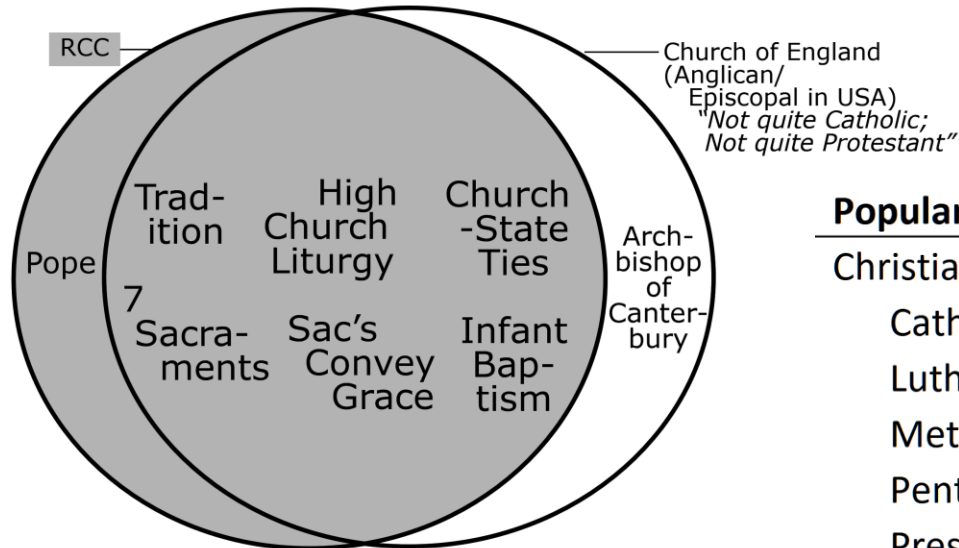
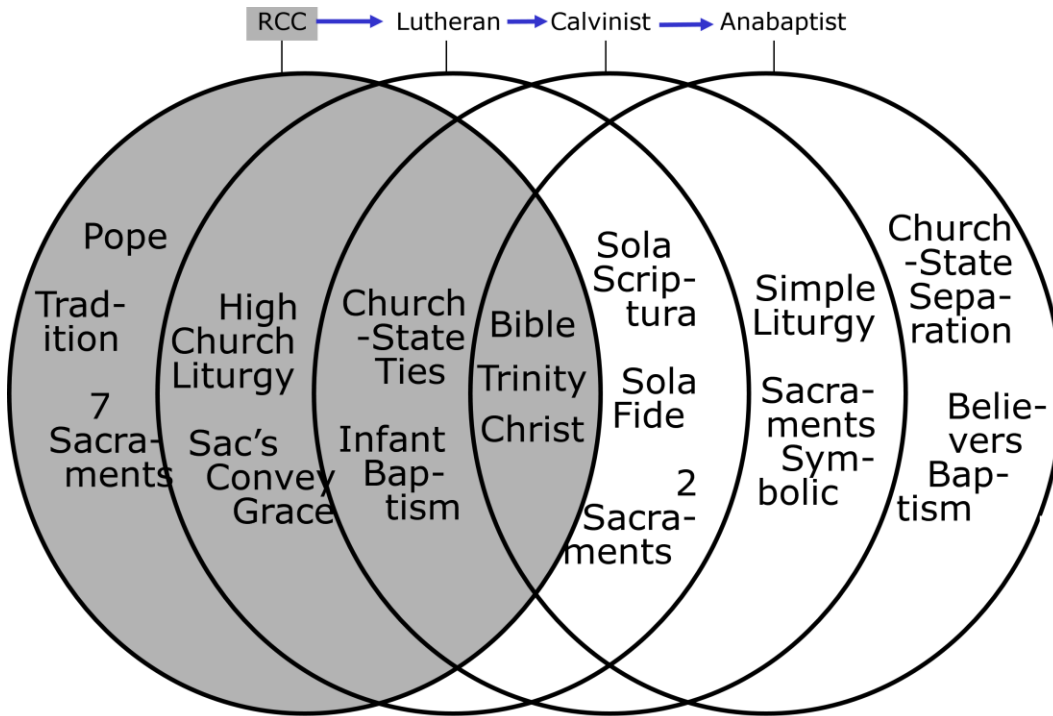


Church Development During and After the Reformation



Popular Religions in DuPage, IL

Christian	55%
Catholic	38.46%
Lutheran	5.06%
Methodist	1.68%
Pentecostal	1.14%
Presbyterian	1.03%
Baptist	0.69%
Episcopalian	0.48%
Mormon	0.35%
Other Christian	6.19%
Jewish	0.18%
Eastern Religion	0.04%
Islam	2.00%

Some Issues with the Protestant Church

Since the Reformation, Protestant denominations have gone wrong in these ways (my opinion):

- Traditionalism, e.g. not moving far enough away from the theological errors of Catholicism
 - Lutheran and Calvinistic/Reformed Churches
 - Lutheranism still retains the sacramental nature of baptism and communion;
 - The Reformed church took a while to leave behind the state/church ties, but has yet to leave behind infant baptism
 - The Anglican church, often considered Protestant, but is not really (e.g. C.S. Lewis)
- Liberal Theology, e.g. downgrading the inerrancy of Scripture, acceptance of gay marriage, etc.
 - Most mainline Protestant denominations: Presbyterian, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Church of Christ
- Secularism, e.g. over-valuing the traditions and opinions of men and new revelations
 - Anglican/Episcopal, Many mainline Protestant denominations, e.g. Methodism
 - Pentecostalism, Word-Faith movement, Some interdenominational mega-churches
- Legalism, e.g. over-regulating the conduct of its members in manners of dress and behavior
 - Mennonite, Amish, Brethren(?), Some independent Baptist groups

◀58▶ Special areas of focus

Two modern, evangelical movements/beliefs are given additional attention in this document:

