

# What's Wrong With the Gospel Part 3

by Keith Green

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*Keith Green emphasizes the importance of truth and sincerity in the gospel, warning against the dangers of half-truths and man-made systems.*

**Duration:** 1:12:12

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:21

**Topics:** "Evangelism Methods", "True Conversion"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the potential pitfalls of modern evangelistic practices, such as altar calls and the sinner's prayer, highlighting the importance of genuine repentance and understanding in salvation. It emphasizes the need for a deep, personal relationship with God rather than rushed decisions or shallow conversions, urging a return to the true essence of Christianity rooted in truth, love, and dedication.

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## Transcript

We're going to be studying tonight part two of what's wrong with the gospel. That's section two, the added parts. And as I was studying through this before the study, so it's good to pre-study before you teach a study, I came up with an analogy that since this was the added parts, it was sort of like a cooking class that you go through and they teach you the artificial ingredients that you should not add to a meal.

After you've already been through a class where they say, don't leave these things out. Well, you know very well that if you remove something important like yeast from a bread recipe, there's not much you can add into it except maybe a tire iron, something to blow it up with. They bite into it and it blows up in their face.

That's what a lot of the diet drinks are. They took sugar out and they put all this other stuff in. They won't find out that after 40 years of drinking saccharine, that you grow a third arm or something under your shirt.

They don't know the side effects yet, but I'm sure they'll find out that they can't replace necessary ingredients. I'm not pro-sugar. I'm not voting on the sugar platform this time.

What I'm talking about here is the Bible. I'm talking about the necessary things that God requires to have anointing. What is anointing? That's Leonard Ravenhill in his book, Water Bible Tarrys, in his first chapter.

He says, with all you're getting, with all thy getting, get unction. Uction is another synonym for anointing. John says, you have an unction from the Holy One.

You know all things. You have an anointing from God. The actual literal meaning of anointing was that God was in it.

When David was anointed, he literally had wesson oil pouring out all over him. Probably not wesson, but the anointing meant that you were God's chosen or that God was choosing to use you. God will only choose to use what's true since God is not a liar.

It says the devil is a liar and the father of lies. When you take even a little bit of truth out of a system, and every theology is a system. There's totally false theology like the cults have, and then there's kind of semi-truth theology like a lot of us have, and then there's the absolute cut-and-dry black-and-white truth theology that God has, and we're all trying to find out what that is, aren't we? God will only bless the true theology.

A friend of mine said this. It says that when a half-truth is presented as the whole truth, it becomes an untruth. When any half-truth is presented as the whole truth, it becomes an untruth.

You can present half-truths as, well, this might be true, and that's what the Pharisees used to do. That's what used to blow their minds about Jesus. He came out and started teaching with authority.

Remember when he came out in the synagogue when he first started preaching and he said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He didn't say like the boring scripture readers that were hanging out in those days, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to heal the sick, just reading it kind of like a parrot. Jesus came up and said, I'm sure the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

And people are going, what's he talking about, man? Isn't that the Sons from Joseph and Sons Carpentry Shop down the road? Well, the thing that really fried the Jews' brains in those days was the fact that Jesus taught with authority. And God only anoints with his authority and his anointing the truth. And tonight we're going to discuss in the second part, this is really the third part of a four-part study, but it's the second part of a series, What's Wrong with the Gospel, called The Added Parts.

And I kind of looked, we were thinking of artwork. We always, in our art department, try to decide what pictures would best describe the subject matter and the impact of what we're trying to say. One of the things that we were going to have for What's Wrong with the Gospel was the missing parts.

We were going to have a picture of a guy going in for an operation. And he was going to say, the operating room for the gospel and all these evil-looking doctors were going to go in there. And the guy was going in and he was all patched and bandaged up and he was going in the operating room.

And in the second part, in the added parts, he was going to come out like with a fire hydrant coming out for an arm and a turkey head for a head and a broomstick for a leg. The added parts. Of course, the fire hydrant does have a round cylindrical kind of thing like an arm, but it isn't an arm.

And a turkey head is a head, but it isn't a human head, and so on. But yes, they have found things that stick in the holes, that will match up somewhat in similarity, somewhat. I mean, some of them are so idiotic and stupid that I don't understand how anybody can believe they're biblical, but they do.

Now, this study is the study, the Part 2. The whole thing got us in trouble, but this Part 2 got us in more trouble than anything we've ever published. When we did the Catholic Chronicles, we got 20% negative mail. When we did this, we got 50% negative mail.

Now, I'm sure that there were some things Jesus taught on where he got 100% negative mail. That doesn't matter to us. We don't want to get positive mail, but we do want to get positive reviews from God.

As a friend of mine says, you can change the whole world's opinion about me. You can spread slander about me. You can say that my wife's a prostitute.

You can say that I'm a liar, that I'm a thief and a robber. You might even get the headlines, you know, Keith Green is an idiot, he's whipping people off or whatever, but you can't change God's opinion about me because the only person that can change God's opinion about me is me. Now, that doesn't mean that I'm supposed to walk through life going, well, I'm just going to please God and I don't care who I hurt.

That's not true either because Paul says, if it possible, be at peace with all men. If it possible. If possible.

Here's the two ifs. If possible, comma, so far as it depends on you, comma, be at peace with all men. That means while you're preaching the truth, while you're correcting error, if you can at the same time be nice, if you can at the same time not offend in any way other than the truth doing its own offending, because the truth will always offend those that don't love the truth, then don't do it.

If possible, so far as it depends on you. Well, there are some things that I wrote in here, I went over it tonight, that I might have rephrased a little differently, but not very many. I am not sorry I wrote this.

I'm not sorry we published it. Sure, I'm sorry that we got 50% negative mail, but I'm not sorry enough to say that this wasn't of the Lord for us to write. I don't like to see anybody not agree with us.

Nobody doesn't like that. Jesus didn't like it. It made him sad when the people wouldn't turn around and go, You're right, Jesus.

Now, we don't want to be right because we want to be right. We want to be close to God, and because we're close to God, we would like people to recognize that the truth is the truth. It doesn't matter if I say it or you say it, or the Baptist pastor or the Methodist preacher down the street says it, it doesn't matter as long as the truth is going forth into the world.

So, I believe that many of these additions to the modern gospel are very clever. Very clever. And they have to be, because they have the outward manifestation of doing some good.

Outwardly. But God only promises to anoint his word, not human cleverness. He doesn't promise to anoint human smartness.

It's important as we go through this that you, well, we'll get to that in a minute. The main thing that we got in trouble for was that we destroyed many sacred cows. The meaning of sacred cow means things that people held as sacred.

