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# CONTEND

DEFENDING THE FAITH

IN A FALLEN WORLD

Aaron Armstrong

# **CONTEND**

*Defending the Faith in a Fallen World*

Aaron Armstrong

Cruciform Press | October, 2012

For Andrew, Chris, Noel, and Norm, pastors who  
model contending for the faith to the glory of God—  
and for Emily, who pushes me to do likewise.

- Aaron Armstrong

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“*Contend*, by one of evangelicalism’s most promising young writers and thinkers, is exactly the kind of book the church needs in our moment. We are tempted today on every side to be meek as a mouse. Christianity is many things, but it is not—it cannot be—anodyne. Armstrong’s gospel-saturated writing, coupled with deeply instructive practical examples, will equip the church to be as bold as a lion, and to roar as Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, and Machen before us.”

**Owen Strachan**, Assistant Professor of Christian Theology and Church History, Boyce College; coauthor, *Essential Edwards Collection*

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“*Contend* is a fine combination of concise biblical exposition, down-to-earth examples, contemporary illustrations, and challenging practical application. I’ve already made a list of people I want to give this to...as well as another list of areas to work on in my own life and ministry. It’s not only an ideal book for discipling a new believer, but also for shaking the more mature out of dangerous complacency and passivity.”

**Dr. David P. Murray**, Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

“Some church leaders like myself get a queasy stomach when faced with theological conflicts. Others relish the fights and want to convene a church council over the number of Adam’s hairs. Aaron presents a third way between avoidance and division: the biblical model of earnest, charitable contending for the faith. This is a book the Church desperately needs, for it matters not merely that we contend, but also how we contend and that we contend for the right cause: namely the name of Christ. *Contend* not only calls us to defend orthodoxy, but gives us a biblical blueprint for doing it. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to pastors, seminarians, bloggers, and teachers.”

**Daniel Darling**, Senior Pastor, Gages Lake Bible Church;  
Author, *Real: Owning Your Christian Faith*

“The very idea of contending is contentious. But the costs of not contending for the faith are high, and we’d better learn when and how to defend what matters most. With clarity and insight, Aaron Armstrong helps us understand why it’s hard to take a stand, what’s worth fighting for, and how to do it. I’m grateful for this biblical and helpful book.”

**Darryl Dash**, Pastor, Liberty Grace Church, Toronto ON;  
blogger, [Dashhouse.com](http://Dashhouse.com)

“While some think that defending the faith is the task of scholarship and others dismiss it as the practice of rigid guardians of doctrine, my friend Aaron Armstrong reminds us that Jude’s instruction is the Christian’s necessity for perseverance in the faith, the advance of the gospel, and the glory of Christ. Filled with humble boldness and delight in the gospel, *Contend* will equip you with a biblical framework and practical advice to winsomely and wisely stand as a witness for Christ.”

**Andrew Hall**, Lead Pastor, Community Bible Church,  
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One

# THE CONTEXT

## Contending in Our Day

“To struggle in the face of opposition.”

“To strive against rivals.”

“To dispute and debate earnestly.”

Contend is not a passive word, as these phrases from various dictionary definitions make clear. Contending requires action. And while it may sound like something polite people simply don't do, the fact is that we all contend. Asserting our opinions, vocalizing our likes and dislikes, broadcasting our beliefs, defending our positions — whether our point is profound or trivial, most of us go through the day fully primed to pass along our views to others.

Not on everything, obviously. But each of us will contend over those things that really matter to us. That's how you know what people care about.

Die-hard sports fans contend over the merits of their respective teams. People of differing political persuasions contend over parties and pragmatism, policies, and power. Companies contend with their rivals. Parents contend against whatever they think is harmful to their

children. Nations contend with one another when they perceive a threat. When something that really matters to you is in harm's way, that's when you will be willing to contend—to struggle and strive, dispute and debate, even if it's uncomfortable.

The New Testament writer Jude (the brother of James and half-brother of our Lord) made an important point about this kind of principled striving when he wrote, “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”<sup>1</sup>

One thing we can draw from Jude's appeal is that sometimes it is more important to defend the faith than to examine and rehearse what we believe. Like the writer of Ecclesiastes, Jude is affirming that there is a time and purpose for all godly behavior. To face inward, affirming and clarifying among and between orthodox believers everything God has done for us—this is a necessary, ongoing activity of the church. But that must not and cannot be our exclusive preoccupation. We must also at times—as a necessary complementary activity—be intentional about facing outward, contending with those who deny who God is and what he has done, whether these voices come from within the church or without.

Because sin and evil are ever at work, and their principal objective is to overthrow the gospel of grace, it's safe to say there has never been a time in the history of the church when contending was not necessary. Therefore, as if there were any doubt, this is certainly such a time.

## **Where We Are and How We Got Here**

The Christian church in the West has come to a strange place. Many of us are so concerned about being perceived as judgmental or exclusive that we present to the world a false picture of “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” Indeed, a whole generation of young people (both Christian and not) are focused on unity<sup>2</sup> to a degree that is not good for the church or the world. It’s not that Christians with a strong interest in unity have wicked motives. We all want people to like us—and by extension to like Jesus. But when we place too high a priority on unity, we fail to contend for the faith.