- The Charismatic Movement
- Lordship-Salvation Theology

▶ 1. The Charismatic Movement

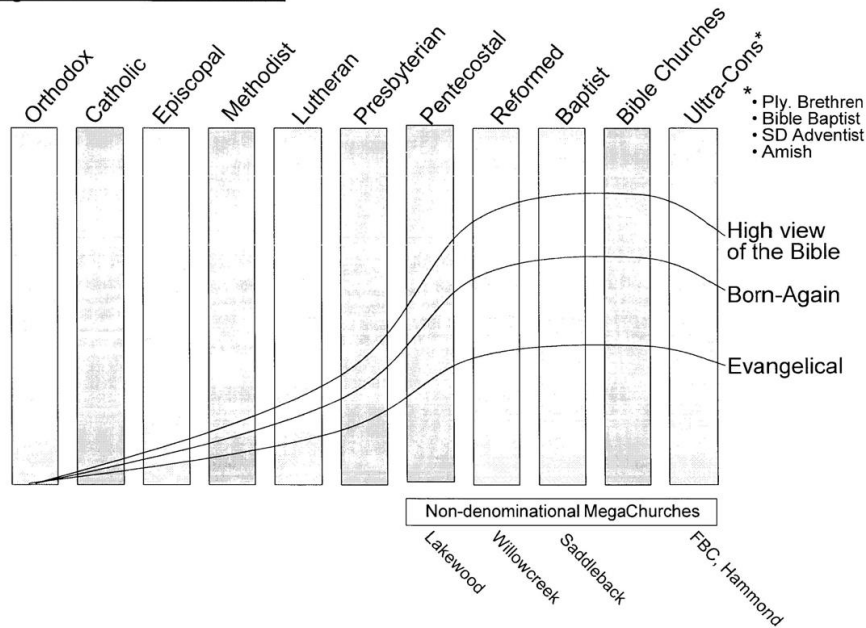
It seems to me that the public face of evangelicalism in America today is the charismatic movement. Christian television seems dominated by Pentecostalism. And that pains me because I believe much of it is a misrepresentation of evangelicalism, the gospel, and the Word of God. I think that the simplicity and purity of the true gospel is hidden behind showmanship, marketing ploys, transparent hypocrisy, unbiblical and extra-biblical messages, and characters who are all too eerily similar to the Elmer Gantry stereotype.

The modern secular world makes fun of all this. For example, an [article](#) in *The New Yorker*, by Michael Luo, (March 4, 2021), said “Evangelicalism in America, however, has come to be defined by its anti-intellectualism. The style of the most popular and influential pastors tend to correlate with shallowness: charisma trumps expertise; scientific authority is often viewed with suspicion. So it is of little surprise that American evangelicals have become vulnerable to demagoguery and misinformation.” And then he gets to quote (the hapless, in my opinion) Mark Noll: “a historian who was then a professor at Wheaton College in Illinois, the preeminent evangelical liberal-arts institution, published *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. In the opening sentence of the book’s first chapter, he writes, ‘The scandal of the evangelical mind is there is not much of an evangelical mind.’”

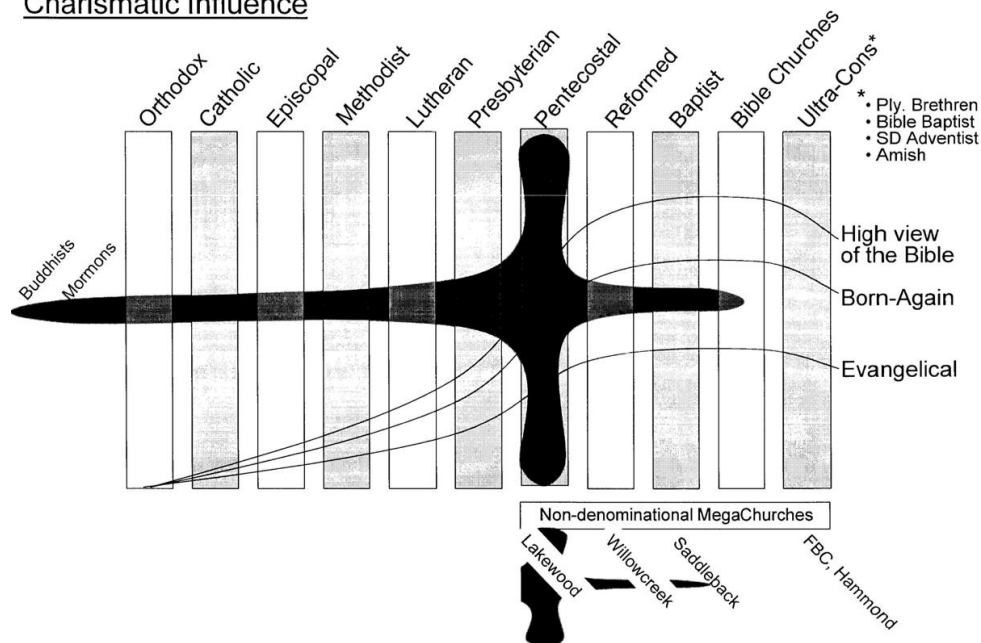
It amazes me that lists of the richest preachers in the world are so dominated by charismatics ([example](#)). That, in and of itself, tells me that something is amiss here, if not outright wrong.

Charismatic Influence

US Religious Denominations



Charismatic Influence



There are many books, videos, and courses that expose the theological and behavioral problems with the modern charismatic movement (e.g. [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).)

One very interesting website, *The Protestant Standard*, out of Ireland has an extensive set of articles on the *Charismatic Reversal of the Reformation* ([here](#)). One article begins, "What does a charismatic do with 160 million Roman Catholics? Whilst that may sound like the start of a joke, it is actually an important question. It is a question posed by the existence of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a movement within the church of Rome purported to comprise some 160 million members in 2013, and which practices the charismatic gifts of prophecy, healing, and tongues. The dilemma which this movement presents for charismatics arises from two issues; firstly the charismatic propensity of making the outward manifestation of the supernatural gifts the sure evidence of the infilling or baptism of the Holy Spirit, and secondly the existence of those same supposed gifts within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal."

