deceived person what the world is like is akin to asking a drunk dancing wildly in a house of mirrors what the chubby lady dancing with him looked like.

God is your enemy, as He was mine before He graciously opened my eyes. You love the darkness, and you hate the light. Satan has you in chains, but you are clearly unaware of that. Shouldn’t you also ask, “is God at war with me?”

The short answer is yes. Romans 5:10 replies,

*For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*

It is obvious from verse 10 that all believers, before they were reconciled (made peace with God) to God, were His enemies. That means that every unbeliever is God’s enemy, whether they agree to that truth or not.

Lastly, your final sentence was a rather poorly executed attempt at a double-zinger. I bet you are capable of better. Be yourself, think your own thoughts. Don’t borrow zingers, invent them. The old saw about I am an Atheist, therefore I am bright, is pure self-assessment with the spectacles of conceit firmly stationed at the tip of your nose. As I often mention, Mark Twain once said,

**“Man is the reasoning animal. Such is the claim. I think that is open to dispute.”**

You may actually be a “bright,” as Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and a dumpster full of today’s Atheistic guiding lights style themselves. *I prize humility, so I would be loath to say such a thing. Please consider taking the lower seat yourself.*

Finally, the “Bill needs a crutch canard” is rather pompous and presumptuous, don’t you think? You know almost nothing about me. I have scads of flaws, but being afraid to stand alone has never been an accusation made about me, even by my fiercest detractors. The need for a crutch could just as easily be made concerning you, right?



Do write again, as I enjoy reading such notes. But, as I said earlier, pluck up some courage and speak your own mind not another's.

11) Mr. Moore, I am excited about your approach to evangelism, especially your emphasis on the individuality of the people I know and meet. Does your emphasis on the individual vs. the group impact your Christianity in other ways aside from evangelism?

What a good question this is. I see the world as God's field of flowers. To me, it is a limitless field of wildflowers, glorious wildflowers. Oh, the variety I see! No two are identical — I know that only the Eternal Creator could have such a garden, one comprised of beautiful, individual wildflowers. If you could see my field as I see it, you would not attempt to convince me there were only Azaleas standing in front of me. This is why I am certain that **a one-shoe-fits-all formulaic evangelism is a modern blunder.**

This wildflower view naturally carries over into a discussion of "gifts", natural and spiritual, in the body of Christ. I won't get into that here, but I'm sure I will in one of the videos.

12) Bill, if I thought everyone's salvation was a matter of election/ choosing by God, I would never evangelize.

I can sympathize with you a bit, as I once asked this of a wise friend. He nodded knowingly and replied, "Mr. Moore, do you ever think before you speak?" Dr. Gerstner said similar things often, as I was completely in the dark about almost everything. I was nonplussed. I repeated my question. He paused and replied, "Did Jesus command you to go into the whole world and make disciples?" The dialogue continued for a time as I just could not see where the good Dr. was driving me.

Finally, he quit questioning me and simply instructed me. God has chosen to have us, Christians, to speak to those in the dark, those who love their darkness. The normal way a man is converted is by a Christian man or woman speaking to that lost soul about his or her lost soul and the judgment that awaits. Our words matter. Our hearts matter as our words should never be a matter of the mind and tongue only. We plant seeds. At other times we water the seeds. If there is an increase, God must give it. It is that simple. The divine and supernatural light needed so badly by the person we are speaking to belongs to God alone. But, since we are commanded to speak to the lost, our role is a vital one. Every word of truth we utter is of gravest importance, as an eternal soul hangs in the balance. There is no room for slothfulness on our part. We are light-givers because God has sovereignly decreed it should be so. God alone is the life-giver.

We are used to both soften hearts and harden hearts. The outcome belongs to God alone. We dare not steal His glory as so many today do. **We are judged by our faithfulness, not our**





**successes or failures. If we are faithful, and a man goes to Hell despite our reasonings and pleadings, we are yet seen as faithful.** Dr. Gerstner asked finally, “Mr. Moore, do you know how I know that all of God’s chosen ones are not already converted?” Before I could reply he said, “If the last sheep was in, the world, as we know it now, would have ended.” I owe Dr. Gerstner a great deal.