Things that people held as, well, we're going to get to that, but things that people held so close to their heart. Their uncle Ferdinand came forward at some ox cart, did something, or they once in themselves saw some gospel show where somebody was singing some song that included some phraseology that we're going to talk about and take apart in the light of the gospel. And they're going to be so offended because, I got saved that way, brother.

No, you didn't. You got saved by the truth. I once asked a close friend of mine who's a well-known Bible teacher.

I said, how come these guys get really saved, then they turn around and start teaching things that didn't save them. They start teaching things that they didn't get saved that way. They went out in the woods and they read the Bible and says, God, I'm a rotten sinner.

Please forgive me. I'm going to turn my life and follow you. They didn't go forward.

They didn't read no book. They didn't check the yes box at the bottom of any track. They just got saved.

They looked at themselves and went, yes. They looked at God and said, yes. And God came down in power and says, all right, come on home.

That's salvation. That's the gospel. I surrender.

I'm rotten. You're holy. And I surrender.

Take me. I'll do anything. And then they turn around and they start teaching now what you need to know first is this, this, and this.

I said, brother, how come these people do that? They said, well, here's how it goes. They get saved reading the Bible or just thinking about their sins and they turn to God. Then they go to church or Bible study or read a book or go to seminary to learn out, to find out what happened.

What happened to me? Then their instructor or their pastor starts teaching them this whole added thing to the gospel as the way, oh, this is how you got saved. You see, you really accepted Jesus as your personal Savior. You did this and you did that.

Oh, wow, that's what happened. So what happens is they get saved and they turn around and adopt somebody else's man-made system and turn around and start preaching it as if that's the thing that led them to Christ. And it doesn't bear the fruit that the real truth did in their own lives.

Nobody ever got saved through any other means but by the grace of God through surrender to the Lordship of Jesus after acknowledging that they had no good in themselves. Now, they may not have used those words, but they certainly went through that thought process even in their heart if they didn't do it with their brain. They came to the realization that they're authentically converted.

They came to the realization that there's no good in themselves and that the only good one was the one they were going to trust in and lean on the rest of eternity. And then they went out to some Bible study or went to the Bible bookstore and bought some checklist, the 10 easy steps to becoming a saint and adopted that, swallowed that gospel pill and went out and started vomiting that stuff up to the world. Excuse the expression, I hope you had dinner.

This is not easy. This is not easy to go into somebody's sacred things like a bull in a china shop and start tearing apart their whole world. It's not fun.

Let's go to prayer. God, we humbly come before you tonight and we realize that there is no good thing in us but you. We weren't born into this world with holiness in our hearts, maybe innocence but not holiness, not consciously being set apart for you.

God, we didn't come into this world leaping and rejoicing for you, but we came into this world, a selfish world, and the first thoughts that we had weren't about God but about us. God, I know with all my heart

that my life, the rest of my life and my life up until now has been learning to change my thinking away from myself toward others and you. God, that's going to go on to the day I enter your gates that I'm going to have to readjust my selfish human natured thinking away from myself and towards you.

Only by the Holy Spirit and the truth in your gospel can I ever hope to change. I ask for your anointing tonight upon the truths of your word that we would not be shamed and we would not be put aside and we would not be deceived any longer. God, because I know that it just aches your heart to see people counterfeiting your truth.

So I ask in Jesus' name, God, that you would come down mightily in our midst and God, a lot of this writing is me, I know that. There's a lot of my own humor and thought structure in this. But God, as we go through this, help us to separate what's Keith Green from what's God's word.

Please do it, Lord. You said that your word was sharper than any two-edged sword to divide between even the soul and the spirit and God, there's my soul in this thing and there's also the spirit of God. And I ask that you'd even help me divide it as we go through it.

For God, we want to in these crusades, God, we want to see people honestly planted and then left alone to grow. Sure, if we see a bug going up the stem, we'd take it off. If we saw weed growing up, we'd help the guy pull it out.

If we see that they're bending the wrong way or there's too strong of a wind, we'd put a big stick up into the ground and tie them to it so the wind doesn't blow them over. But God, that we'd let them alone to grow. Let your son shine.

Teach them how to stand still and abide in you and not add any of these stupid artificial weights to their branches when they're so tender and young to break them off. Teach us, God, how to lead someone to the kingdom and how not to lead them astray and to prematurely give birth to them. In Jesus' name, we ask this, knowing that you've heard us and that you anoint whatever is true.

And whoever is sincere, God, looking for you. Amen. Okay, we're going to read through this.

I haven't got this memorized. It's hard enough to memorize a hundred songs. We're going to read through this together and then I'll stop and make some comments.

I suggest that you look up the scriptures at home. There's hundreds of scriptures through these studies. Hundreds, literally.

But you look the ones up on the bottom at home. I mean, at least the ones through the paragraphs. The ones that are inside the sentences.

On the bottom, if you could look those up at another time, that'd be fine. Okay, let's go through this. Introduction.

In each generation, there have been various ways and means used to secure the attention of sinners so that they may be shown the truth and then led into a saving knowledge and true relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Just very simply, you can't preach to somebody the truth until you have their attention. That's what an announcer is for on television.

The guy's got this voice, and now you've got to listen to this amazing double opera. Wow, where are we now? So they got your attention and then they sell you the product. Well, Christians are supposed to get your attention with love.

And they'll know we're Christians by our love, that we have one for another. That's supposed to get the attention because the world is so selfish that the norm is selfishness. And so you're supposed to stick out like an unsore thumb.

It is a fact that man is a creature of habit. He loves form. He doesn't like things to change too quickly, and he clings to tradition.

Unfortunately for man, God is no such person. I say unfortunately there because man and God have been going butted head to head since day one because man likes things to stay the same because then he knows what's going to come next. God, wanting to see if he really loves him, has always changed the scene very quickly and changed the ways to prove that you love God.

As a famous evangelist once wrote, means, in other words, methods, are only effective to prove love for God as long as they're new, as long as they're a novelty, as long as they're something that has just been around for a little while. As soon as they become old or traditioned, they lose their effectiveness because people put their eyes on the thing itself, on the method, rather than on the ends that the method is brought forth to produce. And we're going to get into that a little bit later, but that's when a test, for instance, they have to change the driving test every few years at the motor vehicle place.

Otherwise, you learn the answers by memory instead of knowledge. And then you can pass the test, but you don't really know what you're passing. As soon as you think that reading five chapters a day and spending 15 minutes of prayer is all that it takes to please God, then all of a sudden that won't please him anymore because you're offering it up to him by rote.

You're doing it a package deal. Here's your package for the day, God. God will change the requirements day by day, church by church, city by city.