A Personal Story

An old friend who was a “good Baptist kid” in a local youth group that I led 45 years ago recently contacted me. In the past 15 years, he’s become quite charismatic in his beliefs. He called me out-of-the-blue to tell me about some dire warnings that his favorite prophets seemed to all be in agreement about. Many of them apparently were amassing in the Ozarks to witness the literal fulfillment of a passage in Revelations that Rome (in fact all of Italy) was going to be judged, and large hailstones were going to rain down...all this around the 4th of July weekend in 2021. When none of this came about, the date was changed; then when the new date came and went, it “must have been that Rome repented.”

The prophets also foretold that in the next month (August 2021), two Supreme Court justices would die, and Donald Trump would be reinstalled as President. None of these have apparently occurred either (or I missed the news).

And yet, my dear friend continues to hold great faith in his prophets. One of them he likes is the “pink-haired prophetess” who has purportedly been to heaven thousands of times and shares incredible [detail](#) about what it is like. It saddens me that my friend is so sadly confused. Somewhere along the way, it seems like he has lost his faith in the sufficiency of God’s Word, and the sufficiency of Christ’s role as prophet, priest, and king.

In speaking to him, I’ve tried to bring him back to the basics of the gospel, but unfortunately, he seems so caught up in his enthusiasm and his charismatic experiences (tongues, etc.) that he comes across as one who feels superior to me and isn’t open to my uninformed opinion. It reminds me of another situation where a good Christian man I know was rejected as a dating partner for the sole reason that he didn’t speak in tongues.

Charismatic Variances

There is an association of churches who make up Calvary Chapel. This might be called charismatic-lite, because they attempt to avoid some of the excesses typically associated with the movement. Yet, they still misunderstand the role of the Holy Spirit, tend toward a fundamentalist legalism with a “Moses Model,” and unwise ecumenicalism including using with Roman Catholic practices ([website](#)).

At sort of the other extreme is the New Apostolic Reformation that espouses a theology of Dominionism. There are exposes of this movement you can find readily online, e.g. [here](#) and [here](#). They have a strong appeal to young people due to its focus on social action.

Evangelism & Charismatics

Talking to people who are charismatic can be very tricky.

Many charismatics are likely to be saved, but I would be cautious in assuming anything. While they may not add works to salvation, they tend to add a set of expectations to the Christian life, like speaking in tongues, that seem to divide believers into a spiritual caste system. Many believe you can lose your salvation based on an Arminian bent to their theology.

Regarding fellowshiping in these churches, personally I would not be able to. Their weaknesses are too dangerous in my opinion, such as their view on the Holy Spirit and extra-biblical revelations.

► The next section relates to another group of evangelical people, but who have a difference of opinion on a topic of major significance. It is important enough that you should be aware of it when you share your faith with others.

► 2. Lordship-Salvation

I wanted to name this section, *The 20-page Lesson I Wrote and Threw Away*. In it, I share my deep dive into and out of a doctrine taught by John MacArthur and William Webster, people whom I have great respect for.

Getting the Gospel Right

In preparing the lesson *The Gospel According to Scripture* (sections 12-21) I focused on taking various passages of Scripture and distilling them to their essence. Standing on the shoulders of the Reformation giants, I drew some diagrams and summarized their core message of the gospel to be “faith alone in Christ alone.”

Having done that, I took some time to step back and ask myself if I may have gone too far and oversimplified the gospel too much. I had a nagging doubt that the usual way we evangelicals present the gospel may often fail to warn people to count the cost before becoming a follower of Christ, Jesus, after all, did that in no uncertain terms (Luke 14:25-33). I also wondered why so many seemingly solid evangelicals leave their faith.

My research took me on a fascinating trail involving many hours of deep study and long conversations with educated people with expertise in the topic.

The Gospel According to Jesus

In 1998 Pastor John MacArthur published the book *The Gospel According to Jesus*. It laid out a rigorous defense of the concept of Lordship-Salvation (L-S). L-S is the belief that **in order for Jesus to be your Savior, he must also be your Lord. “A person is not truly converted until he has not only fully repented of his sin, but has fully surrendered his will to the complete control of the Lord.” “Coming to Christ means you give up the control of your life, and you yield it to Christ.”** MacArthur has a 5-hour series of sermons online where he explains L-S, all based on Scripture, which is what you would expect from him.

Dr. William Webster has penned 2 very well-researched books, *The Gospel of the Reformation*, and *Must Jesus be Lord to be Savior?* which both make detailed cases for L-S. He quotes many of the Reformers and modern-day theologians who also apparently hold to this belief. During my research I also had a 90-minute phone call with Dr. Webster (or Bill as he invited me to call him).

One website that I rarely disagree with is *GotQuestions.org* which is the brainchild of CEO Shea Michael Houdmann. It has a complete set of articles on salvation, and they also support L-S.

In my research, I searched online for articles that would argue against L-S and I could not find too many surprisingly. The most detailed website was written in an antagonistic, off-putting tone, and did not strike me as very scholarly (at first).

Because I often learn by writing, I spent quite a bit of time writing up what I thought I might present in class. I “boiled it all down” to about 20 pages—a “concise” case that I thought summed it up L-S convincingly.

After all these hours of study, I met a couple of times with another serious scholar, who wishes to remain anonymous. But he helped me put it all into perspective. Then I went back to the articles critiquing L-S, and (ignoring the invective tone) I discovered was more scholarly than I had first thought.