## **How Millennials Think**

Thom and Jess Rainer have published some helpful research on the Millennials, sometimes called Generation Y or Mosaics. Born between about 1980 and 2000, this generation, while less monolithic than some previous generations, does have some clear tendencies. Paradoxically, they “tend to be upbeat, positive, and happy. But they are realists as well.”<sup>3</sup> They place more focus on family (sometimes quite loosely defined) than their Boomer and Gen X predecessors, yet few Millennials give thought to religious matters, and they generally see ethnic, racial, and sexual diversity as nonissues. Mixed-ethnic marriages, which would have ruffled feathers in previous generations, are normal for this generation, and even same-sex marriage is fine in the eyes of many.<sup>4</sup> Millennials have had enough of social division and believe it’s their responsibility to pursue societal harmony as an end in itself:

Millennials are weary of the fights in our nation and world. They are tired of the polarization of views. They avoid the high-pitched shouts of opposing political forces. They are abandoning churches in great numbers because they see religion as divisive and argumentative.<sup>5</sup>

This, the Rainers suggest, may be this generation's defining issue. The Millennials, especially the Christian cohort, grew up seeing their parents locked into "culture wars" that divided people over music and dress codes, food and drink, festivals and feasts.<sup>6</sup> Frustrated by the seemingly endless quarrelling, they have declared their elders' contending as nothing more than "vanity, and a striving after the wind."<sup>7</sup> Having concluded that their parents' efforts in these areas were ultimately futile, they now want nothing of it. They want to know why we can't all just get along, explain the Rainers.<sup>8</sup>

I'm not pinning exclusive blame on the Millennials (among whom, by some definitions, I would be counted). Their desire for everyone to "just get along" is understandable and, as we see in Jude's letter, it goes back to the earliest days of the church.

**Doctrine or unity?** The community of believers to whom Jude wrote his epistle had been infiltrated by false teachers intent on deception. These teachers were actively trying to turn the eyes of the Christian community away from Christ. Yet, instead of rejecting these apostles of Satan and their demonic doctrine,<sup>9</sup> the believers accepted them. Perhaps it was out of simple naïveté or maybe theo-

logical ignorance, but whatever the reason, the Christians to whom Jude appealed did not recognize these teachers for the “fierce wolves” they truly were.

The experience of Jude’s audience is far from unique. Christians in every age have suffered the attacks of false teachers. In the New Testament alone,

- Paul faced Judaizers and “super-apostles” who insisted that keeping the ceremonial law was necessary for our justification.<sup>10</sup>
- The apostle John seemingly squared off against mystics who were more concerned with esoteric knowledge than the truth of the gospel.<sup>11</sup>
- In his revelation to John, Jesus himself rebuked the Nicolaitans who sought to spread sexual immorality throughout the church at Ephesus and Pergamum.<sup>12</sup>

Since those days, the Church has repeatedly needed to be drawn back to Scripture and away from the lure of false teaching. Here are just a few more examples:

- Numerous battles were waged against various heresies in the first few centuries of the church.
- Augustine defended the doctrine of original sin against Pelagius in the fourth century.
- Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers upheld biblical authority over against the Roman Church in the sixteenth century.
- Evangelical stalwarts J. I. Packer, Francis Schaeffer, and J. Gresham Machen contended against the creep

of liberalism and easy-believism in the early- and mid-twentieth centuries.

In each of these cases, the counterattacks mounted by Christians were successful, in the sense that many believers were awakened to the danger of false teaching and renewed their commitment to sound doctrine. Inevitably, though, the Church's fresh zeal would, over time, cool into passivity before slipping finally into apostasy—typically within the relatively short span of three or four generations. Where one generation believed the truth, the second assumed it and the third denied it, as D. A. Carson frequently reminds us.<sup>13</sup> But in every instance, when truth is denied by one generation, God mercifully brings about a renewal in the next.

**False teaching today.** Our own day is indeed desperate for renewal. In recent years, virtually no fundamental belief of the Christian faith has been free from assault, even from professing believers. The virgin birth, the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the sinlessness of Christ, even the necessity of the physical resurrection: everything seems open for debate.<sup>14</sup>

How did things get this bad? It boggles the mind, especially when we consider the sheer volume of solid, Christ-exalting books and sermons available in our time. Still, here we are. While there are undoubtedly many reasons for this sad development (and what follows is not at all a comprehensive analysis), I would like to try to tie together a few related threads:

**Thread 1:** Millennials are especially inclined to the pursuit of (perceived) unity.

**Thread 2:** The mainstream cultural air we breathe — celebrating tolerance and political correctness — pressures us all, regardless of age, to embrace (perceived) unity as the highest good.

**Thread 3:** Many Millennial Christians have been exposed to the weaknesses of seeker-sensitive churches and modern fundamentalism (we will review these influences in a moment).

**Thread 4:** Responding or reacting to these various influences, many millennials fled to various expressions of the emerging/emergent church.

Tie these threads together, and you get a tangled, messy knot characterized by a de-emphasis of doctrine leading to a largely rudderless unity-for-its-own-sake kind of unity.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's go back and look at what the unity-loving millennials have grown up with in Western evangelicalism.

## **What Millennials Have Seen**

**The Seeker-Sensitive Movement.** Birthed out of a genuine desire to see the lost come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, the seeker-sensitive movement<sup>15</sup> sought to eliminate as many perceived barriers to faith as possible. In their view, perhaps the most challenging barrier facing the non-Christian was an emphasis on doctrine. Doctrine divides, or so the saying goes. So, rather than offering non-Christians

doctrine-heavy expository preaching, it was thought better to attend to their felt needs with shorter, topical messages, dramatic presentations, and heart-warming music.

And it worked. Sort of.

Lots of people came through the doors of seeker-sensitive churches. Lots of people made professions of faith and began participating in church activities. But as time went on, it came as a rude surprise that these people weren't necessarily growing in their faith.

“We discovered that higher levels of church activity did not predict increasing love for God or increasing love for other people,” writes Cally Parkinson in Willow Creek's Reveal study.<sup>16</sup> People weren't growing, nor were they taking ownership of their spiritual growth.<sup>17</sup> Simply put, the seeker-sensitive model seemed to do a fine job of making converts but a poor job of making disciples. “Our analysis paints the picture of the church being too preoccupied with the early growing years, leaving the spiritual adolescents to find their own way — without preparing them for the journey.”<sup>18</sup>

I'm not making a categorical statement that all seeker churches neglect discipleship, nor am I saying that God cannot work through these methods to accomplish his will. Indeed, my wife and I came to genuine faith at such a church.