In the end, it is enough for me that Jesus commanded us to go to the lost. God does not need me or you to speak to re-create a man, He many times re-creates without our assistance. There is nothing impossible for God. When He created Adam, He did not require assistance. When He now re-creates, He does not require assistance. But, for reasons hidden in eternal wisdom, God has chosen to use our words to bring about conversions. God opens a man’s eyes with our words. I should often think how wond’rous this is.

13) Mr. Moore, I think that most of the people I witness to (our church goes door- to- door talking to people and passing out tracts one Saturday each month) are simply ignorant about Jesus. I don't use the Romans Road or the Bridge Illustration. I just ask, “If you died tonight and stood before God, what would you say if God asked why He should let you into His Heaven?” After some discussion, I ask if they are at all worried about Hell. Again we talk. Then I ask if they would like to be sure they won’t go to Hell by praying and making Jesus their Savior. Once the people have those facts, they many times follow my lead in prayer. Many are saved by our door-to-door campaign. We leave them with our tracts, and we assure them we will be excited if they decide to visit our Church. By the way, our Church’s name is XXX XXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXX XX XXX XX XXXXXX.

I suppose a nice lady like you hears only a bit of what a person like me says at times, and then you naturally fill in the blanks about what I believe from the treasury of imaginary thoughts that is hidden within a cavern in your mind. I must, at times, do this myself. Obviously, you and your Church group are well-intentioned, but sadly I must report that I see your approach as just another evangelistic formula. Your formula has the basic ingredients all evangelistic formulas have. A “cheap grace decisionalism” cake must have:

- A- an opening statement that is easily repeatable
- B- a dash of “nobody’s perfect, everybody makes mistakes”
- C- a quip about Hell
- D- a pound of assurance that any fear of Hell can be easily vanquished
- E- an easily repeatable, formulaic prayer that is like icing on the cake; if the customer doesn’t want to pick up the fork, you solve it by forking a bite into the person’s mouth — you say the prayer and they parrot the prayer



I am not trying to deliberately offend you, but I am hoping you will listen so you will know why I am disappointed in what you and your Church do. I do understand that you mean well.

Satan has caused great chaos. The sleepy Christian Church has its eyes partially open, although its eyelids are heavy. Those drowsy eyes are wary and weary of attacks from the outside, the world and the culture. Cleverly, Satan has, at the same time, been destroying the structure of the Church from the inside. Like so many termites gnawing at timbers, evangelism of this sort and many other modern theological gimmicks are constantly gnawing at what remains of sound, historical Christianity.

Sweet lady, please allow me to paint a Biblical picture of the gentleman who is answering your knock. The homeowner whose door is being knocked on is capable of hearing, but —

*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*

*1 Corinthians 2:14*

*But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them... For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

*2 Corinthians 4:3-7*

*... that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*

*2 Timothy 2:26*

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So, then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

*Romans 8:7-8*

**To such a man, the life-giver must come.**

*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

*John 6:44*



*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.*

*John 6:37*

*It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.*

*John 6:63*

*And He said, therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.*

*John 6:65*

I encourage each of you to read and to study the last 4 passages in the context of John, Chapter 6. All Scriptures should be read in context, but it is especially important, in my mind, to do so with John 6 in order to gain a proper understanding.

The first four passages above state clearly that the man answering the door, if he has not been born again, can't correctly understand what you are speaking about, because what you are revealing about him, his plight, all that God has done, and all that God demands must be spiritually discerned. He is incapable of such a spiritual understanding and always will be, unless the Holy Spirit regenerates him. The poor chap can understand your words, but Satan has blinded him, and your words are foolish to him. We are merely earthen vessels, so the power needed we cannot provide. That power resides in God alone. The 4 passages from John 6 are crystal clear, unless one insists on abusing and mangling these precious words from Jesus' lips. Unless the man who is greeting you is effectually called by the Spirit of God, all you say will remain foolishness to him. He will perish eternally.