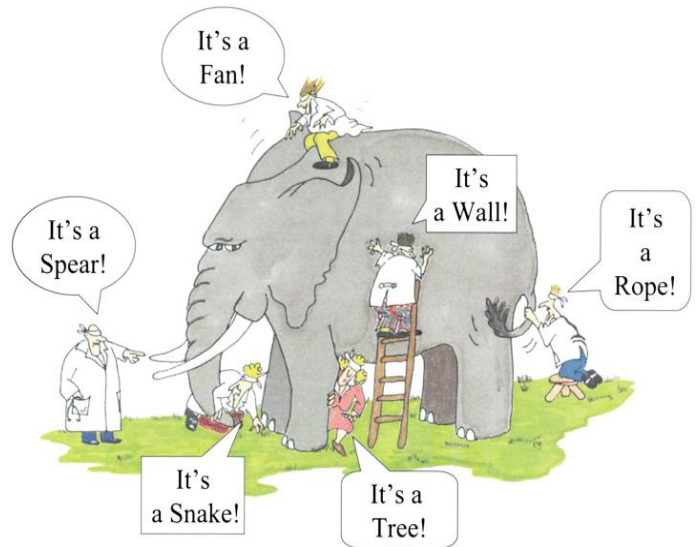
In short, after digesting the idea of L-S for a few weeks and reading what was right about it, I reverted back to believing it was not a biblical position after all. I rarely disagree with the positions of MacArthur, Webster, or Houdmann, but in this case I must. My trail had me convinced momentarily, but I see it now as merely a rabbit trail. Now I’ll summarize my conclusions in the next two pages. Hopefully, it will be of benefit to others who may have the same concerns and curiosity that I did.

The 6 Blind Men and the Elephant

I think the issue of L-S is like the proverbial blind men and the elephant, each man seeing a different aspect, and certain that they are right. And while each man's perspective is accurate, the full truth is actually more than merely the sum of all of its parts.

An elephant is much more than what 6 men can perceive, even if they were not blind. And it's more wonderful than they can comprehend, an animal with a brain, etc.

Spiritual concepts are like that too. When God spoke to Job, he described some things that Job could not see. The heavenly 'blueprint' of pain and suffering was more complex than Job could fully understand.



◀1▶ Salvation is like that, and those emphasizing L-S are reasoning from Scripture, but there are other dimensions too—ones that they tend to ignore or downplay. For example, they make a point that Jesus is biblically defined as both a Savior—and as Lord—and we cannot divide his role. Yet, he is also described as a teacher and a friend, and they divorce their Jesus from those roles in their arguments.

◀2▶ The L-S position seems to interpret the story of the rich, young ruler who came to Jesus in a normative fashion. That is, they interpret Jesus' saying to mean "anyone who comes to him must give up all that they have." But wait, Jesus didn't say that same thing to the woman at the well, to Zacchaeus, or anyone else he met. He tailored the message to each person he met.

◀3▶ The L-S position seems to make a big deal out of repentance, such that repenting of one's sin—and sin nature—are a mandatory part of the conversion event. But there are many examples where people didn't repent, yet came to faith. The snide internet article I mentioned above points out that it is not just the epistles that emphasize believing in Jesus (often without mention of repenting) but that even the gospel of John refers to "believe" over 80 times and does not use the word "repent" once.

This takes me back to one of my early questions about L-S: If Evangelicals seem to truncate the gospel, isn't it also true that many passages in the NT do that also (e.g. John 3:16, Eph. 2:8-9, Acts 16:31, John 1:12, etc., etc.)? Do these passages, if insufficient in themselves, put the lie to the perspicuity (understandability) of the Word, a position we hold dearly?

◀4▶ Also, my experience, and that of many Christians I know well, is that we have placed our faith in Christ as Savior years before we may have recognized the need to make him Lord as well. In the intervening years, our personal relationship with God has been so real that it would be impossible for us to deny that reality, and now believe that we must not have been saved during that period.

One book I read, called *They Found the Secret*, by V. Raymond Edmond, reported the stories of over a dozen great Christian leaders, such as D.L. Moody. I recall one of the overall findings is that, on average, for these people, it took them about 7 years after they were saved before they realized that the secret of a victorious Christian life is full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus.

◀5▶ It sure seems to me that the doctrine of L-S, held rigorously, leads to a kind of sectarianism where those who hold it must view all other ‘Christians’ as lost? Well, one might say that this could be what Christ referred to when he said, “Depart from me,” but that does not seem right.

To me, when 3 John 1:11 says “Those who do good prove that they are God’s children,” it means that even those Christians I know who “do good” but who haven’t yet fully surrendered all to Jesus, have proven that they are God’s children.

John MacArthur addressed this specific question in one of his sermons on L-S. His answer was basically that no one fully understands what Jesus-as-Lord means at the time of their conversion. And even if it was a partial understanding, it must have been there. In my conversation with Dr. Webster, I mentioned this answer, and said I thought it was somewhat of a sketchy answer. His laughter at my characterization made me think he kind of agreed. Then I believe he basically said that very few of the people who think they are truly saved, are truly saved. That seems to be to be a rather sad thing to believe, that so many people who believe the biblical gospel to the best of their ability, may not be saved, misled by a simple understanding of what it says.

◀6▶ One final thing that bothers me about L-S is its complexity. To arrive at it, reasoning from Scripture alone, takes quite a bit of theological digging, analysis, synthesis, etc. If true, why would God hide it so well in the Bible, that so few people of average intelligence would be able to discover it? That’s too hard for me to believe.

◀7▶ GBC’s previous Pastor John Bell preached a great sermon series called *Victorious Living* (available [here](#)). In it, he likened the Christian life to the story of the Israel’s exodus from slavery in Egypt, an obvious parallel that many Bible expositors have noted. The time Israel spent in bondage is like the time lost people today spend without Christ, in bondage to their sin. As the Israelites applied the lamb’s blood in faith trusting that they would be spared, they are like people today who trust in the blood of Jesus to free them from bondage, and spare them from spiritual death.

God’s original plan was a short 11-day journey to the promised land flowing with milk and honey. Yet, most of the people lacked the faith of Joshua and Caleb, were too fearful to take the land, and spent 40 years in the wilderness. Today, many people who come to Christ take a lot longer than they should to learn how to live by faith. Unfortunately, most of the Israelites died in the wilderness, and today many Christians die without recognizing that surrendering to Christ in all areas of one’s life is the goal of our sanctification. They never experience the abundant life that is available to them like the Israelites who never entered the Promised Land.