Looking back, however, it's clear we were not discipled. We survived — and before long moved on to another congregation — because God was motivating my growth in ways that the leaders were not. Indeed, given the materials I was reading and listening to in my earliest days as a believer, it's a wonder I wasn't shipwrecked right from the start.

This discipleship issue—the failure to prepare the “spiritual adolescents” for the journey—is at the heart of the Church’s current predicament over contending for the faith. And there are a lot of those adolescents in American churches. Willow Creek (Bill Hybels), Saddleback (Rick Warren), North Point Community Church (Andy Stanley), Elevation Church (Steven Furtick), Newspring Church (Perry Noble), Lakewood Church (Joel Osteen), and Oak Hills Church (Max Lucado) see a combined 144,000 people come through their doors every single week.<sup>19</sup> Add in sermon downloads, books, blogs, conference appearances, etc., and the numbers rise far higher. The influence of seeker methodology is enormous, with hundreds of thousands in North America alone directly influenced by it on a regular basis.

Of course, a primary focus of these churches is simply to get people in the door, and many of them enjoy remarkable success. As a result, a great many people in the West who began calling themselves Christians not too many years ago are now active in local churches without having had the benefit of much sound, expository preaching or effective discipleship.

To put it another way, a large chunk of an entire generation of believers has been largely left to its own devices to figure out the Christian faith.

**Modern Fundamentalism.** But the seeker-sensitive movement is not the only force that has weakened Christian doctrine and practice in our day. Fundamentalism, in the modern, sectarian sense of the term, is equally responsible. Where seeker churches are geared toward

having a good experience and sometimes shave off the hard edges of the gospel in the process, fundamentalists have replaced the gospel with moralism, piling a burden upon the men and women in their congregations that is more than anyone could bear. Listening to the music of Amy Grant, reading any translation other than the King James, missing the Sunday evening service, even being happy at church meetings—in some places any of these may be interpreted as signs that you’re out of the kingdom. Where the seeker movement frequently produces believers who lack a foundation in the gospel, fundamentalism often produces believers who lack any assurance of the gospel.

## **The Backlash**

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw evangelicalism abuzz over this thing called “the emerging church.”<sup>20</sup> No one was quite sure what it was, but they were excited about it. Weary of what they perceived as a lack of authenticity in the seeker movement and turned off by the loveless, wrathful God of fundamentalism, youngish pastors and leaders began looking for a way to reconnect Christianity with real life. They wanted a place where it was “okay to not be okay,” a place where doubts could be voiced freely, where questions could be asked without fear of negative consequences, and where authentic faith could come alive.

But in their commitment to asking questions and expressing doubt—things we should never have a problem with—some forgot that there still had to be a foundation, a standard of truth. So while some questioned the way to “do

church,” and some asked about how best to communicate the core truths of Christianity, others began to question the necessity or even the validity of basic Christian doctrines.

Did Jesus really have to be born of a virgin? Is the Bible really the inspired Word of God or is it merely a collection of folklore representing a nomadic people’s evolving understanding of God? Is the idea of hell consistent with a God of love? One writer within this movement made an alarming observation: “The idea that there is a necessary distinction of matter from spirit, or creation from creator, is being reconsidered.”<sup>21</sup>

When you don’t understand that there are some things worth contending for, everything is up for grabs.

## **A Case Study in Backlash**

Today, although the emerging movement has more or less run out of steam, its influence is still powerfully felt, particularly as pastors and authors within its revisionist stream (now often called the emergent church) continue to write books and blogs and, as in the case of Rob Bell, develop a television series as part of his goals to share “the message of God’s love with a broader audience.” Indeed, for many within evangelicalism, Bell is the first who comes to mind when they hear “emerging,” though he has done his best to avoid such labels.

Raised in a traditional Christian home in Ingham County, Michigan, Bell studied at Wheaton College and Fuller Theological Seminary before moving to Grand Rapids to study under Ed Dobson, pastor of Calvary Chapel, where he and his wife began to consider what

planting a new kind of community would look like. In 1998, Bell planted Mars Hill Bible Church. In less than three years, weekly attendance ranged from 2,000 to 3,500. A few more years, and that number had ballooned to between 8,000 and 11,000 per week. Despite the church's success, it wasn't long before Bell and his wife became uncomfortable with church. "Life in the church had become so small," Kristen Bell says. "It had worked for me for a long time. Then it stopped working."<sup>22</sup> As writer Andy Crouch observes:

The Bells started questioning their assumptions about the Bible itself — "discovering the Bible as a human product," as Rob puts it, rather than the product of divine fiat. "The Bible is still in the center for us," Rob says, "but it's a different kind of center. We want to embrace mystery, rather than conquer it."<sup>23</sup>

Weary of the black-and-white world of evangelicalism and burnt out from trying to do life as a "superpastor,"<sup>24</sup> Bell found comfort in Brian McLaren's book *A New Kind of Christian*.<sup>25</sup> Chronicling the fictional relationship between disillusioned evangelical pastor Dan Poole and high school teacher/spiritual guide Neo (himself a lapsed pastor), *A New Kind of Christian* walks readers "through a series of set pieces that introduce the initially skeptical Dan to a 'postmodern' approach to Christianity"<sup>26</sup> — one that shuns the divisive nature of absolutes, the clear-cut categories of evangelicalism. It's no surprise, then, that in Bell's writing, as in many among this

revisionist set, even the notion of contending is anathema. We see this in Bell’s derisive and ill-conceived discussion of what he calls “brickianity” where (among other things),

You spend a lot of time talking about how right you are. Which of course leads to how wrong everybody else is. Which then leads to defending the wall. . . . [but] you rarely defend a trampoline. You invite people to jump on it with you.<sup>27</sup>

Presumably, Bell views most traditional Christianity as consumed with “defending the wall” (hence, “brickianity”) when he would rather jump on trampolines. This analogy is troubling for many reasons, not the least of which being that even a trampoline requires a sturdy frame to keep it together. The complaint that “brickianity” is all about defending the wall for the sake of defending the wall is worth considering, but that does not mean that no one should ever contend for the faith. Imagine I said to my wife, “Emily, I love you so much that I shouldn’t have to defend you when someone speaks ill of you. You’re cool with that, right?” What about if I said that to my children? How do you think that would go for me?

