

**MY WALK
WITH
JESUS**

A THEOLOGICAL TESTIMONY



JOHN BORUFF

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I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. *—Psalm 77:11*

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CHAPTER 1
CHILDHOOD
(1990 – 1995)

I was born in Arlington Heights, Illinois on May 29, 1985. My mom's side of the family lived in the Chicago area; and my parents were living in Mundelein, a suburb. I have very faint, yet fond memories of living in that house; also, my dad used his camcorder a lot, so I got to watch myself on video over and over. *Superman II* came on TV one night; and my dad saw that I really wanted to see it, so he taped it with the camcorder. I probably watched that movie 100 times when I was 4-6 years old. I had a Superman costume that I practically wore year round; and I understand my mom even let me wear it to the grocery store. I also pretended to fly by putting a fan in my face and balancing myself on a chair. *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street* were a big deal too. I had a stay-at-home mom; she was a good mom. My dad had a strong work ethic; he was an engineer. I had a friend behind my house named Danny and a "girlfriend" named Alesha. I had a very happy, healthy early childhood.

The only religious thing during this time was our attendance to Catholic church services. I would pray "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep" and "The Lord's Prayer" at bedtime. I remember one time when I was alone in my room upstairs, with only my mom in the house, down in the kitchen. I was very still and quiet for about 30 seconds staring at the sun going down out my window. I heard a voice say, "John." It was so distinct that I thought my mom had called me. So I went downstairs, but she said she didn't call me. I related

this experience to an Assistant Pastor when I was in college; and he told me it reminded him of the story of the child Samuel, when God called him, but he had mistaken it for Eli's voice (1 Samuel 3:1-5). I had no idea of that story all the way up until college; or, I had never connected those two things together. Pretty amazing!

Although it was not intentionally part of my religious education, my dad taped *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983) when it came on TV. That short cartoon movie, along with others came to be one of my favorites, and I would watch it a lot. I think it made a subconscious impact on my views of the world: Scrooge was an evil, mean, rich greedy miser who is visited by three spirits; and almost falls into the flames of Hell in his grave. This planted in me seeds of the fear of Hell for the wicked at an early age; although it was subtle and brief. Afterwards, Scrooge repents of his sin of greed; and becomes a nice guy; and gives lots of money away to the poor, and to everybody. I think "Night on Bald Mountain" in *Fantasia* also contributed to my early views of Hell: the scene where the devil plays with the souls of the wicked, and demons, and throws them into the flames.

I loved it when we visited my Grandma and Grandpa Lyons, my uncles; and my Grandma Boruff (my dad's side) out in Western Illinois (Aledo, IL). I have very fond memories of my Grandma Boruff; she really loved me; and had a very tender, and affectionate spirit. We would also see my Uncle Jim (my dad's brother) and his family, and I would play with my older cousin Philip. My mom's dad was one of the police chiefs in Chicago during the 50s, 60s, and 70s, and he retired in the early 80s. He saw a lot of action with the hippie counterculture and lot of the political and social

stuff of the 60s. My dad's dad died before I was born; he was a farmer, and came from a long legacy of farmers in the Boruff family; my dad's mom was a paralegal for a short time before she married, as an assistant to her father, who was a lawyer. *Law* and *farming*:--these are the two industries in my direct lineage. It made both of my parents have a very strong work ethic.

Although I never was really athletic at heart, every once in a while I would play tee-ball, baseball, basketball, or throw the football. Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls and Bears were at a high point; and it gave us (especially my dad) a real high to know that we lived in the Chicago area and "Da Bulls and Da Bears" were so popular. I grew up with a respect for black people; and from a young age, I wonder if Michael Jordan had something to do with it. I also had occasional black friends as either a neighbor or school mate. *Mr. Rogers* eventually gave way to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (the cartoons and movies); I liked Michelangelo the best, because he was a cool skateboarder dude. Karate was something I took interest in when I was around the ages 6-9. I was especially impressed by the heros in *The Karate Kid Part II*, Mr. Miyagi and Daniel LaRusso. But my mom didn't let me get into karate, because she was probably afraid I'd get hurt. She had me do gymnastics instead: that was fun, but I didn't do it for long.

I think it was around 1992 that my dad had to relocate us to Lexington, Kentucky for a job transfer. We lived in a very, very nice house in Palomar Hills. It was three stories! There were two central staircases; and a huge chandelier in the foyer. It was, to say the least, a very large house. I had a good friend named Scott who lived a couple of houses

down; I really liked playing *Doom* and *Unreal* on his computer. His dad was really computer savvy, because of his line of work; and this was around the time that PCs (personal computers) were just starting to become popular. Back then they cost anywhere between \$2,000 to \$3,000 minimum. After several years of begging, my parents got us a Sega Genesis, which was great; I liked playing *Sonic the Hedgehog* and other games on it. I also had a dual cannon Super Soaker; cap guns too; oh, and a lot of flying, explosive fireworks—all legal in Kentucky. Fun, fun, fun; and entertainment; and games; and school...ugh. *Jurassic Park* was a big deal to us, because computer graphics in movies had reached a point where it made the dinosaurs look like they had come back to life. My brother was really into those toys. Kids at school started to bully me around ages 6-9; and then I regrettably took it out on my defenseless sister when I got home. This eventually led to a feeling of isolation from my siblings and parents. I felt like a fifth wheel; and like I didn't belong.

My first romantic girlfriend was a girl named Erika; I remember we went to see *The Lion King* with my mom and brother and sister—and scandalous—we drank from the same soda straw! We would also talk to each other on walkie-talkies at night time. That was in 4th grade, when I was 9. I really liked Jim Carrey's crazy character in *The Mask*. At school, for the reading program, I really got into R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* and Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories* books:--which, although they helped me learn how to read...I found they came to be a bad spiritual influence on me...as I would be tormented with demonic dreams, fearful nightmares; and not knowing that I had opened myself up

to evil spirits, by indulging in occult literature. Eesh! In time, Jesus set me free from all those entertainment-induced, subtle, occult influences.

For a make-your-own-book project I made a picture story of 3 kids who went down to Hell; and were rescued by Jesus shooting light out of His hand and blowing the devil's head off, with lots of blood squirting out. It was originally titled *Hell Corpse*, but my teacher said, "Make it *Underground Corpse*, because Hell is a bad word." Censorship of Hell even then...heh. A Jewish girl spoke out in class after my reading; and said she really liked my story. When I told my Grandpa about the story, he jokingly said I might be the next Stephen King. I did not know the Bible very much then, other than *The Beginner's Bible*; so my view of Hell, I think came from a TV show my mom and dad were watching, with medieval paintings of Hell and demons. I peeped through the railing of the stairs and saw a part of it; when I asked if I could watch, mom and dad said, "No; go to bed John."

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

Shortly before we moved, my dad became persuaded by his older brother (who was with the Presbyterian Church in

America, PCA) that being a Catholic was Biblically wrong; and that praying to the Virgin Mary was very wrong. My parents had a bit of an argument over it; but they eventually settled the matter, and we started attending United Methodist church services.

CHAPTER 2
A SKATER GETS SAVED
(1995 – 2000)

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

With these friends, and others, I eventually got to looking at porn magazines:--which caused me a lot of problems later. Also, sometimes I would have a bully at school—in either Kentucky or Wisconsin—because I was short and easy to pick on. And, not knowing Jesus at all, with pent up and frustrated emotions, I would take it out on my helpless younger sister Julie, and would bully her. Something I greatly regret to this day. Also, our house in Wisconsin was

haunted by demons. Julie, who was in 1st grade, said she saw a blue ghost appear in her room; and there were also occasions of demon-possessed toys; one of her dolls with a dead battery spoke by itself; and also, a clown toy with wheels, moved by itself following her and her friend around the basement, even though nobody pushed the “on” button. I wonder if it was my fault for reading the *Goosebumps* books; and bringing demons into the house; or, perhaps, Spiritualists lived in the house before us. I know I played with an Ouija board with Tom once; and that probably did it. Spiritually, things weren’t so good for me from 1995 to 1998. But God was with me in my ignorance.

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

down there. I'll do confirmation here." I just saw it as a convenient way out—to get it over with. *It was never done with an understanding of salvation from Hell by repentance and faith in the cross.* It was just like I went through a series of religious classes; and this was the "graduation" ceremony. I was not born again of the Holy Spirit. Yet, I wonder if some good seeds were planted.