One certainty in these passages comforts me, when the divine and supernatural light shines in a man's heart, the man will come to Christ, and that man will never be cast out. So, my friend, do speak to the man who answers your knock, but do not imagine that it is within your ability to effect the change man so desperately needs, and do not ask him to parrot a prayer you made up. Instead, speak to him about what man is like and what God is like. Do not shy away from reminding him that all men face a day of judgment and speak to him of justice. Then, when it's proper, speak to him of grace and God's love in sending His Son to walk the dusty roads of Galilee. But, do not promise him the divine and supernatural life God alone can give. Be a light-giver.

Then God may, indeed, use your words, but that is God's prerogative. If God doesn't sovereignly change the man, the man will remain blinded by Satan. **God alone can cure spiritual blindness.**





Allow me to introduce you to Josiah Conder. Joseph died in 1855, but his words about God's grace will ring forever.

'Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee

'Tis not that I did choose Thee,  
For, Lord, that could not be;  
This heart would still refuse Thee,  
Hadst Thou not chosen me.  
Thou from the sin that stained me  
Hast cleansed and set me free;  
Of old Thou hast ordained me,  
That I should live to Thee.

'Twas sovereign mercy called me  
And taught my opening mind;  
The world had else enthralled me,  
To heavenly glories blind.  
My heart owns none before Thee,  
For thy rich grace I thirst;  
This knowing, if I love Thee,  
Thou must have loved me first.

One final thought comes to me as I reread your note. Again, I know you are well-intentioned, but you are misguided, and that matters. Offering the certainty of an escape from Hell by the repetition of a formulaic prayer of your devising is to mock God. I know you will hate the idea that you are mocking God, but you are. You are promising something the Scripture does not. That is not just an error, it is a grievous sin. If the poor man subscribes to the power of your "magic prayer", he will feel that he is God's son, while God views the man as His avowed enemy! What a tragedy. A kindly soul like yourself, meaning to do a soul a good, has instead perverted the Word of God and perhaps sealed the man's eternal fate. In Hell, false converts will ceaselessly curse the names of those who sold them assurance based on a fanciful distortion of God's infallible Bible. Gentle lady, if I appear to be harsh, I assure you that I am not. If you were choking on a bite of apple and I were there, I would perform the Heimlich maneuver to save your life. I would like to attempt the equivalent maneuver right now. If I were there I would perform the maneuver so that you might spit out the "cheap grace decisionalism" you have swallowed that oxygen might be restored to your brain, so that clear thinking might return.

Please do call or drop a note, especially if you have questions, as you likely will. Will plain talk find me removed from your Christmas card list?



14) Bill, you seem to be obsessed with defining words. I mean, you insist, for instance, on narrow definitions for words like awakened, enlightened, and illumined. To me, they are synonyms. Honestly, you have helped me, but this thin slicing you do seems to be unnecessary.


My friend, I understand, I think, what it is to sit in your seat. May I poke fun at you for a moment? Your complaint is clear, broad distinctions are fine, but narrow distinctions are overkill. Right? Young lady, you are the lady who goes to great trouble to explain what type of pet I will have if my Blue Heeler falls in love with a Lab rather than a Collie. Is it fair to point out that you, at times, also define narrowly? I am teasing, but I have noticed that you don't speak of every breed as simply a dog, do you?

You make distinctions between breeds, because distinctions matter. I make distinctions for the same reason. Perhaps your complaint should be that I haven't explained my distinctions clearly enough. I think I will join you in lodging that complaint against me.

I will attempt to rectify my mistake. I want to be clear, awakened, enlightened, and illumined have been used in various ways the past 500 years. I am a man of this age, so I use them as I see fit. I will explain why I am precise.

When I say a man is awakened, I mean that the Holy Spirit has brought the conviction that the man has a soul, and that there is a judgment looming. The man sees that he is a sinner and that a sinner's reward is eternal torment. The man has been told that only Jesus can save him. NORMALLY, the man begins to attend Church and studies his Bible. I stress NORMALLY because God, sovereign as He is, regularly does abnormal things, like His handling of the thief on the cross. Yet, it is true that God normally awakens a man who then, normally, learns more about his soul's plight and the possibility that Jesus can save him. The chap is learning. The man is not converted. He would go to Hell if he died.