Unfortunately for man, God is no such person. Though something has never been tried before, God simply doesn't care. His only concern is that it is the wisest and most direct way of accomplishing his own desire.

This, of course, threw the children of Israel into many a panic. What's God doing now? If there was a big sea in the way, no problem. He just split it.

If there wasn't any water, snap, a drinking fountain from a rock, food running low, poof, it'll rain bread in the morning. And Jesus had the same way of dealing with things. When his disciples were far from shore, it didn't matter.

Jesus just strolled over the waves. Problem with the weather? Shut up, wind. And so it went.

Now, as you can see in the Bible, God had a lot of problems with man and his moldy traditions. Just take a look at the Jews, how they loved their temple, their sacrifices, their Sabbath. Too bad they didn't care much for their God.

And Jesus ran up against the whole stubborn lot of them. Did you see that? Why, he healed on the Sabbath. At every turn, Jesus tried to show them the truth using the wisest reasoning and the best

examples.

But they kept getting hung up on his methods, touching lepers. I mean, that was against the law. It was against the law of Moses.

You know, remember how he used to heal different people? He always healed somebody in a way that tested their faith. Always. Or came up against the traditional taboos.

Always. He didn't have to touch the lepers. Remember a couple of them? He'd say, you know, go on your way.

By the time you reach home, your daughter will be healed. In fact, right now, remember the guy says, you don't even have to come to my house. Just say the word.

He goes, alright. The word. He's healed.

Jesus didn't have to touch the lepers, but because it was forbidden by law, he reached out and touched them so that he could say to the Pharisees, look, you said it's illegal to touch these guys. Well, I'm going to touch them and then they won't be lepers and then you won't be able to prove that I broke the law. He touched the leper.

No, I didn't look at him. Well, he was a leper when I touched him, but when I, you know, right in the middle of the touch, it changed. So did I, am I really guilty? It's kind of like the guy that goes through the yellow light and it changes when he just touches the line, you know, and they go to court and well, it changed right after he went out.

No, it changed before I went. Now, Jesus always was testing their traditions and their man-made laws, as he does ours to this day. Touching lepers, raising the dead, hanging out with sinners.

Oh, man. Whipping money changers, that didn't go too popular in the Jewish 500 fortune. It scared them to death.

Their religion was basically peaceful, very solemn and quiet, but Jesus had the whole town in an uproar at least once a week. You can see why he bothered them. He disturbed their nice, little, peaceful hometown religion with the truth.

It is obvious that God anoints men and women who are completely yielded to his spirit, but he also anoints methods and tools that we use. Meetings, tracks, books, music, witnessing, preaching. In fact, anything, any tool that we use, when they are also fully submitted to him in faithfulness.

But there is a great danger when man or even God, we'll talk about that in a minute, designs a tool to be used for God's glory, and then as time passes, people's attention starts to be fixed on the tool itself rather than on the glory of God, which was originally designed to promote. And then at the bottom of the footnote, which is an itsy-bitsy little print, because it had now become an idol, King Hezekiah had to destroy the same bronze serpent that Moses had made in obedience to God, in Numbers 21, which had been used to stop the plague of death among the Israelites. This is the same bronze serpent referred to by Jesus in reference to himself.

Remember when Jesus says, as the serpent in the wilderness, I myself must be lifted up. Well, that serpent had to be destroyed by a man of God because it had been turned into an idol. God told Moses, I'm

not going to tell the whole story, but God told Moses to make a bronze serpent that when the people looked upon this serpent, their plague would be checked, the plague that God had sent on them because of their sin.

A couple of generations later, they started adoring it as a religious artifact. And they had to turn around and the godly king had to destroy the very thing that God had told them to make earlier to obey him. So God many times gives us... In fact, you know what? Even the Bible itself can become an idol.

We're supposed to worship the living word. Many people worship the written word. The written word is supposed to reveal the living word so that we can worship him.

Many times people, you know, they don't know God at all, but they sure know their Bibles. As we just wrote in this article that we're doing on rock music, the cults use the same book that we adore. They use the very same Bible that we study Jesus, then they twist it and turn it and they use it for their own destruction according to Peter.

The very things that God gives us can be used for our own destruction if we don't use them in the proper perspective for the promotion of the glory of God. Now, if the things that God gives us can be misused and abused, how much more can the things that we invent in submission to God, can they be abused? Okay. The following is a list of just some of the tools, just some, by the way, this is not a complete list, of some of the tools, methods, and concepts that I believe have become so much a part of presenting the modern gospel that they have become just about inseparable from it.

I mean that one and the same to people. These tools have become so much a part of the gospel, well, it says here, in fact, they are to such an extent considered necessary that if many of them are left out of an evangelistic meeting, Christians can hardly believe that anyone can even be saved there. And I mean it.

I mean it. Well, I started getting bothered about three years ago with some of the tools that people were using. And I started just not using them anymore because I was perplexed and confused.

Now, we're going to do crusades and we're going to use some tools that some of them are like this. In fact, we're even going to have a follow-up program. The words don't bother me, just the thing that they're doing today in most cases is the follow-up program.

And we're not going to be the self, well, we're going to have the right follow-up program. No, we're just going to try to follow people up the way Jesus would. That's all.

We're going to try to call people to receive Christ the way Jesus would. That's the way we want to do it. But anyway, these methods that people are using today, in fact, nobody even considers an evangelistic meeting, an evangelistic meeting, unless there is an official invitation given right then and there.

I don't understand that. We're going to get to that. I don't want to go ahead of myself.

But the main point I want to make here is that people, good people, sincere people, people that love God and believe that this is the truth, cannot even conceive of the fact that someone can get saved unless they go through the official motions according to an official... I got a letter today, I read it. This guy said, Thank you so much for your What's Wrong With The Gospel tracks. I should have brought it and read it here.

He said, I got saved about a year ago and I've been living for Jesus and I love Him, but my friends are bothering me because I haven't raised my hand for an invitation. I said, I don't need to. I love Jesus.

I raised my hand in my own room before God. Yes, but if you're really a Christian, then you'd have the courage to come forward and confess it before men. He says, I go out witnessing every day.

I'm confessing it all the time. He says, Keith, I even went and got baptized like the Bible says I should. Isn't that raising my hand? He says, and I read your articles and it just gave me such peace that I didn't need to do all that stuff.

I got saved and I know it and people know it, but they're still laying this trip on me that I gotta go forward or else they're got some doubt. You see, these people are so brainwashed, are so indoctrinated, not by any one group, just by all of us. You know how we can all brainwash each other to thinking something's true? The whole world was brainwashed to think the earth was flat.