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

I could have become a prep. My family was nearly wealthy enough, but it just didn't appeal to me. Abercrombie & Fitch was the favorite clothing brand of the *preppies*.

I just didn't understand it. It was like they were *proud of being rich and showing it off*. Listening to grunge and alternative rock sort of put a proto-Franciscan spirit into me; creating a love for simplicity; and even a tattered, frayed-pants look, at the opposite end of the spectrum. Not that I knew anything about actually being poor or spiritual, because my family was anything but poor; I had thrifty parents, but not poor ones. *My sentiments were anti-corporate, anti-business, anti-rich, anti-anything that looked like materialism*. I hated that idea; my music showed me it was all shallow and hollow. And that was probably the *only* good thing, other than rhythm and melody, that I learned from my style of rock music. It was Kurt Cobain's "grunge" idea; I also picked it up by being friends with Kyle in West Bend, and going to his house, seeing that his stepdad was a blue collar plumber, and their house was much smaller than anything I ever lived in. So, I gained a respect for simple living. You could be happy, funny, and enjoy life; and you didn't have to have a mansion, or a castle, or even come close to wanting something like that.

I still believe this generally agrees with the teaching of Jesus (see Matthew 6 and Luke 16). Take especially His teaching in Matthew 6:25: "*I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?*" (However, this doesn't mean you have to wear holes in your jeans to be saved from Hell.) When Rebekah came into my life later in college, and I was just starting to learn about St. Francis of Assisi in Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water*; she showed me a movie about him called *Brother Sun, Sister*

Moon, which was a big deal to “Jesus freaks” in the 70s.¹ It brought to the surface all these old sentiments I had about anti-materialism, grunge, and simplicity.

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

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

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

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

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

David³ was another friend I had in 8th grade. We got in big trouble together once; and God used this incident to really humble me and prepare me for a *true conversion* to Christ. Since I lived so close to the school, we talked about how fun it would be to sneak into the school late at night, when everyone was gone; then, we could just goof around and run around the school all by ourselves! It was a fool's idea—probably mine; a very 13-year-old, deviant, juvenile delinquent, boy idea. (When I lived in West Bend the year before, I had set a whole field on fire while goofing around with a friend and a box of matches. But we escaped from getting caught by the firefighters who responded to the scene.)

Well, we managed to break into the school. I had a health class on the first floor. While in it, I unlocked the window, which had no screen on it. Nobody saw me do it; I sat down at my desk, finished class, and continued throughout the school day. We had arranged for David to sleep over that Friday night. Since my room was in the basement, and there was a door, we slipped out the door when everyone was sleeping. We dressed in all black, pretending to be spies (probably influenced by *GoldenEye 007*, a popular

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

game on Nintendo 64); but we also didn't want anyone to see us on our journey through the night. We didn't want to steal or break anything at the school; it was just a stupid game done for the thrill. We covertly ran, walked, and hid our way down to Leesville Road, and we arrived at the middle school window I had unlocked. I think this was around midnight.

When we broke in, it was *fun*. It was such a *rush*. We simply opened up the window, and crawled inside. We ran all over the school halls in our sock feet, goofing around. It was then that I saw a little red light flashing over one of the doorways; and a feeling of fear came over me. I realized we had triggered some kind of motion sensor. Perhaps someone knew we were in the school; perhaps it was like an ADT system for burglars. (And that's exactly what it was.) Not really fully sure what the light was, the fear remained in me, as I urged my friend and I to get out of the building; my friend was slow to get out, and was not at all worried, but I was. After slowly making our way down to the window from which we entered, and crawling out:—we had a snack of granola bars. As we were eating in the darkness, a group of men came around the corner with flashlights. At first I thought it was a bunch of young guys like us, but rough, and up to no good. I thought they were a gang or something. “Hey! You! Stop!” And they ran after us. Were they gangsters looking for trouble? We split up and hid under some classroom trailers nearby. They were a group of *police*; the silent alarm in the school had alerted them. Eventually, they found us and put us in the back of a *police car*. We waited until our dads came to pick us up. It was very embarrassing and humiliating.

Shortly after this, a clerk of the Wake County Courthouse in Raleigh, North Carolina gave me the option of going before a judge, and possibly going to Juvenile Hall; or doing 24 hours of community service. I chose community service as a janitor's assistant at Lake Lynn Community Center.

After this, a friend named Bryan invited me to "Hellfighters":—its full name was Hellfighter Youth Church, the youth ministry of a non-denominational charismatic church. I didn't really know that though. I was under the impression it was a secular "youth club" or something for grunge culture, skaters, and "freaks" (which it was). But it was still a youth ministry. Still under the weight of my guilt from my foolish and dangerous action with the school, the word "Hell" was pressing on my mind, and my heart was convicted of wrongdoing, humiliated, and soft enough to hear what I believe was the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time. Up until then, I went to Catholic and United Methodist church services on Sundays with my family, but I had never heard the Gospel as a message of *repentant faith in the cross that saves from Hell*. Nobody had ever told me that; and it was perfect timing that I heard that message when I did. It was a short and to-the-point altar call at the end of the youth sermon. I raised my head at the youth pastor's request to confess my commitment to *live my life for Jesus as Lord*, so my sins could be forgiven, and I would not have to go to Hell (lordship salvation). It was at that moment of faith, that my life was changed; and I was born again to a new life of faith and growth in holiness (obedience to God's Word; living by the Bible).

Hellfighter Youth Church and another church (which is where my new friend Luke, his dad was pastor; and where I

would choose to go to church freely):--both were non-denominational charismatic churches. I remember one time when Luke and I were at a prayer meeting, and I saw Luke praying with fervency and emotion, his eyes closed, his hands raised in a kind of ecstasy, swaying back and forth, having some kind of deep experience of God. I didn't understand it, but I knew *I wanted it*. I saw that he was making *strange sounds* with his mouth as he was praying. I had never heard anything like it. Eventually I came to understand this as *speaking in tongues* (1 Corinthians 14). Following his example, I just made this *my regular way of worshiping*. As I continued to seek God's face, I discovered He had given me the gift as well. Closing my eyes, focusing on the Lord, raising my hands, swaying, dancing, as I felt led, and praising and worshiping God with all my heart to English worship songs, and with the sounds. Another phenomenon happened as I worshiped and prayed with the sounds; although it didn't always happen, but gradually more and more, when I worshiped this way, concentrating on Jesus and worshiping in tongues:--I would *feel a tangible, manifest presence of the Holy Spirit, surround me and comfort me* with holy reverence and adoration of God. This feeling of the Spirit in worship I understand is called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And I believe I can be rebaptized in the Spirit with fresh fillings every time I choose to worship God in this way.

CHAPTER 3
A NITPICKY CHRISTIAN
(2000 – 2005)

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

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

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

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

away from my mandate to warn the world of God's commands to obey His law!

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

I still retained a strong interest in alternative rock and nu metal during this time, which was a real battleground for my flesh and spirit (as in Romans 7). Bands like Korn, Limp Bizkit, Slipknot, Machine Head, System of a Down, Coal Chamber, Deftones, Sepultura, and especially SOULFLY were what I listened to for fun; and I would scream and shred my metal guitar in my room for hours

every week, expressing my depression, anxiety, and frustration at my sin, the flesh, the world and its temptations, and the devil; and I would write and record my own Christian metal songs. Thrown into the listening mix were some Christian metal bands, which, musically weren't as good, but I still liked them because of their themes about Christian warfare. Living Sacrifice, Project 86, P.O.D., Blindside, Embodiment, Selfminidead, Extol, Soul Embraced, Eso-Charis, Luti-Kriss, etc. My dad eventually confronted me about the profanity he heard in the secular metal bands; because he did not want it playing loudly throughout the house to influence my brother and sister. I respected him for that, but I don't know. I would have really liked to have more of a relationship with him as a person. He did nice things for me sometimes, like buying me things and making skateboard ramps. But instead I turned to God for affirmation, love, and support.