This idea that we don’t need to defend—or at best rarely need to defend—something we love is ludicrous. If we are willing to offer defense for our families, our political preferences, and the Toronto Maple Leafs, how much more should we be willing to offer a defense of the gospel? If we truly love Jesus and if we truly care about the well being of the Church then we must contend.

## **Contending Defined**

Let's be honest: doctrine sometimes does divide. It can't not by its very nature. Jesus himself—the Word of God made flesh—was and is the most divisive person ever to live. He himself said, “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”<sup>28</sup>

The ultimate question about Jesus today is the same as when he walked the earth: is he or is he not who he claimed to be? He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”<sup>29</sup> With the entire Christian faith standing or falling on the validity of such an utterly exclusive and uncompromising claim, doctrine that truly aligns with Jesus will cause division. When we discuss our faith honestly, it is simply inevitable: at times we will be at odds with others—friends, relatives, perhaps even other believers.

Yet we are called to contend—in obedience to and for the sake of the most divisive person in history. And the challenge is to do it in the way Jude describes. We'll unpack this more in the following chapters, but our premise, and a key takeaway for this entire book, is simply this:

*Contending must be understood and exercised  
as an act of mercy toward those who doubt  
and those who have been deceived,  
regardless of whether they claim faith in Christ.*

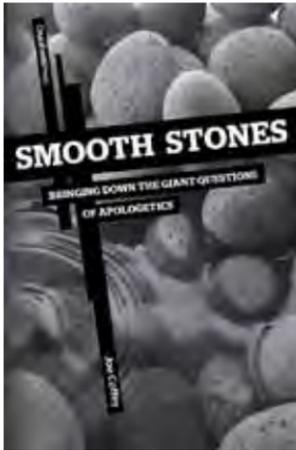
The question we must now answer is, “Over what must we contend?” That's the focus of the next chapter.

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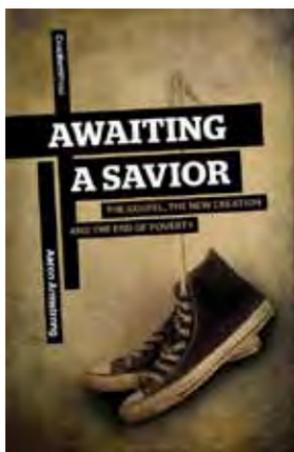
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***Peter Jones, PhD, TruthXchange, Scholar-in-Residence and Adjunct Professor, Westminster Seminary in California***

“I commend this book to you: it will fuel your worship and empower your discipleship.”

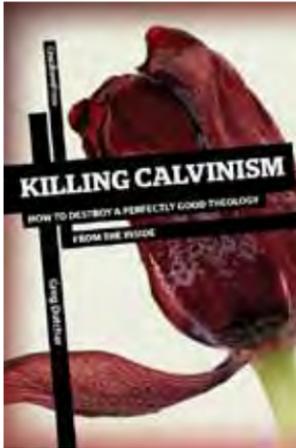
***Gabe Tribbett, Christ's Covenant Church, Winona Lake, IA***

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**A resurgence of Calvinism is changing lives, transforming churches, and spreading the gospel. Will it continue or will we destroy it?**

**That depends on how we live the message.**

“Brilliant corrective work and I couldn’t be more glad he wrote it.”

***Matt Chandler, The Village Church; President, Acts 29***

“When this kind of critique and warning come from within a movement, it is a sign of health.”

***John Piper, Desiring God***

“This book blew me away! Greg Dutcher skillfully diagnoses how I kill the very truth I love by my hypocrisy, pride, anger, and judgmental attitude. This book will serve a young generation of Calvinists. But the older generation had better heed it, too. There’s medicine here for all our hearts.”

***Thabiti Anyabwile, author; Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Grand Cayman; Council Member, The Gospel Coalition***

“Dutcher’s wisdom will go a long way in bringing spiritual health to the young, restless, and reformed.”

***Sam Storms, Bridgeway Church, Oklahoma City***

“An absolute must-read for every YRR—and older Calvinists too! With wit, compassion, and candor, Greg Dutcher exposes how sin taints our theological convictions... he shows us Calvinism done right to the glory of God.”

***Lydia Brownback, author and speaker***



## [Who Am I?](#)

Identity in Christ

by Jerry Bridges

**Jerry Bridges unpacks Scripture to give the Christian eight clear, simple, interlocking answers to one of the most essential questions of life.**

“Jerry Bridges’ gift for simple but deep spiritual communication is fully displayed in this warm-hearted, biblical spelling out of the Christian’s true identity in Christ.”

***J.I. Packer, Theological Editor, ESV Study Bible; author, Knowing God, A Quest for Godliness, Concise Theology***

“I know of no one better prepared than Jerry Bridges to write *Who Am I?* He is a man who knows who he is in Christ and he helps us to see succinctly and clearly who we are to be. Thank you for another gift to the Church of your wisdom and insight in this book.”

***R.C. Sproul, founder, chairman, president, Ligonier Ministries; executive editor, Tabletalk magazine; general editor, The Reformation Study Bible***

“*Who Am I?* answers one of the most pressing questions of our time in clear gospel categories straight from the Bible. This little book is a great resource to ground new believers and remind all of us of what God has made us through faith in Jesus. Thank the Lord for Jerry Bridges, who continues to provide the warm, clear, and biblically balanced teaching that has made him so beloved to this generation of Christians.”