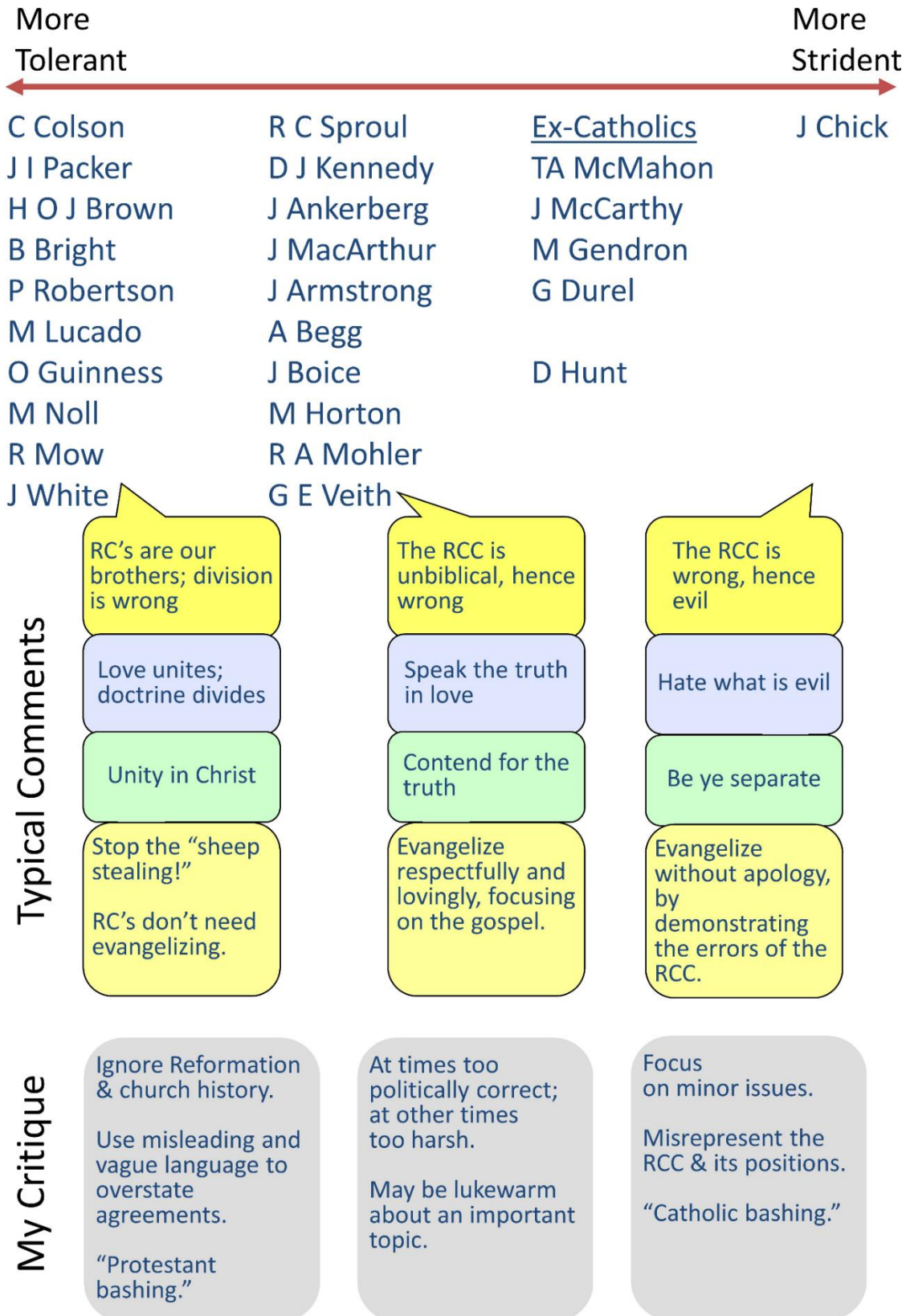
In the wilderness, God provided manna to his people and met their basic needs. After a short while, the people grumbled. Had they taken possession of the promised land promptly, God would have more than met their basic needs and would have blessed them much more. It is, once again, *Trust and Obey*. Hebrews 11:6 says, “It is impossible to please God without faith.” and in John 15:9-11 Jesus said, “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!”

Conclusion

So, the heavenly blueprint of salvation is more complex—and more wonderful—than we really know. How it all fits together, from election to glorification, is too grand for us to fully understand. So we must read the Scriptures humbly, and with the Spirit’s enlightenment, be careful to not to be swayed by clever logic.

And, when we present the gospel to others, let’s be very sensitive to the Spirit’s leading and tailor our comments to the individual we are talking to and where they are at spiritually. Any reliance on a single, particular technique is not following the approach that Jesus and the Apostles did.

If you research more about Catholicism, you'll run across Protestant materials running the gamut such as shown in the graphic below. I'd recommend you stay away from the extremes, but don't get lukewarm or apathetic about this topic.





A Conversation with a Lutheran Repairman

I, Mark, had a repairman out to replace my garage door opener. After he, Frank, completed the work, we chatted for 20-30 minutes. I'll reconstruct our conversation, but first a little background.

Background on Lutheranism

- In the table on page 85, Lutheranism is the 3rd-largest Protestant denomination in the US, and forms a plurality in Minnesota and North Dakota. Worldwide, it is of course prevalent in Germany, and it is the established church in most of the Nordic countries including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. In these countries, where most people are Lutheran, the churches are supported by taxes, either indirectly through the general taxes paid by most citizens or directly in the form of a church tax.
- One would think that the Lutheran church today would be in line with the teachings of Luther, especially regarding his re-discovery of the biblical gospel of faith alone in Christ alone.
- Unfortunately, the church quickly slipped back to a position that muddies the water about justification. Today it generally teaches that baptism is a requirement for salvation. In the special section on infant baptism in his *Large Catechism*, Luther argues that infant baptism is God-pleasing because persons so baptized were reborn and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- Given that it never moved far enough away from Catholicism to question the validity of infant baptism, I believe that many in the Lutheran church feel as if they were baptized as infants and never denounced the church, they are in a right standing before God.
- US Lutheran churches are generally associated with one of 4 branches, or *synods*. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or ELCA; the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; The American Association of Lutheran Churches; and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. ELCA is the largest synod and the most liberal, the only one not holding to an inerrant Scripture and its literal interpretation, and as such, is the only synod with female pastors, gay marriages, and gay and transgender bishops.