I became so convicted about explicit lyrics, that I used a sledgehammer and smashed all my rock and metal albums that even had one cuss word on them, which was really hard for me, because although *I had personally given up cussing* (Colossians 3:8)--I loved the rhythm and sound of this music so much. Walmart released censored CDs though, so I eventually cut corners. Slowly, but surely, through will power and prayer, and accountability with Luke, *I gave up looking at porn*, because I became convinced it was adultery of the heart to look with sexual lust at women you're not married to, and that can send you to Hell (Matthew 5:27-30). After this, I became just as strict with movies and TV; and the beach, the pool, and any venue of public swimming where there are bikinis, etc. I didn't

want any media influencing me towards cussing or sexually immoral images. *I was very nitpicky with my family about what they watched on TV* (Psalm 101:3), but mainly because I didn't want to be tempted, or compromise the purity of mind I was trying to maintain—a clear conscience before God (Acts 24:16). *And I managed to destroy a very large amount of our family's movie collection, with my parents' permission.*

CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGICAL FORMATION
(2005 – 2010)

UNC Pembroke was the college I went to. While I was there, I was confronted with the idea of “declaring my major” in 2005, my sophomore year. I was really at a crossroads. I had originally set out to get a B.S. in Business and Accounting, but none of that appealed to me. I was just doing it to make my parents happy; that way, I thought, I would be able to make a lot of money when I graduated. But that went against all of my *anti-materialistic sentiments*¹ (as mentioned earlier). It had already begun to show in my economics and accounting classes—with a D and F. I had tried, but my heart was not really in it; if I continued down this path, I feared my parents would be wasting lots of money, I would be miserable doing something I didn’t want to do, and would probably end up with a very low GPA. My goal in college was to make As and Bs like I mostly did in high school.

So, I went to the “Meditation Room” in the university center to pray alone. While I was in there, I prayed, “Lord,

¹ *Materialism in philosophy* is the idea that there is no spirit world (and so, it’s linked with atheism and naturalism); the view that the only thing that exists is the physical, material world that we can touch, taste, see, hear, and smell. Not too distantly related is the common economic definition of *materialism*, of which I am speaking: *the tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values*. I believe this is what Jesus condemned when He spoke against the rich and desiring wealth as an end in itself. The Lord Jesus Christ was anti-materialistic.

which major do You want me to choose? I am here by necessity; my parents have made me come here. This decision will affect me for the rest of my life. Please show me Holy Spirit: which major should I choose?” And I heard a voice say, “*Isn't it obvious?*” And I inwardly knew I should choose the Philosophy and Religion major; I had seen the sign for it, and felt drawn to it; in fact, I yearned for it. When I told my parents, I had some resistance, because it was not seen as a money making degree; but eventually they consented. All throughout college, I never doubted that I was called to the ministry, or that this would be the degree to prepare me for it. Mainly, throughout my Philosophy and Religion program, I got As and Bs! And afterwards, I chose more of those Bible, theology, and religion classes to fill up my electives:--just because I loved it so much.

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

Perhaps his Arminianism indirectly rubbed off on me, but I think I was always of an Arminian bent, because of my

Catholic, United Methodist, and non-denominational charismatic backgrounds. I had never been taught Calvinism, not once, not even one hint. It had always been something foreign to me. So, when people at the Baptist Student Union (BSU) started talking about a belief they called “*once saved, always saved*,”² I was immediately turned off by this. The sense in which this was conveyed to me, and the context in which it arose in conversation, seemed to always take on the character of excusing carnality, immorality, and moral compromise of the lives of these “once saved, always saved” Southern Baptists.³

For a while it was hard for me to respect Baptists, because I just saw them as hypocrites that excused their carnality, and were not really trying hard enough to live for God. I kept on hearing them say things like, “We’re all sinners, but I know I’m forgiven. I got saved when I was seven when I asked Jesus in my heart, so I know God forgives my sins automatically, whenever I sin, and I know I’ll go to Heaven when I die.” This sort of idea was totally foreign to my *Arminian view of salvation*, which requires daily holy living and vital faith in the cross—but if you backslide, then you could go to Hell. That was what I understood naturally when I just read the Bible.⁴ Eventually I got J. Matthew Pinson’s *Four Views on Eternal Security*; and came to identify with the Wesleyan Arminian view; but I couldn’t believe in entire sanctification. I came to agree with the Baptists that sanctification is only progressive and gradual

² Also called *eternal security*.

³ Perhaps this was a form of *antinomianism* or cheap grace.

⁴ Also called *conditional security*.

in this life. Perfection in holiness only occurs *after* the death of the saints, which is called glorification. This is the point that prevents me from being a 100% Wesleyan on all points of my soteriology. But, just as well. I believe this is the most accurate, Biblical view to take on these issues.⁵

Some of the professors I had were Bible critics and would introduce me to ideas I absolutely hated. I guess they thought this was necessary to give me a full orb exposure to all the ideas out there. Over time, it really began to wear on my soul, but the Holy Spirit, and the foundation that was laid in my charismatic churches back home, and the *Pentecostal worship* had given me such an assurance of the reality of God, of salvation from Hell, and of *the witness of the presence of God's Holy Spirit*:--that I was pretty bold, if not daring at times, in confronting my professors in class. One time, during one of my Bible classes, I said, that in my opinion, John Dominic Crossan is a heretic.⁶ Well, he is!

⁵ My view of salvation aligns the closest with Assemblies of God and the Free Will Baptist Church. With other Wesleyans, I also believe that some apostates can get saved again, and return to their first love, which is Christ (Revelation 2:4-5).

⁶ A liberal Bible scholar who asserts that *all* of the miracles and teachings of Jesus in the Bible are not literally true, but were made up by Christians later on. This is called Biblical criticism. Josh McDowell's *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* and Norman Geisler's *When Critics Ask*, are solid evangelical responses to Biblical criticism. Geisler's book especially helped me when one of my professors started making claims of Bible contradictions. I found that most of what unbelievers call contradictions are, in fact, not contradictions; and even when Bible critics do seem to have a point, they tend to *exaggerate* minor issues as if they were major indictments against God. This way, they feel they have *excused themselves* from the responsibility of fear-

This atmosphere served to strengthen my faith rather than weaken it. But in the middle of rational debate, I came to value the witness of the Holy Spirit; or feeling God's presence in Pentecostal worship, as the surest foundation of all that I believed intellectually in my head; and of course, a deep seated, immovable fear of Hell. The practical application of unbelief in the Bible is atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, and the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25):--all of which were options I chose consistently against at college, out of a total fear of Hell. But I saw other Christians fall away from the Lord often; the temptations and lures of the pleasures of sin—especially of *the frats*, mixed with the skepticism of their professors, eventually eroded their souls. I would sometimes plead and beg some of my BSU friends to come back to God; but they would not; their hearts had been hardened (Hebrews 3:12-13).

I learned how fickle and unstable even Christian friends can be. And the verse had a deeper meaning, "*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man*" (Psalm 118:8). This gave me an opportunity to get closer to the Lord and develop more of a personal devotional life. *2006 was a very prophetic year for me;*⁷ this is when I started to receive dreams from God, and experience more signs and wonders. I kept a journal called "Supernatural Experiences"

ing Hell and living a holy life for God. The same kind of reasoning is used by atheists (see Romans 1:18-20).

⁷ In the summer of 2005, a camp counselor friend showed me his copy of Kris Vallotton's *Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry*. I flipped through it and came to a description of an open vision; and really started to desire that for myself. My friend was a big fan of Bethel Church (Redding, CA).

and had it in 4 hardback journal volumes, which are now gone. I learned about sermonindex.net and listened to many audio sermons by Leonard Ravenhill, David Wilkerson, and A. W. Tozer. I practiced contemplative prayer a lot; and was excited to experience *direct revelations from God through dreams, visions, voices, impressions, and signs*. The whole revelatory dimension of the Spirit was opening up to me (I think they call this an “open heaven”);⁸ and it was so amazing; *miracles of physical rain would happen on occasion in answer to faith filled prayer*, as God was building up my faith! I wanted to experience the amazing things of God that the prophets in the Bible did, like Elijah and Elisha; I didn’t think there was anything arrogant in this, I just thought, as a charismatic, this is what God has to offer the body of Christ! I eventually read James Goll and Julia Loren’s *Shifting Shadows of Supernatural Experiences* (2007), which my dad bought for me on Christmas; and it really confirmed in my heart that all these things I was experiencing were for real! I also learned that the devil is in the details, when you open yourself up to these realms, and you have to practice Biblical discernment in order to sort out God’s voice from the devil’s voice; and especially be

⁸ ElijahList.com, Wikipedia.com, and Amazon.com all played a role for me to explore the realms of prophecy and Christian mysticism. I would also go to the UNCP library and research related subjects in the religious reference encyclopedias, because I was just so thirsty and personally interested. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* online also introduced me to contemplative prayer, and “mystical theology” greats such as G. B. Scaramelli, Augustin Poulain, Adolphe Tanquerey, and Arthur Devine. I learned about the “apostolic-prophetic movement,” the Vineyard churches, the Kansas City prophets, and the Toronto Blessing movements.

on guard against New Age deceptions and teachings. Ira Milligan's *Understanding the Dreams You Dream* began to be a must have resource to help me in Biblical dream interpretation. I was coming to see myself as a "Christian mystic."