Columbus had the guts to go out, not the guts, maybe the greed, to go forth and look for gold in the new land, you know, to prove that when you went over the horizon, you weren't going over the edge of the world. The whole world was brainwashed by a lot. There wasn't a cult group going, let's all tell them the world's flat.

They all just kind of perpetrated it themselves. Well, that's what happened. These people are so brainwashed that, when did you get saved? Well, in my bedroom, man.

I was just reading the Bible and praying and, man, a spirit came down. What do you mean a spirit came down? Was there a pastor there? No, but God was there, I was there, and that's salvation. Well, okay, maybe you did get saved, but the next time the pastor gives the invitation, just to be sure, just to make sure, we'll go forward, man.

At least raise your hand up so we'll all see it. Oh, yeah, now we know that John's saved. I mean, he says they're laying this number on him.

He says, I refuse to do it. I said, well, you did everything Jesus told you to do. You even got baptized.

That's great. In fact, I believe that baptism in the New Testament was what the altar calls become today. That was the invitation.

Look, if you really mean business, get down there to the river, dunkin' donuts down there. I think that's what baptism was, was what today's altar called. But now, no fuss, no water, no sloshing, no changing of clothes, no nothing, you know.

Okay, here we go. Some inventions... That must have hurt your ears. Mission control.

They don't make these clips like they used to. How'd that sound? Guys back there, their eyes are like too sunny-side up, eh? Okay. Some inventions of man that have become essential parts of the modern gospel.

Okay, now, I want you to think about this. Now, these... Boy, I got in some nasty letters on this stuff. The term and concept of personal savior.

Let's read it through, and I'll stop and go back over it. I find it very disturbing when something unnecessary is added to the gospel. The use of the term personal savior isn't very harmful in itself, but it shows a kind of mindset that is willing to invent terms and then allow these terms to be preached as if they were actually found in the Bible.

But why must we do this? Why must we add needless, almost meaningless things to the gospel? It's because we've taken so much out of it that we have to replace it with spiritual double talk. That's right, double talk. Would you ever introduce your sister like this? This is Sheila, my personal sister.

Or would you point to your neighbor and say, this is my personal belly button. Ridiculous, but nevertheless, people solemnly speak of Christ as their personal savior as if they've got him right there in their shirt pocket. And as if when he returns, he will not have two but three titles written across his thigh.

King of kings, Lord of lords, and personal savior. This is only one example of how a non-biblical term can be elevated in reverence by the church as if to say, well, if it ain't in the Bible, it ought to be. Okay, I'm not against people saying, I accept that Jesus is my personal savior.

I'm not. Because I know where the term came from. It originally was invented by people who were trying to be evangelicals rather than the Catholic concept of savior.

Rather than the savior. Jesus is the savior. Kind of out there, away on another planet that nobody... No, he's not just the savior.

They go and witness to people and they run into Catholics and say, do you have Jesus as your savior? Did you accept Jesus? Yes, I love the savior. I pray to his mom. I really believe in the savior.

No, but do you have him... And then they had to come up with the difference between the savior. Do you have him as a personal savior? So I know where it came from originally. It came from people trying to personalize the experience of salvation in contrast to the non-personal kind of gods up there with the big stick, so you better speak to his mother.

Now, but today, it's become a cliché. And a cliché, whenever you've got a cliché, you lose all your meaning, and everything started out mostly with good motives for a good reason. But today people use this thing in a stupid way.

I get letters all the time. Well, I accept Jesus as my personal savior. I have.

All right. So, are you living for it? No, no, he's not my lord yet, but he's my personal savior. So what does that mean? I've got four brownie points, I'm waiting for my other one.

It's kind of like the guy, the Pentecostal boy scout troop, and the guy gets tongues, he sews a little tongue on his thing there. I mean, really, people have this kind of thing. They've got this kind of installment plan to heaven, you know.

First, I'll get saved by making Jesus my personal savior, and then I'll make him my lord, and then I'll get baptized in the spirit, and then I'll become holy after that. Backwards. There's no such thing as, you know, get saved now, pay later, any of that stuff.

It comes in one bite-sized bullet called the cross. People have to come lock, stock, and barrel, or Jesus would leave them alone and say, if you're not ready, don't let me rush you. Make sure that a man sits

down and counts the cost.

It's very important. Don't ever rush somebody in like a used car salesman into salvation. It's the biggest mistake you could make for somebody.

And this personal savior thing is just, it doesn't make me mad. The personal savior thing does not bug me. It's the, as I say here, it's not harmful in itself, but it shows a kind of mindset that is willing to invent terms and then allow these terms.

This is the part that gets to me. Allows these terms to be preached as if they're actually biblical terms. Now, the term itself is not harmful.

It's the mindset I'm talking about. The mindset of taking something and saying, this is biblical, brother. You know? I mean, people talk about, you know, the pre-tribulation rapture people in the Mid and the Post, they all talk about it as if it's written right there in 4th Corinthians, you know? And they've got all, you know, and I go, wait a minute.

Now, I respect you, and there's a brother down the road that believes the exact opposite that I respect too. Now, since both of you are respected Christians, how can you both be so sure your way is the biblical way? You've got maybe some good scripture. But don't make it watertight, this is definitely the way it is thing, on something that the Bible is not totally clear about.

Now, the Bible is clear about him being the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, and if that isn't enough to get somebody saved, you don't have to add anything to it. If you can't define King of Kings, King of Rulers, and if you can't define Lord of Lords, including landlords and every other kind of Lord, then the other definitions are futile. People try to cheapen it.

Okay, the term and concept of accepting the Lord. Now, this got me into even more trouble. I go, but brother, I accepted the Lord.

I accepted the Lord. I said, wait a minute. If you're saved, He accepted you.

And, let's go, this is one of those that's plain make me mad. You can hear people say, why didn't you accept the Lord? Or, I'm going to accept the Lord right after the weenie roast tonight. What? How dare we talk about the miracle of someone accepting the Lord.

What kind of a miracle is that? Is it a miracle for a hopeless fool like me to accept the living God? Why, the miracle is that the creator of the universe, the one who made the sea and the mountains, the sun and the stars, who right now is holding it all together, wants to accept me. That's the miracle. Now, there is a phrase in the Bible about receiving Christ.

People wrote me, well, wait a minute. It says that we should receive Christ. Isn't that accepting and receiving? Pretty close.

I said, well, the word accept does have a meaning that's the same as receive. But when people talk about accepting the Lord, it's as if they're kind of going, well, maybe I'll accept you, maybe I won't. I mean, you're going to have to prove yourself to me first.

Let me see how acceptable you are. That's the definition that drives me up the wall. Receiving something is God's giving you something and you're just taking it.