Implications for Evangelism

- To me, Lutherans can be among the most difficult people to witness to. For many, their religion may be a family tradition that they are comfortable in, and like us, they are generally confident that they have a high regard for Scripture and follow in the grand history of the Reformation. Some may clearly know that they are “saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.” There are many, however, for whom their religion is just a obligation that they perpetuate with for one reason or another.
- The rub is that Lutheranism downplays the idea of a personal decision for Christ. Being baptized as an infant and confirmed as a youth, there may not be any specific time in their life that they can point to as when they “became a Christian.” They are probably not likely to say that they have “accepted Christ,” and they may not even think of themselves as “born-again.” Nevertheless, if they are genuinely trusting in Christ alone (and not in their baptism), even if they have believed this way their whole lives, then they must be truly right with God, and be a brother or sister to us. This can be an uncomfortable thing to consider for some evangelicals who have always believed salvation comes to us when we make a decision for Christ—it was for me till I met my wife who grew up in a Reformed church, which is similar to the Lutheran church in this regard (i.e. downplaying point-in-time decisions).
- Talking to Lutherans about their faith, therefore, requires great sensitivity, with careful and respectful questioning to determine how seriously they take their faith, and specifically what they are trusting in to be right with God. It can be too easy for us to hear the right buzzwords, and jump to the conclusion that they are true believers. It requires us to remember that they may have been taught that as long as they were baptized, they would be okay before God.

Sept. 7, 2021 Conversation (as best as I can recall)

Mark. I think you did a really nice job, thank you. Do you get tired doing all that lifting by yourself?

Frank. Well, it is getting harder as I get older.

M. Do you plan to retire anytime soon? If you're like me, you'll love it.

F. I hope to, maybe in a few years. I'm not quite sure what I'll do with all my time.

M. Oh, I'll bet there are a lot of things you would enjoy doing. I sure have found my niche.

F. You did?

M. Yes, after working 40 years in computing, now I volunteer at my church and use a lot of skills I've developed over the years. What are some of the things you like to do?

F. Well, I've thought about coaching a sports team because I love kids. My own 2 kids are grown now.

M. Any grandchildren?

F. Yes, they are 9 and 7 but they live out of state.

M. I'll bet you miss them like I miss my 2 granddaughters who live in Montana. What else are you considering doing?

F. I'd like to help handicapped children, I think.

M. Isn't there an Easter Seals in Villa Park?

F. Yes, I was thinking of checking them out.

M. My sister had a good experience with them. I know that churches often need volunteers for youth work. Do you attend a church?

F. Yes, in my hometown in Villa Park.

M. Do you mind if I ask, what church is that?

F. It's a Lutheran church.

M. Oh, how'd you start going there?

F. Well, my folks were Catholic. I'm Italian, you know, but not a Catholic, how about that?

M. Hey, me too! We're kind of rare. But tell me about yourself.

F. Well, even though my folks were Catholic, they didn't attend. But when I was little my mother made me go to the Baptist church at the end of our block. She didn't go, but she made me go for many years.

M. That's interesting. But now you're at a Lutheran church—how did that happen?

F. My wife was Lutheran when we married, but now only I attend. She's not that interested.

M. Hey, I like to study various churches. I wonder, from your perspective, what would you say is the main difference between these churches? To start, what

would you say is the main difference between the Catholic and Lutheran churches?

F. It seems to me the Catholic church is more about its traditions and the Lutheran more about the Bible.

M. And, which are you, are more in line with?

F. I think the Bible is the only thing we should rely on.

M. Gotcha. I'm there too. Now tell me what you think are the main difference between the Baptist church and the Lutheran church?

F. Oh, that's a little harder.

M. Did you attend both churches for some time?

F. Yes, years in both.

M. Do they both rely solely on the Bible?

F. Yes.

M. Let me ask a more pointed question. How would the 2 churches say a person would get right with God?

F. Well, the Baptist church says you just have to trust in Christ, and I think the Lutheran church would say it's more about being baptized.

M. Well, that's what I think too, from my own experience. Let me ask you this, if I'm not getting to personal: Where do you stand on this question...how does a person get right?

F. To me, it's all about trusting in Christ.

M. But that sounds more Baptist than Lutheran though...?

F. Yes.

M. You mean you're not counting on your baptism too?

F. No. For me, it's just Jesus.

M. Hey, wow! It sounds like you believe just like I do!

F. That's cool.

M. It also means to me that you and I are brothers in Christ.

F. I agree. How cool.

M. Yes. It was nice to have this conversation with you.

F. Me too. I really enjoyed it.

M. One more thing...if you ever want to get together again just to visit, or talk about planning for retirement, just give me a call. You've got my number.

F. (Big smile). Thanks. This conversation has really made my day!

[Hearty handshake]

BTW. Frank did actually do a great job. If you're looking for a garage door repairman, ask me for his number!

Ray Comfort is a New Zealander who works with Kirk Cameron and others in a ministry called *Living Waters*. Among other things, *Living Waters* focuses on practical evangelism. From their website:

You'll Stop Using the Sinner's Prayer After Watching This Video

“After sharing the gospel with a receptive man with a Catholic background, many may wonder why Ray Comfort doesn't walk him through the sinner's prayer. At the end of this evangelism encounter, Ray explains why he doesn't: because it's unbiblical.”

tinyurl.com/eyf-ray

-Evangelism encounter, is at: 0:00-12:22

-Ray's thoughts on the sinner's prayer, is at: 12:23-14:07

Another example of Ray's 'technique': tinyurl.com/eyf-ray2

Personally, I think Ray Comfort has a very inappropriate last name. *Discomfort* would be better. He doesn't tend to make *anyone* comfortable, at least not at first. He'll often get people to admit that they are lying, blasphemous, thieving adulterers at heart. I once attended a lecture he taught at a church. He even made *us Christians* uncomfortable (about our style, or lack thereof, of evangelism). I remember him saying “Oh, I believe in *friendship evangelism* too. But after I've talked to someone for 2 minutes, I'm their friend, so I start evangelizing.”—you can't fault his zeal!