I think the distinction between awakened, enlightened, and illumined is of the utmost importance. This is what I alluded to earlier when I noted that I am a man of this age. Today's Church largely considers an awakened man to be a born-again man. The man has prayed the prayer the formula has called for, and that is all that is required for the new birth in the eyes of most Churches. Sadly, the man believes his soul is safe, courtesy of the cheap grace his Church has propagated. This disastrous delusion is the product of the cheap grace period in history, the age we are living in. So, a man is awakened to his soul's danger. This man is under conviction. Enlightened comes in handy when discussing a soul, under conviction, that is learning about Christ and learning about the cost of following Christ. The enlightened soul may languish here for a short time or a long time. That is up to God. This soul may also count the cost of following Jesus and decide that the cost is too high. This awakened and enlightened man may turn his



back on Jesus and simply walk away. This soul is Hell-bound. He was not born-again, and he was not illumined nor converted. But, most enlightened men grow in their knowledge of God, grace, justice, and the beauty of mercy.

Now we come to the illumined man. Many in the Puritan age used enlightened and illumined as synonyms. I choose not to, as I fear I will enable the awakened soul to be confused with the born-again man. In short, cheap grace decisionalism forced me to make the distinction between enlightened and illumined. You need not trouble yourself with adopting my usage, so long as you can allow for and define what a man who perceives that his soul is in danger is called while he is learning about himself, his sinfulness, Christ, and Christ's ability to bring reconciliation with God ("awakened man"). This awakened man is concerned for his soul and seeks to be enlightened about Christ, His message, and His demands on a man's life. This man, awakened man, is not a regenerated man. If an awakened man does all that he can to learn about himself, Jesus, and life after death, etc., then he will be doing what I counseled, he will be "sinfully seeking," which is within his power. This awakened man is being enlightened. If the awakened and enlightened man dies, he deservedly goes to Hell. If he lives, his case is hopeful, and many sinful seekers find; that is, God regenerates them. But, I remind you, there is no merit involved in sinful seeking. Neither is eternal life promised to a sinfully seeking man. WHEN GOD SOVEREIGNLY RE-CREATES A MAN, the man has been awakened, enlightened, and illumined. The divine and supernatural light Jonathan Edwards spoke of has shone on and in this soul. The illumined soul has been changed by the Holy Spirit, and I mean radically changed. Life, eternal life, is his. This man has been sovereignly born-again, re-created by the Holy Spirit. This soul is God's handiwork. Yes, he has been converted. So, for me, born-again, re-created, illumined, and converted are essentially synonyms. Awakened and enlightened men have light. Hopefully, you and I have done our part to give the soul light. We are light-givers, but awakened and enlightened souls as I describe them, are not recipients of the "divine and supernatural light". This is the light and life that God alone can give. This light and life re-creates a man. This man is justified, adopted, and is an heir. This man is being sanctified.

There, I have done my best to clarify my distinctions and why I make them. Today's cheap grace decisionalism has made my distinctions not only useful, but necessary. Young lady, since you have been patient with me, I promise I will not tune you out the next time you are extolling the virtue of a Shih Tzu as a watchdog.

15) Bill, I've listened to you explain "sinful seeking", but I am still unclear about your meaning. Maybe I'm missing the reasoning behind your thinking.

I've included this note, because I realize that the ideas in #14 can use a bit of polishing.





My thinking on “sinful seeking” has been shaped by Jonathan Edwards and Dr. John Gerstner, to whom I obviously am indebted. God sent me to Dr. Gerstner the very night I needed Him to, and I am not ashamed to ruminate on that.

Dr. Gerstner would speak of there being the following types of evangelism, each beginning with S. The last shall be what he, Edwards, and I think is proper evangelism. Please weigh Dr. Gerstner’s criticisms of the other varieties of evangelism against the Scriptures.

1 — **Silence** — the Liberal Church; the Church doesn’t evangelize, because there isn’t anything wrong with man (so they maintain against the Bible’s clear teaching), so why talk of needing a new birth?

2 — **Sacramentalism** — This would be the position of the Roman Catholic Church. Their belief is that the rite, administered by the Church, will save a soul.