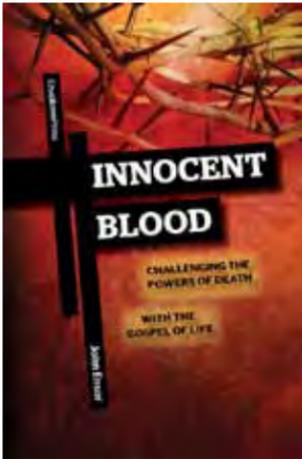
***Richard D. Phillips, Senior Minister, Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC***

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## [Innocent Blood](#)

Challenging the Powers of Death with the Gospel of Life

John Ensor

**The shedding of innocent blood, primarily through abortion, has now marked an entire generation. But God's call to protect the innocent is unchanged. We can obey that call.**

“God's Word tells us to be prepared to give an answer to everyone

who asks us a reason for the hope within us, and it also tells us that we should do this with gentleness and respect. This book does just that. With decades of experience and true wisdom, John Ensor beautifully shows us how our glorious God delights in our courageous fight for the innocent, and that he commands us to fight, not with the words and weapons of man but with the living and active Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

***Burk Parsons, pastor; editor of Tabletalk***

“...a powerful indictment. There are areas of theology about which sincere Christians can disagree, but this is not one of them.”

***John Frame, Professor, Reformed Theological Seminary***

“By showing how our activism is to be motivated and fueled by the gospel, Ensor challenges us to devote our lives to magnifying Jesus Christ through seeking justice for the unborn.”

***Trevin Wax, author, editor at LifeWay Christian Resources***

Stellar! John Ensor provides a bridge between the defense of innocent human life and the proclamation of the gospel. His concisely worded thesis is theologically grounded and philosophically sound. I wholeheartedly recommend this book!

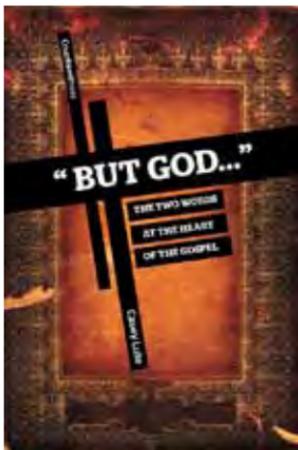
***Scott Klusendorf, speaker and author***

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## **“But God...”**

The Two Words at the Heart of the Gospel

by Casey Lute

**Just two words.  
Understand their use in Scripture,  
and you will never be the same.**

“Rock-solid theology packaged in an engaging and accessible form.”

**- Louis Tullio, *Sight Regained* blog**

“Keying off of nine occurrences of “But God” in the English Bible, Casey Lute ably opens up Scripture in a manner that is instructive, edifying, encouraging, and convicting. This little book would be useful in family or personal reading, or as a gift to a friend. You will enjoy Casey’s style, you will have a fresh view of some critical Scripture, and your appreciation for God’s mighty grace will be deepened.”

***Dan Phillips, Pyromaniacs blog, author of *The World-Tilting Gospel* (forthcoming from Kregel)***

“A refreshingly concise, yet comprehensive biblical theology of grace that left this reader more in awe of the grace of God.”

***Aaron Armstrong, BloggingTheologically.com***

““Casey Lute reminds us that nothing is impossible with God, that we must always reckon with God, and that God brings life out of death and joy out of sorrow.”

***Thomas R. Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary***

“A mini-theology that will speak to the needs of every reader of this small but powerful book. Read it yourself and you will be blessed. Give it to a friend and you will be a blessing.”

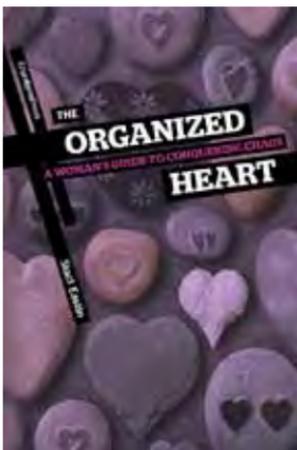
***William Varner, Prof. of Biblical Studies, The Master’s College***

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## [The Organized Heart](#)

A Woman's Guide to Conquering Chaos

by Staci Eastin

**Disorganized?  
You don't need more rules, the  
latest technique, or a new gadget.**

**This book will show you a different,  
better way. A way grounded in the  
grace of God.**

"Staci Eastin packs a gracious punch, full of insights about our disorganized hearts and lives, immediately followed by the balm of gospel-shaped hopes. This book is ideal for accountability partners and small groups."

***Carolyn McCulley, blogger, filmmaker, author of Radical Womanhood and Did I Kiss Marriage Goodbye?***

"Unless we understand the spiritual dimension of productivity, our techniques will ultimately backfire. Find that dimension here. Encouraging and uplifting rather than guilt-driven, this book can help women who want to be more organized but know that adding a new method is not enough."

***Matt Perman, Director of Strategy at Desiring God, blogger, author of the forthcoming book, What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done***

"Organizing a home can be an insurmountable challenge for a woman. The Organized Heart makes a unique connection between idols of the heart and the ability to run a well-managed home. This is not a how-to. Eastin looks at sin as the root problem of disorganization. She offers a fresh new approach and one I recommend, especially to those of us who have tried all the other self-help models and failed."

***Aileen Challies, Mom of three, and wife of blogger, author, and pastor Tim Challies***

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## [Reclaiming Adoption](#)

Missional Living Through the  
Rediscovery of Abba Father

Dan Cruver, Editor  
John Piper, Scotty Smith  
Richard D. Phillips, Jason Kovacs

“There is no greater need in our day than theological clarity. Dan has brought us near to God’s heart. As you read this book, you will sense the need to embrace your own acceptance as God’s adopted child.”

**-Darrin Patrick, Pastor and author**

“I can’t recall ever hearing about, much less reading, a book like this before. Simply put, this remarkable volume fills a much-needed gap in our understanding of what the Bible says both about God’s adoption of us and our adoption of others. I highly recommend it.”