There was a small Christian bookstore in Pembroke, NC called "The Potter's House," and I would go in there sometimes and browse and buy a spiritual book I was curious about. This began a process towards learning about spiritual gifts, Christian mysticism, and eventually mystical theology. On the internet, I discovered James Goll and Patricia King and Sid Roth's *It's Supernatural*. I learned a lot about dreams and visions. I was really interested in deepening my awareness of God; and of personal spiritual formation, because there was a vacuum being created by my skeptical religion professors. With the help of that bookstore and amazon.com, I was able to buy lots of cheap books whereby I could discover *supernatural areas of thought* (including Vineyard related things). Among those I read were:

Derek Prince's *They Shall Expel Demons*

Richard Ing's *Spiritual Warfare*

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

Hank Hanegraaff's *Counterfeit Revival*

James Beverley's *Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing*

Guy Chevreau's *Catch the Fire*

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

In February 2006, I had just started a short lived campus ministry called Fusion, and used it as a launching pad to host a DVD presentation of Kent Hovind's *Lies in the Textbooks* in the university center. The science faculty and others protested with signs and a rebuttal seminar. I had posted flyers all over campus that said: EVOLUTION IS A LIE; but when the faculty responded that I was personally accusing them of being liars, then I changed the flyers to EVOLUTION IS FAULTY. A Baptist pastor persuaded me to change the program videos to *Unlocking the Mystery of Life: The Case for Intelligent Design* and *Icons of Evolution: Dismantling the Myths*.⁹ He said Hovind came to his church once and was very disrespectful. Good that he did too, because not soon after, Hovind was imprisoned in January 2007 for tax evasion, causing a big scandal. So, the change in the program served to strengthen my cause for intelligent design rather than weaken it. However, I still think Hovind's program is the best. Whether his tax eva-

⁹ http://www2.uncp.edu/pineneedle/news/2006/020906_evolution.html

sion was real, I don't know; it seems to have revolved around his Dinosaur Adventure Land being recognized by the state as a Business rather than a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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

¹⁰ Since this experience, Rebekah and I have fairly regularly had "angel sparkles," appear to us to guide our thoughts, especially since September 2008, when we got married. I have found that if you are too open in talking about angel experiences with even spiritual Christians, they tend to respond with skepticism or jealousy, and might even quote Colossians 2:18: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (NASB). They always quote this out of context: the verse was originally referring to Gnostic religion (see *The NIV Study Bible* note). Over time, and after having read the lives of Sts. Columba, Hildegard, Francis of Assisi, Vincent Ferrer, and Ignatius of Loyola, who all saw visions: I saw they practiced "prophetic secrecy" as I like to call it (Amos 3:7). Visions are for personal faith-building. And the Christian who thinks he will be heard by blabbing about his visions, will soon find that most people think he's a fool, and that he's just mistaking his imagination for visions from God. So, keep it a secret!

My eyes were open and I could see the floor and the dresser; but because I was in a trance, I was also able to sense the spirit realm around me just as much as the physical realm. In the spirit realm, it was like there was a 30 foot extension to my tiny dorm room, and the angel was standing in this room extension.

In the physical realm, the angel would have been standing in the tree outside of my window—the 3rd floor of my dormitory. He asked me, “Who wrote *The Pursuit of God*?” And I said, “A. W. Tozer.” Then the central air conditioning vent in my room—as it was blowing air—began blowing air more intensely and it became loud and rushing (Acts 2:2). It was the Holy Spirit, and the sound of this rushing Wind and spiritual Water flooded my being. This loud rushing sound resonated in my head. Then the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord came upon me (Isa. 11:2), because I remembered that God’s voice sounds like rushing water (Ezek. 1:24; 43:2; Rev. 1:15; 14:2). As a divine coincidence, I had recently told my family this when we went to see a rushing waterfall in the Appalachian mountains.

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

I had several short dreams, but I only remember one of them. I dreamed that the pastors from a certain charismatic

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

INTERPRETATION

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

in the dreams and visions seems to have been signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit—confirming the message of Tozer.

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

The final straws that broke the camel’s back were a series of conversations I had with my pastor. The first was while I was reading Derek Prince’s *They Shall Expel Demons*. I was telling him all about it; and what a great need there is for deliverance ministry today. He dismissed it quite easily; and said it was an unhealthy obsession with demons.

The second was an occasion when I was with the pastor and his wife in the pastor’s office. I asked him what his interpretation of the following text was, because I wanted to know what the meaning was: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until*

Heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19). I asked my pastor the meaning of this text—was because I was being very legalistic, nitpicky, and censorious towards my family members about right and wrong. I saw by judgmental attitude about even the smallest issues of morality to have some level of support by this passage. Yet, I also felt that I went too far at times; and I wanted to have my pastor’s wise input on the matter. Maybe he could give me some practical advice on how to best interpret and apply this obviously important teaching of Jesus. And maybe this would help to bring peace to my home.

So, after I read them the passage, my pastor said, “BORUFF! YOU PUTTIN’ ME ON THE SPOT?” Uh...I was just shocked and surprised at this reaction. No, I wanted his godly advice on how to understand and live out this passage of the Bible! Especially since I heard several people in high school and college always say, “Judge not lest ye be judged.” And say other similar things against living by the rules and laws of the Bible. Not only was the pastor’s response rude and surprising, it revealed to me that he apparently felt convicted of wrongdoing—of being somewhat of an antinomian...of downplaying the role of God’s moral law in the Christian’s life. And worse yet, that I should start to see *him* in the same way I saw all the rest of these non-judgmental types who downplay God’s rules.

ANTINOMIANISM is a word I became familiar with in college: it's the heretical theological idea that the New Testament, Jesus, and the Gospel have brought in an era of grace and forgiveness—and therefore, Christians don't have to live by the rules and regulations of the Old Testament law in order to be in a right standing with God, and *even the moral law is no longer in effect*, in the antinomian view. I came to see lots of Southern Baptists and other Christians held a view like this towards the moral rules in the Bible. It took me a while to separate the concepts of the *ceremonial law* and *moral law*; and that Christians are only under the moral law by faith in Christ. As it says in the *39 Articles*, “No Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.”¹¹

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

One comment is all it took. My pastor said, in front of his elders, “I'm not a fire and brimstone preacher.” I had men-

¹¹ VII: “Of the Old Testament.”

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

So, *my pastor's rejection of deliverance ministry, God's law, and Hell-fire preaching*--that's what made me give up on associating with my home church (basically the influences of Derek Prince, John Wimber, Ray Comfort, and Leonard Ravenhill). I didn't want to even try to get along with that kind of spirit. So, I set out on a journey of faith, really just trusting in God, and not trusting in man. Psalm 118:8: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Don't think that just because all I did here was quote one sentence of what my pastor said, that I wasn't hearing him out. I just don't remember the conser-

vations in their entirety; but I do remember the sense in which I was coming from; and the sense in which he was coming from. Ultimately, in my view, he was an *antinomian charismatic*¹² who thought that emphasizing worship, and music, and Bible teaching—is the way to do ministry. No Hell, no law of God, and no casting out demons for him. Well, I just couldn't swallow that. I'm thankful for the *Bible teaching and Pentecostal worship* atmosphere he let me build a foundation on—but when it came to these other things—I couldn't agree with him. They were just too important to me, especially as a growing Christian.¹³

I found another non-denominational charismatic church in Durham, NC, hoping to find more *holiness* among a youth group. But sadly, I was disappointed. The youth pastor defended his use of *cussing* as culturally relevant for our times, and I reported this to the pastors; and understood that

¹² By the grace of God, and His revelation, I've come to see myself as a *Wesleyan Pentecostal*. How comforting and assuring it was to discover that John Wesley, William J. Seymour, Smith Wigglesworth, David Wilkerson, and other classical Pentecostals have held to similar views as I have: without me doing anything much more than just reading the Bible and trying to live it out. *Antinomian charismatics* or “lawless enthusiasts,” on the other hand, have been with us in all ages, as the worst of heretics: the Gnostics, the Alumbrados, the Anabaptists, Johannes Agricola (d. 1566), the Philippists, Tobias Crisp (d. 1643), Anne Hutchinson (d. 1643), the Quakers, the Ranters, the Dispensationalists (this group could have influenced my pastor).