Thank you. But accepting is, well, I don't know. Now, people, you know, that's a fine line, and again, it's the fact that people talk about this concept as if it's right in the Bible.

And the thing that is the thing we should be preaching on is that Jesus Christ accepted us. He loved us before we loved Him. He went after us before we went after Him.

He came to us before we came to Him. He drew us before we asked Him to draw us. And then we turn around and say, why? How do I deserve it? You've got to make people believe that they don't deserve it because that's the truth.

You've got to make people, instead of trying to make people show what a great deal it is, they can get saved. You've got to show people what a rotten deal they've given to God. He gave them life.

He gave them His blood. He gave them His own Son. He gave them His Spirit.

And what did you give them? A big life full of heartache. A whole gut full of trouble and a bunch of rebellion and a whole lot of sin and a stench in His nostrils. And you've got to come to Him on your knees and say, can you ever accept me? And He says, yes, and that's the greatest miracle of all.

All this other stuff is horrible. This me-centered garbage. You're the center of the universe, brother.

Jesus loves you so much that He came to die for you, you, you. But Paul lifted Jesus up. Peter lifted Jesus up.

The Bible lifts Jesus up. But we today, we lift the sinner up. Almighty sinner, Jesus is down here waiting for you to accept Him and He'll fly up to where you are.

It's not humility. It isn't salvation. It's a glorification of the person and the sinner.

Next, the altar call. I got into some trouble for this, but I still believe in the altar call. I believe that the altar call means calling someone to the altar to die.

What was the altar in the Jewish religion? We call it the altar now. They've got altars at churches. What is the altar? The altar is a place to die upon.

You never saw the animals going back to their seats after they were killed. And the altar is supposed to alter a person's life, too. But too many people come forward to the altar, they offer up their prayer, they belch it up, they go back to their seat, hallelujah, you're a Christian, here's your pack of materials, see you later.

That ain't salvation. Salvation is death and rebirth, death and rebirth, death and rebirth, that's salvation. No resurrection without a cross, without a crucifixion.

Imagine if you can, Jesus having people bow their heads after hearing the Sermon on the Mount and then very slowly and softly while Bartholomew plays How Great Thou Art on the accordion, saying to the crowd, while your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed, if you really want to be my disciple tonight, if you really want to show my Father and I that you truly mean to follow the sermon I have given, then I want you to slip your little hand up slowly so that I may see it. There now. Yes, yes.

I see that hand and that one and only the one way back by the fig tree. Yes, now please while Barth plays another chorus, I'd like you to start moving down through the center of the crowd. Yes, those who raise their hands, I want to know if you really mean business and I'd like to lead you in a prayer.

Okay. I realize that there are some who'll see such an illustration as sacrilegious, but that's just the point. They think that making fun of the altar call is making fun of God, but it isn't.

Traditions die hard because they take so long to form. You can memorize that. Traditions die hard because they take so long to form.

It's just like our economy. Our economy, our deficit, our national debt in America has taken a long time to come to being and they expect the President in one year to turn it around and then they blame him when he can't. They'll vote him out of office too.

You watch it. Unless there's some kind of miracle like a world war and that's what took last time to turn the economy around and I hate those kind of miracles, this President is going to be as unpopular, he's going to be more unpopular than Ford, Carter, and Johnson and Nixon put together by the time this thing is done because you can't turn around in four years what took 40 years to be bad. Traditions die hard because they take so long to form.

Recently I received a very intense, I mean angry, letter from the pastor of a church who had sponsored me in a citywide concert in his area. He was upset that I had let several hundreds go ungathered, that was his words, because I had not given an altar call at my concert. He said, it seems you have no burden for souls.

Well, nothing could be farther from the truth but because I had not given the recognized official invitation, the pastor could see no value in my presentation of the gospel. And Tony Slano said at one of our meetings in the area, if you don't give an altar call, I think you've committed the unpardonable sin. I mean that's how religiously important this thing is. And then I got this part here on the history of the altar call.

Believe it or not, the altar call was invented only 150 years ago. Before that date there is not a recorded using of an invitation system. Now, like I said before, baptism was sort of an altar call, but there wasn't ever this coming forward and separating out the seekers from the non-seeker kind of thing that we've got today. It was first used by the American evangelist Charles Finney, one of our heroes here, old Chuck, as a means of separating out those who wanted to talk further about the subject of their salvation.

Finney called the front pew the anxious seat. Well, when I first read those words, the anxious seat, I was going, maybe people are sitting there going, you know, anxious seat. For those who were anxious about the state of their soul, or the mourner's bench, Finney never led them in a prayer, but he and a few others would spend a great deal of time praying with and giving specific instruction to each, one by one, until finally everyone was sent home and to pray and continue seeking God until they had broken through and expressed hope in Christ, as Finney would say.

You got the picture? They'd bring them home and they'd say, well, this is what you need to do. Now you go home. Get right with God.

You don't need me hanging around. I mean, what we do with people is we say, listen, I want to marry you to Jesus, but I want to come on the honeymoon and make sure everything happens okay. This must be exciting for those watching this.

Is there a trick to this? Okay. You know what I mean? It's like you're saying, okay, here's the bridegroom Jesus and here's the bride. Okay.

Do you accept it? Yes. Do you accept it? Oh, great. Okay.

All right, now we're going to go in the back room and we're going to have the honeymoon. Come on, I'll go with you. Make sure you have the right motives and all the right scripture and all the right stuff and everything.

But we need to be able to send people home and trust them in the intimacy of their prayer closet. They're going to give their whole hearts to God. Who can really? Look, I've been a Christian for seven years and I still have trouble opening up and being intimate with other people.

And I've had a lot of my embarrassments cleaned by Christ. I've had a lot of my things taken care of and washed in the blood. But a brand new person who has never trusted anybody in their whole life is going to open up to you when they haven't even ever even opened up to God? Leave them alone.

Leave them alone for God's sake. If you're going to counsel somebody, just give them what they need and leave them alone. As I said a couple of studies ago, the guy that plants a garden and then digs up the seeds every day to make sure they're growing is going to kill them.

You know? How are you growing? Oh, right. That wasn't funny. Can you hit the pause button for a second? Okay? Okay.

So the guy plants the garden, digs up his seeds, and kills them. And that's what we do when we try prying in a new convert's life over every little thought they're having. Did you do this? Did you read that? Hey, you've got to sign this and you've got to go here and you've got to go there.

Leave the people alone. Show them you care. Make yourself available, but anything more than that you're going to do damage.