***Sam Storms, Author of The Singing God: Discover the Joy of Being Enjoyed by God***

“The authors writing here are some of the most fearless thinkers and activists in the Christian orphan care movement. Read. Be empowered. And then join Jesus for the orphans of the world.”

***Russell D. Moore, Pastor and author of Adopted for Life***

“With spiritual insight and effective teaching, *Reclaiming Adoption* will help believers better understand our place with Christ and work in his kingdom.”

***Ed Stetzer, President, LifeWay Research***

“Something like...a revival, is happening right now in evangelical theology...it may have the momentum to reinvigorate evangelical systematic theology...The most promising sign I’ve seen so far is the new book *Reclaiming Adoption*.”

***Fred Sanders, Ph.D., Biola University***

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## [Modest](#)

Men and Women Clothed in the Gospel

by RW Glenn, Tim Challies

**Modesty is about freedom, not rules.**

**What you say or do or wear is not really the point. The point is your heart.**

**True modesty flows from a solid grasp of the gospel.**

“It is so refreshing to have a book on modesty that is a useful resource and not a legalistic, culture-bound list that leaves you a bit paranoid and guilty. No, this book is different. Its counsel on modesty is not rooted in rules, but in the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That grace alone is able to get at the heart of the problem of modesty, which is the heart. In a culture where immodesty is the accepted norm, Glenn and Challies have given us help that every Christian desperately needs.”

***Paul Tripp, pastor, conference speaker, and author***

“How short is too short? How tight is too tight? Glenn and Challies don’t say. But they do provide a thoughtful framework to help us come to a grace-based, gospel-grounded understanding of modesty that extends beyond mere clothing. They uphold a vision for modesty that’s both beautiful and desirable – and not only for gals, but for guys too! This book is a great tool to help you wrestle with the practical question of what and what not to wear.”

***Mary A. Kassian, Author, Girls Gone Wise***

“The authors of Modest break new ground in their treatment of this difficult subject. It is a healthy antidote to the prevailing views, which tend toward either legalism or antinomianism, by grounding the whole subject in the gospel. I heartily recommend this book.”

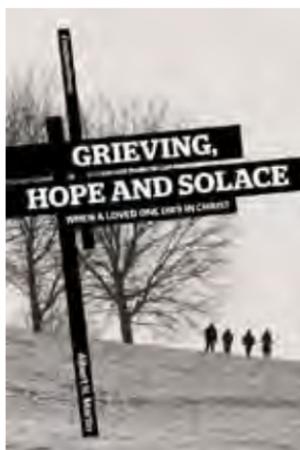
***Jerry Bridges, Author, The Pursuit of Holiness***

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## [Grieving, Hope and Solace](#)

When a Loved One Dies in Christ

by Albert N. Martin

**There is comfort for the grief.  
There are answers to the questions.  
The Bible does offer hope, solace,  
healing, and confidence.**

**Pastor Albert Martin has been  
there.**

“This tender book by a much-loved pastor, written after the death of his beloved wife, offers comfort to those in tears. A rare guidebook to teach us how to grieve with godliness, it is relevant to us all – if not for today, then no doubt for tomorrow.”

***Maurice Roberts, former editor, Banner of Truth magazine***

“Albert N. Martin is a seasoned pastor, skilled teacher, and gifted writer who has given us a priceless treasure in this book. All who read these pages will, unquestionably, be pointed to Christ and find themselves greatly helped.”

***Steve Lawson, Christ Fellowship Baptist Church, Mobile, AL***

“Like turning the corner and being met by a glorious moonrise, or discovering a painter or musician who touches us in the deepest recesses of our being—this little book by Pastor Al Martin has been such an experience for me. Whether you are a pastor or counselor, one who is experiencing the pangs of grief, or a member of the church who wants to be useful to others, you need to read this book.”

***Joseph Pipa, President, Greenville Presbyterian Theo. Sem.***

“Personal tenderness and biblical teaching in a sweet book of comfort. Buy it and give it away, but make sure to get a copy for yourself.”

***Dr. Joel R. Beeke, President, Puritan Reformed Theo. Sem.***



## [Intentional Parenting](#)

Family Discipleship by Design

by Tad Thompson

**The Big Picture and a Simple Plan – That's What You Need to Do Family Discipleship Well**

*This book will allow you to take all the sermons, teachings, and exhortations you have received on the topic of family discipleship, make sense of it, and put it to use.*

“As parents, we know God has given us the responsibility to train our children in his ways. But many parents don't know where or how to start. Tad has done us all a favor by identifying seven key categories of biblical teaching we can utilize in teaching our children godly truth and principles. This easy-to-follow plan will help any parent put the truth of God's Word into their children's hearts.”

***Kevin Ezell, President, North American Mission Board,  
Southern Baptist Convention; father of six***

“Here is a practical page-turner that encourages fathers to engage the hearts of their families with truth and grace. In an age when truth is either ignored or despised, it is refreshing to see a book written for ordinary fathers who want their families to be sanctified by the truth. Thompson writes with a grace which reminds us that parenting flows from the sweet mercies of Christ.”

***Joel Beeke, President, Puritan Reformed Theological  
Seminary***

“Need an introductory text to the topic of discipling children? Here is a clear, simple book on family discipleship, centered on the gospel rather than human successes or external behaviors.”

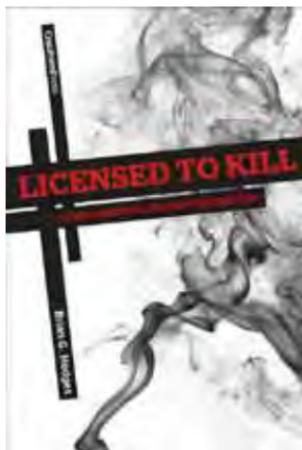
***James M. Hamilton, Associate Professor of Biblical  
Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary***

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## [Licensed to Kill](#)

A Field Manual for Mortifying Sin

by Brian G. Hedges

**Your soul is a war zone.  
Know your enemy.  
Learn to fight.**

“A faithful, smart, Word-centered  
guide.”