¹³ This pastor is currently in Raleigh, NC and has a non-denominational Charismatic church that broke away from Rock Church International in the 1980s. This is not the church that had the Hellfighter youth ministry. Today, they support MorningStar Ministries, Bethel Church (Redding, CA), and Catch The Fire. In my opinion, these are all antinomian (non-judgmental and *not holiness-oriented*) Charismatic ministries.

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

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

But what an *encouraging word* it was to have Bredesen prophesy this to me in light of the opposition I was just re-

ceiving from my pastor of 6 years! We talked a bit; he said, “I have to go up to Washington, DC to see my agnostic brother.” Then he kissed my forehead; and gave me his blessing. One month later, he died.¹⁴ My mom cried when she heard this.

I went back to college; and was browsing through the religious books in the library as usual; and I randomly came across a book: John Sherrill’s *They Speak with Other Tongues*, and skimmed through the contents and saw chapter 2: “Harald’s Strange Story”—IT WAS ABOUT HARALD BREDESEN! ABOUT HOW HE EXPERIENCED *XENOGLOSSY* (SPEAKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TONGUES) IN POLISH! This happened within *weeks* after me having met the man! I had received a blessing from a church father, a true prophet, a leader of the Charismatic Renewal,¹⁵ and I had no idea who he was! God set it all up.

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

After reading a series of books during this summer, I noticed that they all magnified the

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harald_Bredesen

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charismatic_Movement - This article says, “The term ‘charismatic’ was coined by American Lutheran minister Harald Bredesen in 1962 to describe what was happening in main-line Protestant denominations. Confronted with the term ‘neo-Pentecostal,’ he preferred to call it ‘the charismatic renewal in the historic churches.’” Wow! *That’s* Harald Bredesen!

topic of divine love. These books were Leonard Ravenhill's *Why Revival Tarries* (1959), John Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1777), Hannah Whitall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875), Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* (2001),¹⁶ and finally Os Guinness' *The Call* (2003), and when I reached page 14 of this last book—I came to conclude that *divine love is the highest good*. After coming to this conclusion through a revelatory impression, I chose to sit still and meditate on it. As I sat still with my earmuffs meditating on the common teaching of divine love in this succession of books, I heard a quiet mental voice say, "*There is nothing more important than love.*"¹⁷

God had made it clear to me that obedience to the moral commandments of God is to love God and man: that "*Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*" (Romans 13:10). And "*this is the love of God,*

¹⁶ Foster's book really played a role at showing me the four Christian spiritual traditions, which I came to adopt: Evangelical, Holiness, Contemplative, and Charismatic. This probably played a role in my formation of the phrase "Evangelical mystic" around 2009; a phrase that John Fletcher, the early Methodist preacher, had come to centuries ago, without my knowing until much later (see Robert Tuttle, "John Fletcher's Evangelical Mysticism," in *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, pp. 138-142).

¹⁷ This agrees with 1 Corinthians 13.

that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). It is not a non-judgmental, allowance of sin; not a tolerance of carnality in the name of friendship and rapport; but is a holy, pure, divine love from the Holy Spirit that energizes obedience to the moral law of Scripture. I think John Wesley’s *Plain Account* influenced me the most in this view, because it was full of Biblical references.

On September 25, 2007, Kerrigan Skelly visited UNC Pembroke to do some open air preaching. This was an amazing coincidence! I had just been watching his open air preaching videos on YouTube a few days ago. And now, here he was.¹⁸ I stood by him as he preached; and he even let me preach a bit. This was my introduction to open air preaching. It got me out of my comfort zone.¹⁹ After he left, I started to do open air preaching by myself on campus. Like me, Skelly had been influenced by Ray Comfort and his program *The Way of the Master*, which featured methods of evangelism on the streets and other public plac-

¹⁸ Prior to this in 2006, I did a biographical research paper on George Whitefield for my Religions of America class. It was based on the first 100 pages or so of Albert Belden’s *George Whitefield: The Awakener* (1930). This book profoundly impacted my view of open air preaching, extempore preaching, revival, etc. I came to identify with John Wesley’s Arminianism during this study. I was also hit by a sign from God: his name was John, so am I; he led a campus ministry, I just started Fusion; WHITEFIELD AND WESLEY WENT TO A “PEMBROKE COLLEGE”—and so was I! God was probably showing me I have a similar calling in my life to Wesley.

¹⁹ http://www2.uncp.edu/pineneedle/news/2007_2008/092607_NEWS_evangelist.htm

es. Now Comfort has a YouTube program called “The Comfort Zone.” Heh.

It was around this time period that Rebekah and I met. She and I loved each other immediately. She fulfilled a detailed “wife specifications” list that I had written and prayed through for 2 years! We spent hours and hours talking about ecclesiology, house church (especially as it relates to the 1 Corinthians 14:26 practice of open-participation in a meeting), denominations, church government, and church corruption. She had been influenced by house church ideas; and I was trying to see where she was coming from. Two of her favorite movies she showed me were *Brother Sun*, *Sister Moon* and *Cotton Patch Gospel*. And when she showed me the “Relationships” DVDs by Bob and Peggy Hughey, I could really tell she was serious; as much as I was.²⁰

September 8, 2008 is when Rebekah and I got married; and times were tough for several reasons. The recession had just hit; and although I had graduated, it was hard for many graduates to find a decent job. *Both of our parents did not want us to get married*, because of our economic situation, and for other parental control issues going on. Rebekah and I had come to accept “house church” ideas from one of her professors (mainly her), who had also got her converted. He also taught her to distrust the organized church and all ministers in denominations.²¹ He was influenced by the Jesus Movement; and since the 1980s was in-

²⁰ <http://www.alifestyleoflight.com/videos.php>

²¹ A lot of this was a well-meaning reaction to what he saw as *church corruption* in denominations. No doubt, what I would later acknowledge to be the bad fruit of the Seeker-Sensitive Movement.

volved in the house church movement, and heavily influenced by Watchman Nee's, Gene Edwards', and Frank Viola's ideas (especially *Pagan Christianity?* which had just come out in a new up-to-date form). There was some Biblical purity in the teachings; the main idea was to focus on developing Christian friendships, and not get lost in the "bigness" of the institutional church.

Yet there were *anti-clerical* ideas he held to (anti-clergy, anti-pastor): like an Anabaptist or Quaker. In this view, for a church to have one pastor contradicts the idea of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). But this can't be true, because the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) were written specifically for single pastors of churches. Also, the word "pastors" is used in Ephesians 4:11. To be anti-pastor is also to be anti-sermon, which undermines preaching the Gospel (evangelistic sermons), and the regeneration of man by hearing the Word preached (1 Peter 1:23; Acts 16:14). Over time, God showed us that "*godliness with contentment is great gain*" (1 Timothy 6:6); and that whether it is godliness in the institutional church or godliness in a house church, it doesn't matter. I also struggled with my call to the ministry; and denominational guidance. I had seen a "prosperity gospel" being pushed in certain Pentecostal churches that I did not want any part of;²² and I just did not know where to go.

We set out to Arkansas where Rebekah's professor friend was; and his godly family. We were married outside of the library on the grounds of Harding University; and a crowd

²² Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Assemblies of God.

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

Eventually, a friend of the professor's opened their house to us around Albuquerque, New Mexico; and we lived with them for about one year. I was in total *dismay*. I had no direction; no idea for what kind of a job to look for. I was into the house church ideas; and became persuaded that American churches and pastors had gotten so corrupt, that there were no openings for any of the kind of preaching I would like to engage in. We did some open air preaching at the University of New Mexico, right around the time when the elections were between Barack Obama and John McCain. I was rooting for McCain as the lesser of the two evils; but my view for societal change was much more to-

wards evangelism, and much less about voting for presidents. One man gave us \$20 when we were preaching out there; the first of several like occasions.

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

get us two contacts in India through friends who had gone on mission trips.