Have you ever courted a husband or a wife or any of you married that are going to be counselors? How much of a chance would your husband have had if he would have bugged you all the time? I mean, really bugged you. I'm not talking about would you like to go out, but, hey, what are you doing? You're going out with who? I mean, what are you doing? Where are you going to be? You know? Is everything okay? Not with you watching this guy in the back that's sledgehammering things. Jealous? I mean, look, people live in a world where they don't trust anybody.

That's the way the world is. You get ripped off. You buy a car, it breaks down.

You think that the warranty is going to cover everything? Oh, well, we don't cover that part. Oh, here's the warranty. You didn't know this? Oh, we're sorry.

Well, you're going to have to pay for half the labor and that comes to \$500 because they double their prices. See? For you, it's twice as much, but you get half off, so it's the same. And so they go through the world ripped off.

Well, they've seen religious preachers on TV, most of which have scared the living daylights out of them. And you come along and why are they going to trust you? You got all the same Jesus words and everything that grandma had that scared with stories of hell and so on back then, without the right view of

Christ. Or they'd heard of people being in Christian schemes where they've made a whole bunch of money and they see these, you know, evangelists with diamond rings and so on and they feel like they're going to get ripped off and you come along and you take an interest in where they're going and why you're hanging out with that person and so on and so forth.

Showing an interest is one thing. Bothering a new convert is like digging up the seeds the day after you plant them. You're bound to kill them.

They're very delicate creatures. And this altar call thing, all we're supposed to do is offer them the truth and show them more love than they've ever seen in their life. And if those two things, the truth and love cannot reach them, nothing can.

Understand? Nothing can reach them if truth and love can't reach them. If you can't prove to them one, what the light is, the gospel, to come into their minds and two, what their state is and that you love them anyway even though they've been an enemy of God and that you're willing to stand by them and drive them here or take them in or if they're living with their boyfriend, take them into your own house or if they don't have a job to take them in and help them find a job or whatever it takes. That love will blow their minds and the truth will change their minds and their lives.

But all this other stuff that we call gospel follow-up and gospel this and evangelistic that is really hurting people. The early Salvation Army going a bit further. Let's skip that part.

Not because they're not... It's just another example of the same thing. Well, let's not skip the part. I'll just read the... You don't have to turn your page again.

It sounds like the end of the world. The early Salvation Army going a bit further. In Phineas' innovation developed what they called the penitent form.

That penitent being repentant or the mercy seat. After a rousing time of singing and preaching they would invite any sinner present who wanted to confess his sins to repent... confess his sins to God and repent to come to the front and they would be prayed for individually and... individually. I have met a few older Christians who used to attend some of these early meetings and others like them in the 20's and 30's and they said that sometimes people would stay there all night and on a few occasions even a few days weeping and confessing their sins with broken hearts.

You know that Billy Graham's father for three days there was a revival meeting and he went to the altar and he stayed there for three days and didn't move. Now that doesn't mean that oh you know somebody watching this now I know what I got to tell people to do they got to stay somewhere for three days and they'll get saved. But that was one of those early sadist evangelists that preached to people and left them alone.

Let them get their hearts right. You know? The guy pops the question and says will you marry me? And she goes let me have some time to think and pray about it. Well what do you think she'd do if he called up every hour and says well what do you think? The no is going to come pretty quickly.

Weeping and confessing their sins with broken hearts for a few days. There were always some who would stay right there to instruct them further if they needed it and asked for it. Encouraging them to make a clean sweep of sin from their lives.

This is what the early altar call was like. A little bit different than today isn't it? In fact the early altar call wasn't an altar call at all. It was just giving people an opportunity to unburden their hearts.

Without letting them go home like well that's the end of the meeting goodnight. It was well that's the end of the meeting if anybody would like to stay to talk and pray we're going to have some people here that will be glad to share their heart with somebody they'll be here if not they'll just be here to keep the place open so you can pray before God. Come on forward.

Have a seat. Everybody else can go home. Turn the lights down.

Now let's get down and what you guys need to do is you need to pray. You guys need to not just oh now lay me down to sleep pray you need to unburden your heart to God. Now we're just going to go in the back and pray for you and you just stay here.

And it was powerful because they let the spirit do it. That's what the early altar call was like but gradually it began to become a fixed part of every meeting and like all other traditions it began to lose its original spirit. The coming forward part started to be more important than the sorrow, confession, repentance and instruction parts.

Eventually it's just like making a wax fruit. You know how good those wax fruit those bowls of wax fruit look? They look like you could bite into them and lose your teeth right? But they don't have any flavor and they don't have any consistency and they're not real. But they make them look just the same.

Eventually anyone who would come down the aisle was excitedly exclaimed a new believer in Christ. No matter how they felt they still were told your sins are forgiven brother rejoice in Christ. How many miserable, defeated and confused persons come away from a meeting like this? Hey you know what? I used to be a new Christian.

Every old Christian or older Christian used to be a new one. When I was a new Christian I got saved the way I told you before that these other guys got saved. I prayed to Jesus for two years and finally I said I surrender.

It was just me and him. That was it. I happened to go to another meeting about a month later and they asked for people who wanted to get saved.

If you really wanted to get saved you'd raise your hand. So I raised my hand. So did Melody.

But we already were saved for a month. They said hallelujah praise God. Here you are a new Christian.

Nice to meet you. Welcome to the family of God. Thank you.

I felt great. I felt great beforehand. Then what happened was I started leading people to the Lord.

I adopted that thing of raise your hand or accept the person or accept the Lord and say the prayer. I adopted that. Then I started leading people in the service for people who weren't ready.

Just say the prayer. I remember saying that. It doesn't matter if you understand or even believe the words.

Just say them and something happens. That's what somebody told me. Somebody told me that.

Something happens. It was almost like a witch's incantation. A spell or something.

There were magic words to say. All of a sudden the Holy Spirit started following you around. There are some words to say and other spirits will follow you around.

But I adopted that view and ruined my head for about two years. Not to mention a lot of people got semi-saved and immediately fell away. A lot of people.

That's one of the things that started me studying this. All the people that got saved so-called and fell away so-called. I don't want to give away some of the next parts.

But I don't know how many of them ever went forward that much in their hearts. The sinner's prayer. That last sentence, how many miserable, defeated, and confused person.

That is what my converts looked like when after they said the prayer. I'd say, praise God, now you're a Christian. In fact, I was such a new believer.

I went to the Bible bookstore and bought some of those silver-plated crosses, 69 cents. I carried them around in my guitar case. When I let somebody in the prayer, I gave them the cross.

Take up your cross. I was an idiot for Christ. Some of those people really got saved, but they got saved because God was working on them before that night anyway.

There are some fish in the sea that are so ready and so hungry, you can throw in an old shoe and they'll bite on it. They just happen to be passing by and they just swallow their mouth open. They get pulled out.