- **Wes Ward, Revive Our Hearts**

“Are there things you hate that you end up doing anyway? Have you tried to stop sinning in certain areas of your life, only to face defeat over and over again? If you’re ready to get serious about sin patterns in your life—ready to put sin to death instead of trying to manage it—this book outlines the only strategy that works. This is a book I will return to and regularly recommend to others.”

**Bob Lepine, Co-Host, FamilyLife Today**

“Brian Hedges shows the importance of fighting the sin that so easily entangles us and robs us of our freedom, by fleeing to the finished work of Christ every day. Well done!”

**Tullian Tchividjian, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church; author,  
Jesus + Nothing = Everything**

“Rather than aiming at simple moral reformation, *Licensed to Kill* aims at our spiritual transformation. Like any good field manual, this one focuses on the most critical information regarding our enemy, and gives practical instruction concerning the stalking and killing of sin. This is a theologically solid and helpfully illustrated book that holds out the gospel confidence of sin’s ultimate demise.”

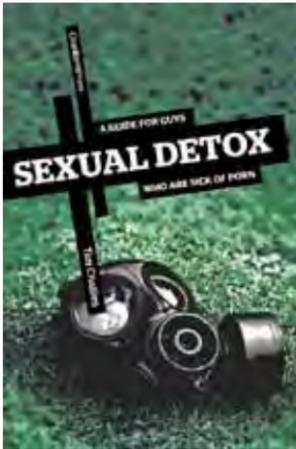
**Joe Thorn, pastor and author, Note to Self: The Discipline of  
Preaching to Yourself**

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## [Sexual Detox](#)

A Guide for Guys Who Are Sick of Porn

by Tim Challies

“In an age when sex is worshiped as a god, a little book like this can go a long way to helping men overcome sexual addiction.”

**-Pastor Mark Driscoll  
Mars Hill Church  
Acts 29**

“Online pornography is not just a problem for Christian men; it is THE problem. Many men, young and old, in our churches need *Sexual Detox*. Challies offers practical, doable and, above all, gospel-centered hope for men. I want every man I serve and all the guys on our staff to read this book.”

**Tedd Tripp, Pastor, and author of *Shepherding a Child's Heart***

“Tim Challies strikes just the right balance in this necessary work. His assessment of the sexual epidemic in our culture is sober but not without hope. His advice is practical but avoids a checklist mentality. His discussion of sexual sin is frank without being inappropriate. This book will be a valuable resource.”

**Kevin DeYoung, Pastor and author**

“Thank God for using Tim to articulate simply and unashamedly the truth about sex amidst a culture of permissiveness.”

**Ben Zobrist, Tampa Bay Rays**

“*Sexual Detox* is just what we need. It is clear, honest, and biblical, written with a tone that is knowing but kind, exhortative but gracious, realistic but determined. We have been given by Tim Challies a terrific resource for fighting sin and exalting Christ.

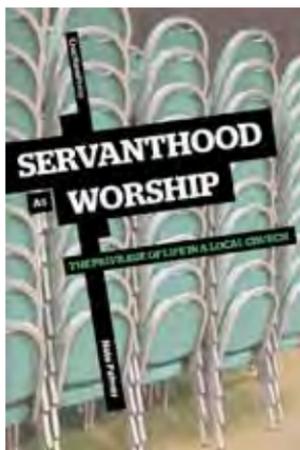
**Owen Strachan, Boyce College**

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## [Servanthood as Worship](#)

The Privilege of Life in a Local Church

by Nate Palmer

**We [serve] because he first [served] us. - 1 John 1:19 [sort of]**

**What ever happened to servanthood? Here is a biblical presentation of our calling to serve in the church, motivated by the grace that is ours in the gospel.**

“In an age where the church can be likened to Cinderella - beautiful, but largely ignored and forgotten - Nate Palmer’s brief book forces us to rethink both the church and our relationship to her. In an age where egocentrism ensures we sing, ‘O say, can you see - what’s in it for me?’ on a weekly basis, Palmer forces us to say instead, ‘How can I best serve the church?’ Looking at the needs of others rather than one’s own is possibly the most serious deficiency in the church today. Reading this book will help redress the deficiency. I heartily recommend it.”

***Derek W.H. Thomas, Professor of Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson)***

“Think of these pages as a handbook. It contains a sustainable, practical vision for serving in the local church that is powered by grace. Along the way, you’ll get a mini theological education.”

***Justin Buzzard, pastor, San Francisco Bay Area, Buzzard Blog***

“In our media-crazed, me-first culture, the art of the basin and the towel has been shoved off onto those who get paid to serve - certainly a call to serve in humility can’t be God’s will for all of us, or could it? Nate Palmer gets at the heart of our resistance. I strongly recommend this book.”

***Elyse Fitzpatrick, author of Because He Loves Me***

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## [Friends and Lovers](#)

Cultivating Companionship and Intimacy in Marriage

by Joel R. Beeke

**Marriage is for God's glory and our good.**

**The secret?**

**Intimate Christian companionship.**

"A book about love, marriage, and sex from Joel Beeke that is surprisingly candid yet without a trace of smuttiness. Fresh and refreshingly straightforward, this is the best book of its kind."

***Derek WH Thomas, Visiting Professor, Reformed Theo. Sem.***

"Marriage is hard work. And wonderful. And sometimes, it's both at the same time. *Friends and Lovers* is like a personal mentoring session on marriage with a man whose heart is devoted to seeing Christ honored in how we love each other as husbands and wives. It's full of practical wisdom and grace. A delight."