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

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

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

After New Mexico, we shifted around and lived in various states; but to tell all that happened in this time, would be more than I would want to. To put it as simply as possible: 2009-2010 was VERY HARD TO BEAR. During this hard period, Mary was born on May 26, 2009. And what I learned was that if you want to go up in the kingdom of God, then you must go down in the eyes of the world: it's a humility thing. I started writing and blogging; and eventually put out my first manuscript on the web called *How to Experience God*, which was a summary of my experiences in contemplative prayer and prophetic revelations--I took G. B. Scaramelli's *A Handbook of Mystical Theology* and Augustin Poulain's *Revelations and Visions* as earmarks of spiritual discernment; or a skeleton on which to build my theology of spiritual experience.²³

²³ While in a bookstore, I came across Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon's *The Seduction of Christianity* and Douglas Groothuis' *Confronting the New Age*. These books helped me to filter out some of my beliefs about the supernatural. Back in 2008, I had already come to see that Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* was polluted by New Age ideas; and that being called a "Christian mystic" wasn't good enough, wasn't specific enough theologically, and wasn't really what I was aiming at. So, at this point around 2009, I came to call myself an "Evangelical mystic."

The manuscript was endorsed and a foreword was written by a popular charismatic writer, but when he and the publisher spoke about *book marketing*, traveling and selling my book from church to church, and when I criticized turning my Father's house into a marketplace (John 2:16); and how a lot of pastors are just like Pharisees, the guy said, that unless I take these statements back, "There's no way you're getting *in on this*." And at that point, I knew that man was corrupt; and he was just merchandising his spirituality like a religious salesman. Like old Tetzal, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings—the soul from Purgatory springs." Same thing, just different times. Today this man holds \$300 conferences on how to hear God's voice; and that's how he makes his living! Can you spell S-I-M-O-N-Y?²⁴

I started to develop a really radical, rogue like, prophet-in-the-wilderness mentality around this time. I'd had that idea for years;²⁵ but now I was really *starting to shed a lot of religious conventions off of me*, something that a woman rightly prophesied to me at a charismatic church. I wasn't going to be confined by *churchianity* anymore. God was going to lead me, and guide me, period. From 2010-2013 I worked as a security guard, contemplating what God has in store for me; these were not pleasant times, but I was glad to have a job—it was better than all the janitor, sub sandwich maker, assembly line, retail, odd ball jobs I had be-

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

²⁵ Leonard Ravenhill's sermons in 2004-2006 on sermonindex.net probably influenced me in this independent, non-conformist spirit.

fore. But being a security guard does not mean you have a regular schedule; or a regular life. My *desire to preach* was satisfied by writing, blogging, street preaching in Raleigh, NC, and making YouTube videos. Frustrated as I was that *I couldn't be preaching in a pulpit on Sunday mornings in a church*, I had a vague conception that the kind of sermon content I had in my heart was something that the church crowd would not likely accept: because all I would do is preach about sin, righteousness, judgment, and deeper spiritual issues (aka. "revival sermons"). And I came to learn later that most church boards *despise* that kind of preaching: especially the subjects of HELL, REPENTANCE, and OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW.

CHAPTER 5
CALL TO REVIVAL MINISTRY
(2010 – 2015)

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

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

¹ If only we had known then about ratracerebellion.com, sykes.com, and flexjobs.com—Rebekah could have been doing a customer service job or something online, she could have comfortably supplemented my low income, and we could have lived in a better quality rental home; but that’s all part of the school of hard knocks. You live and you learn.

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

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

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

I began to closely study the lives of the saints: Paul of Thebes, Antony the Great, Saint Patrick, Brigit of Kildare, Benedict of Nursia, Columba of Iona, Hildegard of Bingen, Dominic of Osma, St. Francis of Assisi, Vincent Ferrer, Ignatius of Loyola, and Teresa of Avila. I still have some closer inspecting to do, but singling out prophetic and mystical Protestant saints who had similar experiences and miracles on par with these Catholic saints—has been a really hard task, and has taken years of sifting and reading and rethinking. But at this stage I think I’m going to then include: John Knox, George Fox, John Wesley, Charles Finney, William J. Seymour, and Smith Wigglesworth. As far as I can see, after Seymour’s death (d. 1922), the quality of Pentecostalism just got worse and worse, especially through the influence of John G. Lake,² positive confession, and prosperity gospel ideas beginning in the 1940s-50s Healing Revival. There are *very few* Pentecostals that I would consider to be on the same level with the Catholic saints; but perhaps Wesley and Wigglesworth came close.

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

² Lake believed Mohammed was a prophet of God (*John G. Lake: The Complete Collection*, pp. 911-912), that “God intends us to be gods” (as quoted in Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon’s *The Seduction of Christianity*, p. 219), he condemned the Assemblies of God, William J. Seymour, and associated with E. W. Kenyon (*John G. Lake*, pp. 474-479); he endorsed Sadhu Sundar Singh—a universalist (pp., 365, 693), and he repeatedly condemned all use of doctors and medicine in favor of the prayer of faith only. Gordon Lindsay (d. 1973), who organized the Healing Revival, was a big fan of Lake. Today Lake’s legacy carries on through healingrooms.com.

has produced.³ But in the Protestant realm, it is convenient to find “mystical theology” if possible, without the Catholic errors. One such book was treasured by John Wesley: John Lacy’s *The General Delusion of Christians, Touching the Ways of God’s Revealing Himself to and by the Prophets* (1713). However, it wasn’t until much later that Wesley read it, regarding which he journaled on August 15, 1750:

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

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

³ For example, Augustin Poulain’s *The Graces of Interior Prayer*.

ley was undecided about the French Prophets, and he was likely unaware of Lacy's grave sins and errors; but to give credit where credit was due, he saw his book as a good treatment on miraculous gifts.⁴ In 1750, the same year Wesley wrote in his journal about Lacy, Thomas Church's *A Vindication of the Miraculous Powers* was published by an Anglican charismatic priest; and discussed miracles among the church fathers, healings, deliverances, dreams and visions, the gift of tongues, and a defense against Conyers Middleton, the cessationist. Another Anglican charismatic priest, Thomas Boys, published *The Suppressed Evidence* in 1832, one of the most remarkable studies in miraculous gifts. In there, he proves that Luther, Calvin, Knox, and a number of other 1500s reformers were actually what we might call "open but cautious" charismatics.

Smith Wigglesworth's *Ever Increasing Faith* (1924), it seems, was the first official Assemblies of God teaching on miraculous gifts, soon followed by Donald Gee's *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (1928) and Harold Horton's *The Gifts of the Spirit* (1934).⁵ In the 1940s and 50s, there were a lot of spurious healing revivalists, which to me, might be hard to peg down for authenticity and integrity. But if there was anything real, or any true teaching on miraculous gifts that could be trusted in any degree from that era, it might be

⁴ John Lacy, *The Spirit of Prophecy Defended*. Edited by J. Ramsey Michaels (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), p. xviii, note 6.

⁵ If we include the teachings of William J. Seymour as "unofficial" or non-denominational Pentecostal teachings, then we have the whole Azusa Street Library edited by Larry Martin. Although Seymour was trying to represent the fledgling Apostolic Faith denomination for a few years, he eventually parted ways with it and became independent.

from Gordon Lindsay: *Commissioned with Power* (a total of 513 pages). I've read Dennis Bennett's *The Holy Spirit and You* (1971), which was okay—but it seemed a bit dry; it didn't seem to overflow with guidance on prayer or visionary experiences, like I've found in Catholic mystical theology.

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

At this point in my historical reasoning on the miraculous gifts, I had a dilemma when comparing MacArthur with Deere as theologians and men of God. There is nothing more delicate than a discussion on the Holy Spirit and the power of miracles that proceed from prayer in Jesus' name. Soteriology was at the basis of my dilemma. Although I am a Wesleyan, as such, I am a lordship salvationist, and tend to lean in MacArthur's direction, as expressed in *The Gospel According to Jesus* (1988). Although I affirm condi-

tional security, I'm right there with MacArthur in affirming that obedience to the commands of Christ are necessary for salvation. Deere, on the other hand, comes from a long career with Dallas Theological Seminary, renowned not only for its dispensationalism and cessationism, but also for its no-lordship antinomianism. Deere comes out as an excessionist in his book, which is very encouraging and insightful; but I still had this lingering question in my mind about Deere's soteriology. MacArthur rightly observes:

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

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

That was the seed from which the no-lordship gospel sprouted.⁶

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

So, now when turning to Deere as a charismatic theologian, considering these things, I had some questions. Deere affirms repeatedly, with John Wimber, that miraculous gifts such as healing are given for multiple reasons, not the least of which is authentication of the "gospel" message. But just what is the gospel message according to Jack Deere? Upon a further reading of his book *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, my fears were relieved, as he not only lifts up justification by faith alone (which was to be expected), but also many occasions when he rebukes pornography, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, and refers to deliverance from other specific sins such as lust, anger, and fear (pp. 72, 79, 81-82, 109). Although Deere has times when he refers to a misuse of God's law or man-made religious rules (pp. 79,

⁶ "A 15-Year Retrospective on the Lordship Controversy"
<<http://www.gty.org/resources/articles/A100/a-15year-retrospective-on-the-lordship-controversy>>

189)—on page 91, he sounds quite Wesleyan as he quotes Psalm 119:120: “My flesh trembles in fear of You; I stand in awe of Your laws.” Although Deere favorably refers to Paul Cain as an example of a man who demonstrated and taught him about the gift of healing; after the book was published, however, Deere withdrew his fellowship due to Cain’s drunkenness, homosexuality, and hypocrisy.