► **Don't miss the free-to-download, 128-page pdf that is very interesting: at freewonderfulbook.com!**

See also an audiobook ‘*School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons: How to Share Your Faith Simply, Effectively, Biblically...the Way Jesus Did*’ (tinyurl.com/eyf-ray3, with an audio sample).

Some important points from these materials are:

- Follow the principle of “law to the proud; grace to the humble” (based on James 4:6, “God opposes the proud. but shows favor to the humble.”) By this he means that lost people are in different places in their attitudes toward God. Some are defiant toward God or refuse to see themselves as sinners; others are already defeated and broken but don't know where or how to turn to God.
- The “God Has a Wonderful Plan” approach doesn't have much of an appeal for successful people, who already have their own wonderful plan that seems to be working out pretty well for them.
- The “If You Died Tonight” approach makes a lot of assumptions about the other person's beliefs that are likely to be pretty outdated in today's culture, e.g. a belief in God and an afterlife.
- No one can make sense of the Good News unless they know they are in trouble. Give bad news first. The Appendix to Ray's *Tough Questions* book lays out an approach called *WDJD* (*What Did Jesus Do?*) that is simple and gets to the point very directly.
- Stay on message. A person's religion is not the issue; it's their lost condition before a righteous judge.

I like their emphasis on “law to the proud; grace to the humble.” And Ray's technique is worth everyone at least taking a look at. It's a pretty streamlined and straightforward witnessing technique, e.g. he teaches that we often make too much of apologetics when we think we need to be able to answer everyone's intellectual questions (in one article, he asks, “did you notice that in my last 100 conversations with people, the subject of evolution never came up?”).

A note: I wish the *Living Waters* ministry didn't lean toward Lordship-Salvation in some of its materials.

“In the late seventies, God very graciously opened an itinerant ministry to me. As I began to travel, I found that I had access to church growth records, and found to my horror that something like 80 to 90% of those making a decision for Christ were falling away from the faith. That is, modern evangelism with its methods is creating something like 80 to 90 of what we commonly call *backsliders* for every hundred decisions for Christ.

...I began to study the book of Romans intently and, specifically, the gospel proclamation of men like Spurgeon, Wesley, Moody, Finney, Whitefield, Luther, and others that God used down through the ages, and I found they used a principle which is almost entirely neglected by modern evangelical methods.

...The Bible says in Psalm 19, verse 7, “The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.” What is it that the Bible says is perfect and actually converts the soul? Why scripture makes it very clear: “The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.” Now to illustrate the function of God’s law, let’s just look for a moment at civil law. Imagine if I said to you, “I’ve got some good news for you: someone has just paid a \$25,000 speeding fine on your behalf.” You’d probably react by saying, “What are you talking about? That’s not good news: it doesn’t even make sense. I don’t have a \$25,000 speeding fine.” My good news wouldn’t be good news to you: it would seem foolishness. But more than that, it would be offensive to you, because I’m insinuating you’ve broken the law when you don’t think you have. However, if I put it this way, it may make more sense: “On the way to this meeting, the law clocked you at going 55 miles an hour through an area set aside for a blind children’s convention. There were ten clear warning signs stating that fifteen miles an hour was the maximum speed, but you went straight through at 55 miles an hour. What you did was extremely dangerous; there’s a \$25,000 fine. The law was about to take its course, when someone you don’t even know stepped in and paid the fine for you. You are very fortunate.”

Can you see that telling you precisely what you’ve done wrong first actually makes the good news make sense. If I don’t clearly bring instruction and understanding that you’ve violated the law, then the good news will seem foolishness; it will seem offensive. But once you understand that you’ve broken the law, then that good news will become good news indeed.

Now in the same way, if I approach an impenitent sinner and say, “Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins,” it will be foolishness and offensive to him. Foolishness because it won’t make sense. The Bible says that: “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1Cor. 1:18). And offensive because I’m insinuating he’s a sinner when he doesn’t think he is. As far as he’s concerned, there are a lot of people far worse than him. But if I take the time to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, it may make more sense. If I take the time to open up the divine law, the ten commandments, and show the sinner precisely what he’s done wrong, that he has offended God by violating His law, then when he becomes, as James says, “convinced of the law as a transgressor” (Jam. 2:9), the good news of the fine being paid for will not be foolishness, it will not be offensive, it will be “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

Now, with those few thoughts in mind by way of introduction, let’s now look at Romans 3, verse 19. We’ll look at some of the functions of God’s law for humanity. Romans 3, verse 19: “Now we know that whatsoever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.” So one function of God’s law is to stop the mouth. To stop sinners justifying themselves and saying, “There’s plenty of people worse than me. I’m not a bad person. Really.” No, the law stops the mouth of justification and leaves the whole world, not just the Jews, but the whole world guilty before God.

Romans 3, verse 20: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So God's law tells us what sin is. 1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is transgression of the law." Romans 7, verse 7: "What shall we say then?" says Paul. "Is the law sin? God forbid! No, I had not known sin but by the law." Paul says, "I didn't know what sin was until the law told me." In Galatians 3:24, "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." God's law acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ that we might be justified through faith in His blood. The law doesn't help us; it just leaves us helpless. It doesn't justify us; it just leaves us guilty before the judgment bar of a holy God.