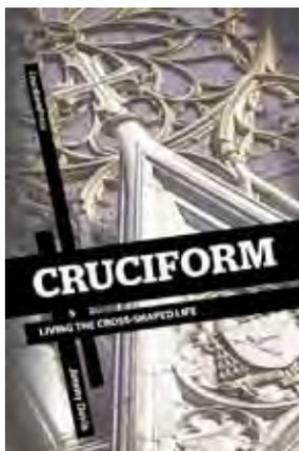
***Bob Lepine, Co-Host, FamilyLife Today***

"By laying the theological, emotional, social, and spiritual foundations of marriage before heading to the bedroom, Joel Beeke provides a healthy corrective to the excessive and obsessive sex-focus of our generation and even of some pastors. But, thankfully, he also goes on to provide wise, practical, down-to-earth direction for couples wanting to discover or recover physical intimacy that will both satisfy themselves and honor God."

***Dr. David Murray, Professor, Puritan Reformed Theo. Sem.***

"There is no better book than this to renew the affection of happy marriage."

***Geoffrey Thomas, Pastor, Alfred Place Baptist Church, Wales***



## [Cruciform](#)

Living the Cross-Shaped Life

by Jimmy Davis

**This is the shape of the gospel.**

“Jimmy Davis loves the cross. This little book will open your heart up to see how the cross is the center of all of life. Well done.”

— **Paul Miller, Director of seeJesus.net, author of *A Praying Life***

“Jimmy Davis shows us how to cut through the fog of contemporary Christian thinking to recover the Savior’s plan for our lives.”

***T.M. Moore, Dean, Chuck Colson’s Centurions Program***

“Jimmy shows from personal experience how a lack of passion and purpose, focus and fervor, compassion and conviction, is always due to distance from the now-power of the gospel. I pray that through this book you will rediscover the beauty and brilliance of the gospel in brand new ways.”

***Tullian Tchividjian, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church***

“*Cruciform* is a theologically grounded and redemptively freeing picture of a life spent boasting in the cross of Jesus.”

***Scotty Smith, Christ Community Church***

“This book will be a help to everyone struggling with ‘Why, God?’ I believe every person planning for, and serving, in a place of Christian ministry should read this book.”

***Dr. Brian Richardson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary***

“This is a terrific book for those breakfast discipleship groups. It is the next one I am going to use.”

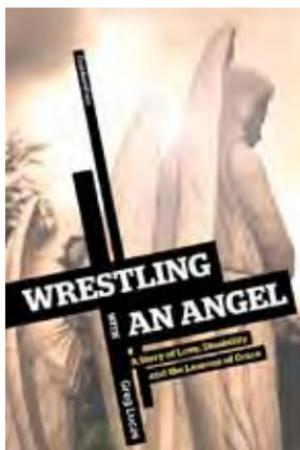
***Dr. William E. Brown, President, Cedarville University***

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## [Wrestling with an Angel](#)

A Story of Love, Disability  
and the Lessons of Grace

by Greg Lucas

**The riveting, inspiring true story that readers have called “a touchstone book of my life,” and “alternately hilarious and heartbreaking,” a book that “turns the diamond of grace in such a way that you see facets you never really noticed before.”**

“C.S. Lewis wrote that he paradoxically loved *The Lord of the Rings* because it ‘broke his heart’ – and Greg Lucas’ writing does the same for me.”

**Justin Taylor, Managing Editor, ESV Study Bible**

“Witty...stunning...striking...humorous and heartfelt. *Wrestling with an Angel* provides a fresh, honest look at one father’s struggle to embrace God in the midst of his son’s disability. Can sheer laughter and weeping gracefully coexist in a world of so much affliction? Greg knows all about it. I highly recommend this wonderfully personal book!”

**Joni Eareckson Tada, Joni and Friends International**

“You will laugh; you will cry. You will feel sick; you will feel inspired. You will be repulsed by the ugliness of sin; you will be overwhelmed by the love of God. Greg Lucas takes us on an unforgettable ride as he extracts the most beautiful insights into grace from the most painful experiences of life.”

**David P. Murray, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary**

“Greg Lucas is a captivating storyteller. When he writes about life with Jake, I recognize God’s grace and loving persistence in my life. I want more!”

**Noël Piper, author, and wife of pastor and author John Piper**

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## [Getting Back in the Race](#)

The Cure for Backsliding

by Joel R. Beeke

**Backsliding is the worst thing that can happen to anyone claiming faith in Jesus.**

**Find out why. Learn the diagnosis. Experience the cure.**

“This book is a masterpiece, and I do not say that lightly. This excellent work, so helpfully spiced with quotations from the Puritans, needs to be read over and over again. I heartily commend it.”

***Martin Holdt, Pastor; editor, Reformation Africa South***

“Joel Beeke’s characteristic clarity, biblical fidelity, and unflinching care as to detail and pastoral wisdom is obvious on every page. This book is an honest and sometimes chilling exposition of the seriousness of backsliding; at the same time, it unfailingly breathes the air of grace and hope. Timely and judicious.”

***Derek W. H. Thomas, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC;  
Editorial Director, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals***

“Don’t settle for being a spiritual shrimp,” argues Dr. Beeke. The pity is that too many modern Christians are opting for shrimpishly small degrees of grace. Indwelling sin drags the careless believer down into guilty backsliding. This book is a prescription for the believer who feels his guilt.”

***Maurice Roberts, former editor, Banner of Truth magazine***

“Dr. Beeke outlines the best means of bringing balm and healing to the backslidden soul. Highly recommended.”

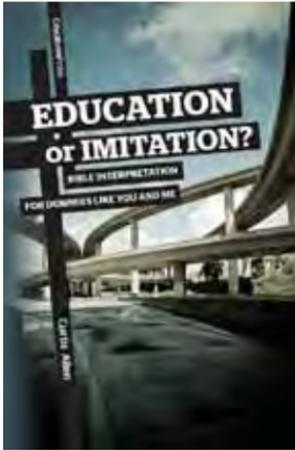
***Michael Haykin, Professor, Southern Baptist Theo. Sem.***

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## [Education or Imitation?](#)

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