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

I know I sort of digressed into a charismatic theology side track for a few paragraphs here, but in this time period there has been a lot of thought along these lines. But from 2011-2014, my theological mind became more occupied with SOTERIOLOGY than ever before. I had been listening to Andrew Strom (“Are You Walking in Romans 8?”) and Paul Washer (“Modern American Christianity”) since 2006; and every once in a while the thought would come

back to me: *The true Biblical Gospel is not being preached by today's pastors; and further, there are also many open air preachers who are not preaching a balanced Gospel message.* In 2010 this was especially the case; most street preachers were just LAW PREACHERS; only naming sins, but never coming around to the message of God's forgiveness of sins through justification by faith in the cross. On September 11, 2011, I put "A Friendly Rebuke to Open Air Preachers: Balanced Gospel Preaching with Law and Grace" on my YouTube channel, because I was so aggravated by this. According to one fairly well known street preacher, that video caused quite a stir in the open air preaching community. To me, the true Gospel of the New Testament was not being preached in either the pulpit or the street. The pulpiteers were preaching seeker-sensitive messages and street preachers were just preaching law and Hell; but neither were PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

So I went through a sort of crisis of Gospel searching: *what is the Gospel preached in the Bible?* The true Gospel. God saw the unspoken prayer of my heart, and gave me a dream that totally transformed my mind; and brought almost absolute clarity concerning the New Testament message of salvation. On July 14, 2011, I had a dream that revolutionized my spiritual life. Being a firm believer that God speaks through dreams (Acts 2:17), I dreamed that my wife and I were at a United Methodist summer camp I worked at for several summers. I had in my hand *The NIV Study Bible* and Steve Harper's *The Way to Heaven: The Gospel According to John Wesley* (2003). As I came out of the car in the dream (at night), I saw the camp director and someone else looking out the office window at me. (In real life, this

camp director was eventually fired for misusing the camp's money to start his own private sports camp.) I felt the dream meant the body of Christ is desperately in need of hearing the Gospel that Wesley and the Puritans preached during the Great Awakening. Eventually I studied a series of Wesleyan books on soteriology,⁷ and developed a good understanding of *repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, judgment, and eternal punishment*:—and generally the “order of salvation.”

I also went street preaching in Raleigh, NC whenever I could. As I embarked on my evangelistic quest, I got connected with another street preacher whom I will call George. He leaned more to the Calvinist (George Whitefield) view; and I more to the Arminian (John Wesley) view; but we balanced each other out by mid-2012; and decided that predestination is a doctrine that can be set aside for the common cause of evangelism. God made it clear to us that *repentant faith in the cross saves from Hell and empowers holy living*; and on this Gospel we could agree. Influenced by “New Calvinists” like John MacArthur, John Piper, and Mark Driscoll;⁸ and his passion for apologetics, eventually George balanced me out, and enabled me to de-

⁷ Steve Harper's *The Way to Heaven: The Gospel According to John Wesley*; Kenneth J. Collins' *Wesley on Salvation and The Scripture Way of Salvation*; Harold Lindstrom's *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*; Albert Outler's *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*; Thomas Oden's *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*; also Reformed books such as Christopher Morgan's *Hell Under Fire and Is Hell for Real or Does Everyone Go to Heaven?*; Martin Luther's *Commentary on Romans*, chs. 3-8; and most of Joseph Alleine's *A Sure Guide to Heaven*. I renamed my site wesleygospel.com.

⁸ I am personally not a fan of Mark Driscoll.

velop a respect for aspects of Reformed and Puritan theology. But I am still very Arminian.

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

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

The dream experience I had, the experiential and even charismatic nature of John Wesley's encounter with Luther's view of salvation, became to me a DIVINE REVELATION ON SALVATION: that *between John Wesley and Martin Luther, the Biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ can be found in the middle*. There is supernatural evidence to back this up. Somewhere there is a middle ground between these two Gospel prophets; and I wished to strive to enter it as through a narrow gate (Matt. 7:13). In the back of my mind, I couldn't shake what I read years ago in Rebecca Springer's *Within Heaven's Gates*: "Not long after this, Frank said, 'We will go to the grand auditorium. Martin Luther is speaking on 'The Reformation: Its Causes and Effects.' This will be supplemented by a talk from John Wesley. There may also be other speakers.'"⁹

I came to accept virtually 90% of Wesley's soteriology (or theology of salvation); however, I came to reject his doctrines of infant baptism and entire sanctification, where original sin is said to be exterminated by the Holy Spirit; so, Luther and his view of progressive sanctification appealed to me as a settlement; also Jonathan Edwards' views of Hell completed the full picture for me, because I felt both Wesley's and Luther's views of Hell were too weak, and needed to be supplemented by Edwards (and by John Bunyan).¹⁰ By now, I had put together my own "order of salvation" in my e-book *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: Salvation from Hell and the Way to Heaven* (2014), which was

⁹ Rebecca Springer, *Within Heaven's Gates* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), p. 55.

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards' *The Wrath of Almighty God* and John Bunyan's *Sighs from Hell*—both edited by Don Kistler.

graciously endorsed by Greg Gordon, the Founder of SermonIndex.net. He said:

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

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

It was frustrating and hard, but in a way I wasn't surprised; in another way I was. I had thought the seeker-sensitive movement was bad and widespread, but for years I entertained the thought: *what if there are exceptions?* Well, I learned the hard way: a tolerant, comfortable, and non-controversial ministry model that avoids revivalism

and evangelism concepts—is basically the kind of lukewarm spirit that Pharisee pastors and their church boards want (see Matthew 23, etc). And I would have none of it! That’s not God! That’s not what He’s putting in my heart to preach! *God’s calling me to preach about Hell, repentance, and faith in the cross!* The pastor almost always looked guilty and ashamed when I mentioned these things,¹¹ but he knew he was stuck and that he had a comfortable church board to please.¹² Galatians 1:10: “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

I was really depressed after this experience, but the Holy Spirit assured me with signs and communications that I was on the right track, and that I was doing the right thing for sticking to the Gospel message and not watering down Hell or compromising the repentance message one iota. Clearly the pastor wanted a “*love-and-relationships-only*” *ministry model* to work with; no Hell, no repentance, and no holiness (he could barely be shaken from the view that EVERYONE IN HIS CHURCH IS SAVED). One elder even said this in a sermon: “Everyone in this church is saved, so there is no need for an evangelistic sermon.” C’mon! *Everyone* is saved in your congregation...without a shadow of

¹¹ Once he said, “I don’t even know if God has forgiven me of my sins.” I replied, “You need the witness of the Spirit in Romans 8.”

¹² See John MacArthur’s *Ashamed of the Gospel* and Gary Gilley’s *This Little Church Went to Market*...which substantiate that this view is the reality of the pastoral ministry situation today; it’s not a self-delusion. Others may find this hard to understand, but the evidence is right there in your face!

doubt? There were at least 30 people in regular attendance! It was an easy-believism spirit for sure. I was glad to leave that ungodly church, although there were one or two people I was going to miss. The pastor even fell into a porn addiction shortly before I arrived, and confessed it to the elders, but they kept him on as their pastor—with no disciplinary period. It was convenient that he stay.

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

Especially odious to Wesley was a *sentimentalist hymnody* that tended to deal with Christ overfamiliarly, neglecting His deity. Wesley urged the avoidance of “every fondling expression,” and especially the impertinent use of the word “dear” as addressed to God...¹³

I came to appreciate Robin Mark and the Vineyard’s worship albums the best (John Wimber years). The *Shout to the Lord* albums with Hillsong’s Darlene Zschech weren’t all that bad either. Styles of preaching and worship music had pretty much been set in stone for me at this point. I also ex-

¹³ Thomas Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 213. Impertinent means ill-mannered or rude.

plored black gospel music a bit, and I settled on the Georgia Mass Choir and John P. Kee as my favorites.