God is working on their life anyway and you come along with a garbage can and they jump in. It doesn't matter. You think, wow, that's all I need is garbage cans.

Some will stick because they were stuck before you even asked them to stick. The sinner's prayer. Also, try and imagine this scene where Jesus is leading some new disciples in the sinner's prayer.

Before this, you have to understand that Jesus says, now those of you who have heard my sermon tonight, we have 12 trained counselors back here, are going to answer all your questions. Don't become a counselor thinking that you're going to be the spiritual source for this person's new life. Because only the Holy Spirit can be the spiritual source for this person's new life.

All you're going to be is like the curb on the road. That's all you're going to be. You're going to be someone to make sure they don't drive off the path.

If you see they're going the right way, leave them alone. Just, that's nice, leave them alone. Pray for them.

Smile at them if they ask you a question, answer it. But don't go, now you need to do this, now you need to do that, now you need to read this. Invite them to the next meeting.

Get their phone number. Invite them and encourage them to come and offer to drive them. Invite them out to dinner before the meeting or out to coffee after the meeting.

But don't let them feel like you're trying to sell them something, you know, it's like trying to sell them some products or something, you know. I almost said Amway. Okay, don't let them feel like there's anything in it for you, except the part of you that wants to see that Jesus gets what he deserves.

So Jesus, try to imagine Jesus saying, wow, there's so many that came forward for salvation tonight. The multitude applauds. Now it is very simple.

You must repeat this little prayer after me and then you're a Christian. Now it doesn't really matter whether you fully understand the prayer, it works just the same. Now ready? Repeat after me, dear Jesus, come into my heart, and so on.

As you can see when we try to imagine Jesus himself using our modern methods of evangelism, it seems completely foolish. I think that that's a very good test for any method, could I see Jesus doing this, or could I hear Jesus preaching or teaching that? Since the Bible tells us walk in the manner that he walked, we should always try and compare our actions and preaching to the masters. Amen.

It is obvious that there is no set sinner's prayer. I'm talking about the ones that people are using. There are many variations with different lengths and different wordings, different endings, etc., but the contents are usually the same.

The prayer usually includes phrases like dear Jesus, and come into my heart, I admit I have sinned, at least the better ones contain this last statement. There are some who do not even mention sin in their sinner's prayer, and I mean that. I mean I've heard sinner's prayers that say Jesus, I'm tired of living for myself, or Jesus, I want to be happy, please make me happy, come into my heart in Jesus' name.

I mean I've heard people lead people in prayers like that. But it doesn't matter what you lead them in, and you can say you know, banana Patty Hearst, or whatever, you know, and no words are going to make any difference to anybody unless their heart is saying them from its own desire. So that's the futility of the thing.

Now every now and then, like I said, you're going to get a fish on the line, that their heart is ready to burst, and you happen to just unzip the zipper, and out comes a torrent, and you're going to get the fish, and you can give them the words, and they'll say it, and they'll mean it, and you could have just said go home, and they would have had the same results, or you could have said, you know, stare at that wall, and they would have started bawling. Fill me with your spirit, in Jesus' name, amen. Extremely harmless, nothing wrong with a prayer like that, right? Wrong.

Now again, I want to say that that prayer in itself isn't wicked or evil or anything. Here's what's wrong about it. It isn't the wording, it's the state of heart of the one that's saying it.

I believe that a true sinner's prayer will gush out of anyone who is truly seeking God and is tired of being enslaved to sin. The very act of leading someone in a prayer is utterly ridiculous. You will find nothing even remotely like it in the Bible, or among the writers and biographies of those in church history.

It completely savors a crowd and peer pressure tactics, and please forgive me, and I said that there because I didn't want people to think I was declaring all evangelists brain washers, at least in the motives, brain washing techniques. I don't believe anyone wants to brain wash people, but I think that many of these tactics are psychological inventions to take the place of the real thing that produce outward results similar. I do not believe that Jesus wants to have his disciples, quote, repeat after me.

I believe he wants them to follow after him. That's important. I don't believe that When I was first on the circuit and traveling around, I found out very easily and very early how to get people to come forward.

I seem to have a kind of a charismatic personality. I could bring people forward. I found I could rinse them out of their seats.

In fact, near the middle of my ministry, I found I could get half the audience, at least. In fact, if I couldn't get half the audience to come forward at any one concert, I was a bad night for me. I'm talking about 50 percent of the people that came.

Any night. Sometimes the Lord anointed, and other times, it was me. Sometimes it was a mixture.

But you see, that's why I couldn't give an altar call, because I wanted to make sure that when people got saved, it wasn't Keith Green. That it wasn't the songs, or the music, or the emotions of the night. That's why in these concerts we're having meetings the next morning to discuss salvation.

When the spotlight's off, and the sound is lower, and there isn't the excitement of the crowd and the music, so that the next morning, when people have had a night to sleep on it and pray about it, maybe cry through the night. Maybe some of them will come and they won't even have slept. But they'll be able to level-headedly, after the emotional high and the adrenaline rush has died down, can come to a meeting and say, you know what, what you said last night made a lot of sense.

I've thought about it. I've read what you've given me. I want to give my life to God, and I want to tell you, I realize how miserable I am and why I'm miserable, because I'm serving myself and not God.

That's why we're doing it the way we're doing it. And maybe it's overcompensation, but until I'm convinced that when people come forward at an altar call at one of my concerts, or anybody else's, that they're coming forward to meet Jesus, because they're convinced that their lives are messed up, and that He's the only way out to get their lives straightened out. Until I'm convinced that, then I won't have, I'm not against altar calls, or in that matter, a time of prayer together.

I'm just against things that prematurely bring people to birth before they're ready. And that's where we're at. Premature birth.

As with the altar call, the practice of having someone repeat a prayer with a minister probably originated from the best of intentions. And no doubt, there are those who have followed through continuing to pray and walk with God, entering into the path of righteousness through God's infinite grace. But also, just like the altar call, the so-called sinner's prayer is one of those tools that make it alarmingly easy for someone to consider himself a Christian when he has absolutely no understanding what counting the cost means.

The greatest reason I believe that God can be grieved with the current use of such tools as altar call and sinner's prayer is because they can take away the conviction of the Holy Spirit prematurely. Phew! Do you know how heavy that is? Before it has the time to work repentance leading to salvation. With an emotional splash that usually doesn't last more than a few weeks, we believe we're leading people into the kingdom when we're really leading many to hell by interfering with what the Spirit of God is trying to do in a person's life.

Do you hear what I'm saying? Do you understand that this constitutes spiritual abortion? And I believe it's even more wrong for this kind of abortion than physical abortion. Even more wrong. Physical abortion isn't sending somebody to hell.