And the tragedy of modern evangelism is because around the turn of the century when it forsook the law in its capacity to convert the soul, to drive sinners to Christ, modern evangelism had to, therefore, find another reason for sinners to respond to the gospel. And the issue that modern evangelism chose to attract sinners was the issue of "life enhancement". The gospel degenerated into "Jesus Christ will give you peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness."

...I was in Australia recently ministering (Australia is a small island off the coast of New Zealand!). And I preached sin, law, righteousness, holiness, judgment, repentance, and hell, and I wasn't exactly crushed by the amount of people wanting to "give their hearts to Jesus." In fact, the air went very tense. After the meeting, they said, "There's a young guy down in the back who wants to give his life to Christ." I went down the back and found a teenage lad who could not pray the sinner's prayer because he was weeping so profusely. Now, for me it was so refreshing, because for many years I suffered from the disease of "evangelical frustration". I so wanted sinners to respond to the gospel I unwittingly preached a man-centered message. The essence of which was this: "You'll never find true peace without Jesus Christ; you've a God-shaped vacuum in your heart that only God can fill." I'd preach Christ crucified; I'd preach repentance. A sinner would respond to the altar; I'd open an eye and say, "Oh no. This guy wants to give his heart to Jesus and there's an 80% chance he's going to backslide. And I am tired of creating backsliders. So I'd better make sure this guy really means it. He'd better be sincere!" So I'd approach the poor guy in a Gestapo spirit. I'd walk up and say, "What do you want?" He'd say, "I'm here to become a Christian." I'd say, "Do you mean it?" He'd say, "Yeah." I'd say, "Do you REALLY MEAN IT!?" He'd say, "Yeah, I reckon." "Okay, I'll pray with you, but you'd better mean it from your heart." He said, "Okay, okay." "Now you repeat this prayer sincerely after me and mean it from your heart sincerely and really mean it from your heart sincerely and make sure you mean it. 'Oh, God, I'm a sinner.' " He'd say, "Uh...oh, God, I'm a sinner." And I'd think, "Man, why isn't there a visible sign of contrition. There's no outward evidence the guy is inwardly sorry for his sins." Now, if I could have seen his motive, I would have seen he was 100% sincere. He really did mean his decision with all his heart. He sincerely wanted to give this Jesus thing a go to see if he could get a buzz out of it. He had tried sex, drugs, materialism, alcohol. "Why not give this Christian bit a go and see if it's as good as all these Christians say it is: peace, joy, love, fulfillment, lasting happiness." He wasn't fleeing from the wrath that was to come, because I hadn't told him there was wrath to come. There was this glaring omission from my message. He wasn't broken in contrition, because the poor guy didn't know what sin was.

A.B. Earl said, "I have found by long experience that the severest threatenings of the law of God have a prominent place in leading men to Christ. They must see themselves lost before they will cry for mercy; they'll not escape danger until they see it."

...We have preached the cure without first convincing of the disease. We have preached a gospel of grace without first convincing men of the law, that they're transgressors; and, consequently, almost everyone I try and witness to in southern California or around the Bible belt has been born-again six or seven times. You say, "You need to give your life to Jesus Christ." "Uh, I did that when I was seven, eleven, seventeen, twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-eight, thirty-two..." You know the guy's not a Christian. He's a fornicator. He's a blasphemer, but he thinks he's saved because he's been "born-again". What's happening? He's using the grace of our God for an occasion of the flesh. He doesn't esteem the sacrifice. For him it's not a bad thing to trample the blood of Christ underfoot (Heb. 10:29). Why? Because he's never been convinced of the disease that he might appreciate the cure.

Biblical evangelism is always, without exception, law to the proud and grace to the humble. Never will you see Jesus giving the gospel, the good news, the cross, the grace of our God, to a proud, arrogant, self-righteous person. No, no. With the law he breaks the hard heart and with the gospel he heals the broken heart. Why? Because He always did those things that please the Father. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Jam. 4:6; 1Pet. 5:5). "Everyone who is proud of heart," scripture says, "is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 16:5).

Jesus told us whom the gospel is for. He said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives and the blind" (Luke 4:18). Now, they are spiritual statements. The poor in spirit (Mat. 5:3). The broken hearted are the contrite ones (Is. 57:15). The captives are those of whom Satan has taken captive to do his will (2Tim. 2:26); and the blind are those of whom the god of this world has blinded lest the light of the gospel should shine on them (2Cor. 4:4). Only the sick need a physician (Mark 2:17), and only those who are convinced of the disease will appreciate and appropriate a cure.

...Now, I'm a strong believer in following in the footsteps of Jesus. Never, ever, would I approach someone and say, "Jesus loves you." Totally unbiblical; there's no precedent for that in Scripture. Neither would I go up to someone and say, "I'd like to talk to you about Jesus Christ." Why? Because if I wanted to awaken you from a deep sleep, I wouldn't use a flashlight in your eyes. That will offend you. I'd turn on the light dimmer very gently. First, the natural, then the spiritual. Why? Because "the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God; neither can he know them. They are foolishness to him because they are spiritually understood" (1Cor. 2:14).

...John Wycliffe, the Bible translator said, "The highest service to which a man may obtain on earth is to preach the law of God." Why? Because it will drive sinners to faith in the Savior, to everlasting life. Martin Luther said, "The first duty of the gospel preacher is to declare God's law and to show the nature of sin." In fact, as we read these quotes, these men have so much conviction you can feel their teeth grit. They say things like, "If you do not use the law in gospel proclamation, you will fill the church with false converts." Stony ground hearers who will receive the word with joy and gladness.

Listen to what Martin Luther said. He said, "Satan, the god of all dissension stirs up daily new sects. And last of all which of all others I should never have foreseen or once suspected, he has raised up a sect such as teach that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ." So what's Luther saying? He saying, "Listen, guys. There's a demonic, Satanic sect that's just risen up. Man, I never, ever would have believed this could happen. He's raised up a sect such as teach that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ," which perfectly sums up most of our evangelism.

John Wesley said to a friend, in writing to a young evangelist, "Preach 90 percent law and 10 percent grace."