3 — **Surrender** — It asks a man to do what he isn’t morally capable of doing, surrendering. This is a fatal flaw. Until the Holy Spirit shines a divine and supernatural light on a man, the man cannot surrender. Because he cannot, he will not. This heresy was dealt with at the Synod of Dort 400 years ago. About 200 years ago Charles G. Finney dug up the carcass and breathed his life into it. Its popularity today is made possible by the Bible ignorance we see displayed so rashly and brashly without blushing today.

4 — **Shrug** — Dr. Gerstner maintained that all the Reformed Churches can do today is to shrug. His meaning is clear, the Reformed Church knows that #1, #2, and #3 are all wrong, and they can’t figure out what to do, so Reformed warriors shrug and do nothing. I will add to his thought that many of the Reformed adherents I’ve known actually utilize what is, to me, a formula of their own based on an idea put forth by a good man, D. James Kennedy. This is certainly superior to all of the above, but the approach is still formulaic, which means it is bound to become a stale 1,2,3,4 formula on men’s tongues. Formulas foster an approach that loses the sense of the individual, in my opinion. Good men may disagree with me here.

It is still fair to level the charge, as Dr. Gerstner did, that the Reformed Church, in the main, simply shrugs at this time in history.

5 — **Sinful Seeking** — This is, in my view, the Biblical method of evangelism. The phrase “sinful seeking” focuses on an application that will necessarily arise as a result of a Biblical approach to evangelism. It really does not adequately express Jonathan Edward’s and Gerstner’s complete thoughts on Biblical evangelism. I’m certain Dr. Gerstner selected sinful seeking purely out of his own necessity. He needed an “S” to continue his outline.



\*I intend to discuss this in depth, with a group of folks, on a video.

For now, let's assume that I have spoken with a twenty-five year old entrepreneur who owns a few laundromats and a few hundred storage units. This is our fourth lunch, and we have discussed various topics, ranging from the slaughtering of the Canaanites to a 1031 exchange regarding half his storage units. We have also discussed a husband's love and what that should look like as well as sin and God's justice. At lunch 3 I was able to explain the depth of man's depravity in depth. Week 3 had ended uncomfortably for my young entrepreneur, and he had made it known to me and everyone within hearing distance. It is now fifteen minutes into week 4's lunch, and my friend is not only under conviction, but he is awakened to his soul's danger. When I say "awakened," I am speaking of a man under conviction who is beginning to be enlightened; that is, he is beginning to learn about himself and Christ. Again, I am not speaking of a man who is born again and converted. I am simply speaking of a man who has for the first time truly understood that he went to sleep last night aware that the God Who is dreadfully angry with him is the same God Who must give him breath while he is sleeping. The man sees no reason why God should give him breath at all. The man understands that he is a subject of Satan and that his entire life has been lived in captivity to the Fiend. But, my friend has not been born again. The man is under conviction and is truly fearful that he faces a judgment. He is awakened to his soul's danger.

I have explained a few characters in Pilgrim's Progress to him, such as Mr. Talkative, Faithful, and Formalist and Hypocrisy. We have discussed Nicodemus and what Jesus said to him in the third chapter of John's gospel, and he comprehends that he needs to be born again by the Holy Spirit. He is intense. He implores me to tell him what he can do that is in his soul's best interest. I am feeling blessed, but I am determined that he will count the cost before going further. My friend is uncertain if he can exchange his life for Christ's cause. He understands that the Christian life is one where self-interest is not paramount, but that runs contrary to all he has believed about this life. I tell him I completely understand, the cost is high. **My friend will not be sold "cheap grace" at this lunch.**

The troubled soul has asked what he could and should do. See if you can agree with the advice I'm giving. "There are several things you can do to further your soul's best interest. Read your Bible every morning before you do anything else. Pray that God will help you understand His Word. Beg God for a new heart. Stop the outward sinning you are aware of. Attend the Tuesday Bible Study at Artie's house and come to Church and Sunday School. Put yourself in the company of devoted Christ followers as often as you can. Sit quietly and recount your particular sins particularly to God, and repent of them as well and as sincerely as lies within you."



My friend: But Bill, you told me last week that everything I do is sinful in God's eyes, as I have no true faith. You said that everything I do as God's enemy is a pungent odor, smelling of sulfur, in God's nostrils.