GOD'S CALL TO INDEPENDENT REVIVAL MINISTRY

I had experienced in the natural what God had already been speaking to me in the spiritual. The rejection and disqualification from the pastor at that church seemed to be in keeping with God's will. In fact, it brought a sense of resolve and assurance that God is actually calling me to be a *revivalist* instead of the standard seeker-sensitive pastor.¹⁴ What this means and entails specifically is still hidden from me in God's mysterious plan. But through dreams, visions, and signs, God has made several things absolutely clear to me. At the risk of sounding like a self-deluded fool, I will share a few of these experiences (2 Corinthians 12:11). At this point I am fairly settled that these revelations are from God; and not of myself, nor the devil. I feel the need to share these revelations for my future edification; and to confirm the message for other men of God who feel the Holy Spirit has been speaking similar things to them.

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

¹⁴ See "40 Judgments Against Modern Pastoral Ministry" (April 16, 2014) | "The Teachings of the Pharisees" (September 27, 2014) – on wesleygospel.com.

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

Then I made it to an airport with my little bike. I saw Leonard Ravenhill! A little English boy greeted him in the hallway—about 8 years old; perhaps his grandson. I played on the bike in the hallway, saying, “Meditation leads to revelation; and revelation to awakening.” I forget what they talked about, but it didn't matter. Ravenhill was very fiery and energetic in discussion with the boy; and was preaching against some sin they both were against. The little boy was a “chip off the old block.” As the boy went to the bathroom, Ravenhill stood by the door, and smiled at me.¹⁵ When he did this I examined his face and thought: “Is this man the real deal? Or just another glitz-and-glam conference speaker?” (Because he was coming home from a conference like a lot of these “prophetic movement” guys do at these prophetic conferences.) Then the boy came out, and Ravenhill said, “I'm going to spend the night in PRAYER!”

¹⁵ I have the impression that the 8 year old boy is me. Because I was riding a little kid's bike; also, when I was about 8 years old, Ravenhill was in the last year of his life. To me, it might be God's way of saying in spirit I'm like one of Ravenhill's grandsons.

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

4/24/12 – I Am Called to Be a Ravenhill-Finney Revivalist. I dreamed that I was in a large mansion in Heaven. The walls were all white; and the mansion was being prepared; it was not ready yet. Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Perhaps it was my heavenly mansion I saw. There was a lot of fine, luxury furniture all over the place, but the furniture was covered with cloths or plastic. I saw Leonard Ravenhill! He greeted me and we talked; and walked around the mansion in various rooms, and then we settled in one room. And I had a face-to-face conversation with Leonard Ravenhill; it was *so* real. We were standing about 10 feet apart. He gave me a special edition of *Why Revival Tarries*, with an ornate design on it. I said, "I've read *Why Revival Tarries* and *Revival Praying*, should I read anything else?" "Yes," he said. "Read ALL of my books; and read all of Charles Finney's books too. *You are called to be a revivalist.*" I said, "There are modern abridged versions of Finney (the Parkhurst ver-

sions); are these okay?” “WHAT!?” he said. “THEY’RE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT!? No. READ ALL OF CHARLES FINNEY’S BOOKS IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT.” “Okay,” I said. End of dream.

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

And I came across some kids who were about middle school age (or freshmen in high school). They were black, white, and maybe Hispanic. There was what I thought to be a young black man street preaching to them, just down the sidewalk from Paul Washer. At first I thought, “Okay, cool, they’re both spreading the kingdom of God in this area.” But then there was an aggressive black kid who jumped on him, and the young black preacher had to kick him down off the ledge! Someone scoffed: “Oh, he’s getting *angry* again!” It looked like chaos as all the city’s youth crowded around the young black preacher—listening but crowding him into an awkward corner.

Then I was with the kids listening to the young preacher. At one point I wanted to get out of the crowd of young

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

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

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

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

9/25/13 – Be Patient for Ministry. I dreamed that a loved one was questioning why I did not go into ministry right after college. It just didn’t seem to fit her cause-and-effect logic. As a matter of course, the natural thing for me to have done, would have been to seek youth pastor jobs in the Assemblies of God fresh after graduating from college. I told her frankly, “Because God wants me to be PATIENT and wait for when it is time for me to minister.” Then she

said, “Oh, well I don’t want to talk about this—that’s enough.”

3/28/14 – Black Christians Are More Supportive of Street Preaching. I dreamed that Rebekah and I were sitting in an open air church service outside of the church I just got rejected at. Most of the people were black; and some I think were from the movie *Let the Church Say Amen*. After they took up the offering, there was a time of prayer. A lady prayed for a middle aged white man sitting by her, “Lord, I pray that you would bless _____; and our church’s street preacher. And God, I pray that You would lay it on John’s heart to go street preaching.” And I was encouraged; and I raised and pumped my hand in strong support.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. He affirmed a need for THE DELIVERANCE MINISTRY.

5/10/14 – From Gospel Tent to Church Building. I told Rebekah, “The gospel tent is the means of finding that group of people” (who will be the startup congregation of a church plant). And she SAW AN ANGEL fly by the ceiling fan! Confirmation! This basically confirms what I read about A. B. Crumpler’s founding of the Holiness Church of North Carolina and Leonard Ravenhill’s founding of the Calvary Holiness Church.¹⁶

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

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS ABOUT MINISTRY

The practical conclusion of all of this is: *I am not called to be a denominational pastor*, which is actually the opposite notion I was under during my studies at UNC Pembroke. On the contrary, *I am called to be a revivalist*: which I be-

¹⁶ See “Church Planting God’s Way: From Gospel Tents to Church Buildings” (May 10, 2014) – wesleygospel.com.

lieve entails gospel tent evangelism and revivalism; a small church plant; *independent, non-denominational, Pentecostal, pastoral ministry*; and appointing elders to assist me as the Holy Spirit leads (episcopal church government at first, but presbyterian polity if other pastors are appointed). I should look to found an interracial church; with special attention given to African Americans. There have been prophecies over me that I will also have a “ministry to the nations,” which might mean international traveling and preaching, if not just the international reach of WesleyGospel.com. I have a burden for the homeless; and I can’t shake this feeling that God wants me to do a work that is not only similar to Ravenhill and Finney, but also William Booth and the early Salvation Army. All of this is going to require lots of money, which means I need to learn the art of economic empowerment for myself first, before I go and teach and help others; and that means lots of patience.

THE TOP SIX REASONS WHY CHURCH PLANTERS FAIL

Based on 5 articles written by church planters who failed, and who took the time to share the reasons why they believe they failed;¹⁷ I have listed below the common denominators between them. May I have the wisdom and tact in the Holy Spirit to manage the Lord’s money with care and patience; and be careful in guiding souls.

¹⁷ Perry Noble’s “7 Reasons Your Church Plant Might Fail,” Wade Hodges’ “10 Lessons From a Failed Church Plant,” Geoff Surratt’s “7 Reasons a Church Planting Effort Fails,” Steve Swisher’s “5 Reasons Why I Failed,” and Eric Starkey’s “Why I Failed at Church Planting.”

1. The pastor is not prophetically guided, just a copycat.
2. The pastor lacks financial independence; and so, he compromises with Jezebel spirits and ungodly big givers.
3. The pastor didn't form the church into a theologically united community that loves each other.
4. The pastor, if at one time prophetically guided, comes to compromise the original visions given for the church.
5. The pastor was arrogant and unteachable.
6. The pastor was a quitter.

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

WHERE OUR FAMILY IS RIGHT NOW

Receiving visions for God's call on your life is one thing, but waiting in patience and faith for them to pan out is

quite another. You have to learn how to move on with your life and not have unrealistic expectations about the immediacy of fulfilling such dreams and visions. Right now, I'm mainly just occupied with being a breadwinner, husband, and father. My biggest focus right now is building a solid sales career. I went for such a long time without any guidance in the area of *business*, but thankfully in the recent past, my brother Matt coached me a little bit. Another issue for me is rebuilding my *family* tree. Rebekah and I come from less than ideal family situations; and we're doing all we can to start all over and live in peace (1 Cor. 7:15). This was the motive behind why I did a study of commentaries on Ephesians 6:4 and put out my e-book *Nurture and Admonition* (2017).