This is. This can be. Physical abortion I think is a wicked thing and where our ministry stands firmly against it.

But it isn't as wicked as this. This is worse. Telling somebody they're saved before they are is worse than taking somebody to the hospital and aborting their baby.

The reason for that is because when you tell somebody they're saved and they're not, then they believe they have an authentic. Do you know what it's just like? It's like giving somebody a thousand dollar check and you tell them that all I need is a thousand dollars to take care of all my bills and I won't be bankrupt. And they say, brother, here it is.

A thousand dollars. Put it in their pocket. It's Friday night.

The banks aren't open until Monday. And the whole weekend they go through and they call up all their creditors and say, I've got the money. I'll pay you.

No problem. They get to the bank Monday morning and they find out when it's time to cash in the chips that that check was phony or you didn't have the money to cover it and it bounces. And the whole weekend they walk around thinking my problems are solved.

My money's in the bank. It's right there. And it's not.

The whole time it wasn't worth anything. See, a bad check or a counterfeit hundred dollar bill or whatever you want to use as an analogy is never good. But when the people think it's good until the judgment day comes, until the day of reckoning or cashing it in or whatever you want to call it, judgment day comes when they find out, oh my God, it's never been real.

All that joy I had was false. All that security I had in this thing was phony. And most of these people find out it's phony very shortly.

It doesn't take until judgment day. Most of them find out within a couple weeks when they try to fly and their wings fall off, when they try to walk on the water and they drown spiritually, when they try to pray and their prayers hit the ceiling because they never had any contact with God really in the first place. And we do such incredible damage.

It's the meanest thing that anyone can do to tell somebody they're authentically a Christian before they are. There isn't any more wicked thing that a person can do, I believe, in the whole world. I don't believe an axe murderer who murders people with an axe is any more wicked than the results of somebody leading people to a premature birth in the spirit.

Now that's some heavy words. Now I don't think there's anybody that means to do that, and that's the difference between him and the axe murderer. I don't think anybody wants to bring it.

I think that it's immaturity or premature excitement or just lack of knowledge. And I have done it. I have been party to this.

I have been given the wrong information and I have passed it on to others thinking all the while, hallelujah, they're really Christians. I used to come out of those concerts when the 50 percent would come forward, go to the back of my room and feel awful and just know, you know what, I know a lot of those people that I led in that prayer out there really didn't mean it. But I thought when people would come to the door and

say hallelujah, Keith, praise God, there's people that came forward, it's the most people I've ever seen come and I go, yeah, I go out to eat with them, I go to my hotel room and I still feel like this big, damp sponge had been sucked down my throat and into my heart and I knew that I had done wickedly and I didn't know why until I started reading a few things by people who opened my eyes that the Bible talks about counting the cost and taking the time and leaving people alone.

That's why Jesus let that rich young ruler, that beautiful soul, go. He let him go because he knew that to make any exceptions to the holy rule of if you're going to come, you've got to walk in under your own power, knowing fully what you're getting into. If you made any exception to that, the guy would be lost, most likely for eternity and think he was found, which is even worse.

It's one thing for a person to be lost. It's another thing for a person to be lost. That's what the cults are.

See, if you're going have salvation, but Peter says there's salvation in no other name, and we tell him yes, there is in Buddha or there is in Allah or another Jesus. Paul talks about this other Jesus that really isn't another, a doctrine of devils. A friend of mine says that the greatest cult in America is born againism.

It isn't Mormonism, it isn't Jehovah's Witnesses, it's born againism. It's rubber stamping Christians, mass producing converts. It's the difference between a Volkswagen and a Rolls Royce in the U.S. One's handmade, the other one's mass produced.

One continues to go up in value, the other one, five years, you can't find it except in the junkyard. They both drive at the same speed for a while. They both even may have the same percentage of their original value for a while.

But one will last a lifetime on this earthly plane, the other one doesn't, and in the spiritual realm, the difference is even greater. We are so afraid that we'll see the big one that got away from us, that we'd rather rush someone into a shallow decision and get the personal gratification of seeing him go down the aisle than take the time to fully explain things to him, even if it takes long hours and nights of prevailing prayer for his soul. Hey, if you're going to be a counselor at these crusades of last days ministries, it's commitment.

It's praying for these converts. It's explaining things to them carefully, carefully, without disrupting the future. It's watering, maybe checking around it, but not pulling it up and strangling it with your eagerness.

And it means dedication. Long hours, days, months, years to become these people's friends. What is Christianity but friendship? God's friendship for us, our friendship for God, and our friendship for each other.

For a man can give no greater gift to his friend than he lay down his life. You know, people love to quote John 3.16. For God so loved the world that he laid down his only begotten son. But what about 1 John 3.16? That we lay down our lives.

He laid down our lives for us, it says. I'm paraphrasing. And we should also lay down our lives for the brethren.

It's amazing that that came out when they laid out the scriptures. It came out as 1 John 3.16. You can memorize John 3.16. It's a beautiful scripture, but don't forget about the other one. That God gave us his son, and it says in 1 John 3.16 that we're to give ourselves to each other as in following the example of

Jesus giving his life for us.

Lay down our lives for the brethren, it says in 1 John 3.16. Nights of travail and prayer for his soul. We just don't have the time to do things God's way anymore. But God would rather see one true convert than an ocean full of decisions.

Oh, can't you see what a mess we're in? What we've done to the gospel. And when those converts no longer want to fellowship with us, when they want to go back to their old friends and their old way of life, we have the need to go back backsliding. When we stood in the very way of the never front sliding in the first place, toward the cross.

Oh, and it breaks my heart to think of that awesome day when God will judge those who have stumbled one of these little ones. Now, if you, like me, have been party to this and stumbled one of these little ones, don't think you're going to go to hell. It's time for you to change your ways, as I am trying to do mine.

Try to go back to any of those people you might have met and see if you can lead them the right way. Sometimes when you have misplanted a plant and it's too late to go back and replant it, sometimes you can do something to save some of the fruit that might have come from it. Or some severe pruning or some severe watering or some severe, maybe even a transplant in some cases.

Fertilizing. But I'll tell you this. Unless we realize that we're blowing it, if we prematurely do that, unless we prematurely lead somebody to Christ before they're ready, unless we take responsibility for bringing about these spiritual abortions, then we'll never change, nor can God forgive us unless we admit where we've blown it.

That's just the basic truth. We went through that the other night. God cannot forgive a person unless they feel sorrowful and are willing to repent and turn from that to a different way of life.

He can't even change their life, because it requires us, him working in us and us working in God, to have a changed life. Okay? So we'll see you at the next installment. Good night.

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