Bill: That is true, all you do is sinful because you don't do anything because God commands it, and you don't do things with a view to God's glory and pleasure. You are seeking an escape from eternal misery and that is wise, but yours is a self-seeking motive. You are simply trying to save your proverbial "rear end." You are motivated by self-love. Yet, what you are doing is all that an awakened sinner can do. I am hopeful that God is drawing you and intends to convert you, but I cannot promise you that.

I would be remiss if I did not address a question a few of you may have but have not voiced: of what benefit is sinful seeking if a man is not ultimately born again?

Actually, the benefit of sinful seeking is a startling but great one. An oft-overlooked biblical doctrine is that of "varying degrees of punishment in hell." I alluded to this earlier.

*"But in according with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds."*

*Romans 2:5-6*

What will be rendered? Verses 8 and 9 of chapter 2 tell us that God's indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will be poured out on each individual soul that has not been re-created.

Each man and each woman will justly receive the punishment due their crimes. Each will receive only the wrath they have stored up and not one drop more. I remind you this is eternal, never-ceasing wrath. How can such wrath be exaggerated?

*"Who knows the power of your anger?"*

*Psalms 90:11*

The sinful-seeker, by amending his sinful ways, will lessen the eternal punishment he justly receives. The sinful-seeker is, indeed, sinning when he seeks out of self-love, but this sin is not as sinful as that of continuing in his sinful ways with reckless abandon. This is likely the first time you've been made aware of this doctrine. In the accompanying videos, I will delve into this in more detail. For now, you might also study Luke 12:47-48 as well as Matthew 11:20-24. Lessening one's never-ending torment is of greater benefit than one might imagine. Allow me to paraphrase Jonathan Edwards by saying that the sinner in Hell would give the world and all to have one less sin on his account. One less sin would mitigate a tormented soul's agony, albeit, in





your view, that may appear to be of little consequence, that is because you have not correctly weighed the torment there is for a solitary sin. Infinite wrath deserves contemplation.

My friend: Have you known other men like me who were convicted and awakened who were not ultimately born again?

Bill: Yes, I've known many, but I am hopeful in your case, as yours is a deep conviction of sin and you despair of finding hope in anyone but Christ alone. You and I must both pray that the Spirit of God will illumine you.

My friend: What does illumine mean?

Bill: It's a term used by the Puritans to convey the idea that God's truth is made clear to a soul's eyes. An illumined soul is a recreated soul. The illumined man is a born-again man. This soul is a citizen of Heaven. God has bestowed the gifts of faith and repentance on this soul. Before a man is converted, he should seek with diligence to be enlightened. He should beg God for a new heart. It will be sinful seeking, but it is what an unregenerate soul is capable of. To not do all that is within one's ability is insanity. As I stated previously, many sinful seekers find, but I will not promise you that, as God is sovereign over the regeneration of men's souls. As I've told you, **I am but a privileged light-giver, I am not *the* life-giver.**

Our time together is over.

**As I will explain in the accompanying video, sinful seeking is sinful, but it is not as wicked as not sinfully seeking.**

### Final Thoughts

A) "We can predict to a large degree how a man will behave, but we never will know what an individual will do."

Sherlock Holmes to Watson

This, again, exposes the error resident in formulaic evangelism. Generalizations one is comfortable with about "men" can be helpful, but only when generalizations are held loosely. One's focus must be on a man, not men. This understanding, for me, must undergird all of one's Christianity.

B) I am critical of all formulaic evangelism, because inside it is hidden this poisonous assumption —



Sinful man can initiate saving faith that necessitates the Holy Spirit to regenerate

When you and I consider, truly consider, all that the Bible has infallibly related about the chaos of darkness that is fallen man, the natural born man, the foolishness of imagining that the hope of eternal salvation rests in the hands of this wicked, depraved, spiritually dead, sin-loving enemy of God becomes evident. **If the power to initiate saving faith must come from a man, not a single soul would be saved from Hell's fires.**

God alone must initiate true, saving faith. Only God can initiate true, saving faith.

*“Salvation is of the Lord.”  
Jonah 2:9*

Thanksgiving is called for. This truth spurs us on to evangelize. We realize that God has sovereignly chosen us to be light-givers and truth-tellers. God alone can and will give life to whom He wills.

As I said earlier, this heresy was dealt with thoroughly at the Synod of Dort. Actually, it was also dismantled by Augustine more than a thousand years before Dort. It is heretical, but it is the dominant view in the Church today. This speaks volumes about the Church today. The power to initiate true faith does not lie within a man. God alone can initiate true saving faith.

C) Dr. Gertsner, I believe, coined the phrase Predestinarian Evangelist. It is a fitting description of who he was and what we all ought to be. The Bible emphasizes God's sovereignty in predestination. The Bible also emphasizes man's personal responsibility in caring for his soul. These two declarations are not at odds.

D) THE GOSPEL was a favorite expression of my favorite disciple. He used it 9 times in Philippians, for example. The “gospel” was oft-used by Paul to declare his *message*. Consider,

*... for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He Who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*  
*Philippians 1:5-6*

The gospel is used here in reference to content, teaching and doctrine in a wider sense than we often find in usage today. A few verses later, Paul will speak of his “defense of the gospel”, a defense the size of the largest net seems to be in Paul's mind.



This is why I prefer “good message” to “good news”. Both are acceptable, but due to formulaic evangelism, “good news” has a usage that has become very narrowed. I like the broader sense for both, but I am fighting an uphill battle on behalf of “good news”. I do love the phrase “good news”, especially when it precedes and is coupled with a discussion of “bad news”.

If “the Gospel” was not, as is now in vogue, reduced so frequently to an emaciated rite, I would begin with this simple declaration: **The message of the Gospel concerns God’s kingdom, which may be defined as that place where Christ’s saving reign is evidenced and folks do as He wills.** Or, if you prefer, Ligonier Ministries’ thought,

*“The Gospel proclaims the arrival of God’s blessed kingdom in our Savior and that the only way to become a citizen of this kingdom and achieve eternal life is to trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus alone.”*  
*John 14:6 and Romans 1:1-6*

The Gospel, as I wrote early on, is akin to a glorious and perfect diamond. A wise soul studies it from every angle, under variant lighting. Its depth, clarity, and beauty have captivated the greatest minds and deepest souls ever to have been created. Its cost and value are inestimable. Please revel in God’s wisdom. Do not caricature the precious Gospel.

I close with this, the first mention of the “good news,” the “good message” of salvation:

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*  
*Genesis 3:15*

The Bible details for us the battle between Satan who has led men captive and triumphed over them and the final triumph by the Church and its head, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Warrior Lamb, and His once enslaved but now freed men. As I wrote, the Gospel is a diamond of unparalleled beauty. Look at it from every angle, and you will find yourself transfixed.

#### ‘Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee

‘Tis not that I did choose Thee,  
For, Lord, that could not be;  
This heart would still refuse Thee,  
Hadst Thou not chosen me.  
Thou from the sin that stained me  
Hast cleansed and set me free;  
Of old Thou hast ordained me,





That I should live to Thee.

‘Twas sovereign mercy called me  
And taught my opening mind;  
The world had else enthralled me,  
To heavenly glories blind.  
My heart owns none before Thee,  
For thy rich grace I thirst;  
This knowing, if I love Thee,  
Thou must have loved me first.

Josiah Conder, 1836

I’ve chosen to repeat these verses, because truth and beauty are wed in these simple lines. If you are capable of telling me how this should be sung, please kindly enlighten me.

As we close our discussion of truth-telling to a fallen world, Christian thought, and evangelism, let’s permit just two stanzas of Charles Wesley’s hymn, “And Can It Be That I Should Gain?” instruct and sober us:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick’ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, all in Him is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th’eternal throne,  
And claim the crown through Christ my own.

We preach with equal ardor, God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. They do not need to be reconciled. As Charles Spurgeon said, “Friends don’t need to be reconciled.”

*“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God was pleading through us.  
We implore you, on God’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”  
2 Corinthians 5:20*



*“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*

*Colossians 4:6*

*“The Bible makes it clear that the whole church is to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.”*

*Alistair Begg*