

# I. PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

0.03.00

*"And I had one of those moments in which I felt something!  
**I felt God speaking to me!** And that was it! Like, I was like,  
'This is real!' And then I was in."* Bart Campolo

*"What attracted me more than anything to  
the Christian faith **was the truth.**"* Russell Berger

**1.** Bart Campolo explains his testimony as a transcendent, emotional experience involving music and a community of people, while on the other hand Russell Berger was alone reading his bible. Both considered these details important in describing how they came to faith. What makes each of their stories distinct, and are the differences important? Explain your answer.

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**2.** Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, Matthew 13:18-23 and John 12:47-49. Bart Campolo describes his departure from the Christianity of the Bible, while Russell has embraced it. Applying these verses to their testimonies, what is apparent about Bart's? What is apparent about Russell's in contrast to Bart's?

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3. With Bart Campolo's testimony in mind, consider what scripture says about supernatural signs (See Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). Jesus said that those who believe without seeing Him are blessed (John 20:29). In addition, faith is described as "the substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Like seeing, any "experience" is a stirring of the physical senses. If you must "see" or "experience" to believe *that is not an expression of faith*. Does the Bible promise experiences? Support your answer with Scripture.

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*"The distinctive feature of postmodernism was skepticism... postmodernism is **the abandonment of certainty and knowledge**."* Phil Johnson

*"If there's **one sin** in the progressive church **it's the sin of certainty**."* Alisa Childers

*"Beware of people who charge in with **certainty and bible verses**."* Rob Bell

4. Alisa says that Progressive Christians practice something called deconstruction. In this practice they pick apart historic Christianity only to reconstruct a faith that no longer resembles the Christian faith of the Bible. Have you encountered this, and, if so, how did you respond to it? How should you respond to it?

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5. Read John 2:22, John 5:24, Acts 13:48, Acts 15:7, and 1 Corinthians 15:1-2. What do they have in common?

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*"It took me a long time to be open about [homosexuality], but really early on I realized... look, **the Bible's wrong about this one.**"* Bart Campolo

*"And what I was faced with was a decision: Am I going to **trust what God says about this sin** or am I just going to go with what **the world, my feelings,** say about this sin?"* Russell Berger

6. How does 1 John 2:15 speak to Progressive Christianity?

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7. Consider what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and consider what Jesus says in John 3:3. Is a citizen in God's Kingdom free to identify themselves by anything that is listed in this 1 Corinthians verse? Read Philippians 3:17-20.

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8. Russell Berger was fired from his job for believing what the bible said about homosexuality. Consider 2 Timothy 3:12. Are you prepared to face resistance for believing what the Bible says?

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*"You **can't answer**, 'what is the gospel?'  
Jesus was preaching the gospel **before** He  
died on the cross for sins!" Tony Jones*

*"**Jesus is Himself the gospel**, the good news...  
in the old testament **He is predicted**, in the gospels  
**He is revealed**, in the acts **He is preached**, in the epistles  
**He is explained**, and in the book of Revelation  
**He's expected.**" Alistair Begg*

*"Jesus bypassed the Temple and **offered in His own person**  
the forgiveness of sins." Michael Horton*

*"Anytime anyone anywhere has been saved,  
it has been by grace alone, through faith alone,  
**in Christ alone.**" Steven Lawson*

*"When Christ made that call, **He said 'Follow Me.'**  
Paul makes the call the same way, he says,  
**'We preach Christ and Him crucified.'**" Don Green*

9. Isaiah 53:6 begins, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way...", what is the message of this verse in contrast to the gospel (the good news)? It continues, "and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all". Do you believe you have sin for which you must answer to God? Has your sin been "laid upon" Jesus?

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**10.** You learned in the film that a true believer is someone who recognizes their spiritual need and who mourns over their sin. Does this describe you? If not, go before the Lord in prayer as the tax collector did in Luke 18:10-14 and ask for Jesus to help you. What key traits does the tax collector display? (see James 4:6)

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## ANSWERING THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Several important questions were raised in this chapter: *Is the Bible historically reliable? Do Paul and Jesus teach different things regarding homosexuality? And, is the gospel the same before and after Jesus died? What is the gospel?*

### Is the Bible historically reliable?

The most important thing to consider in answering this question is, *what view did Jesus take regarding the scriptures?* In Matthew 22:31-33, Jesus addressed the Sadducees who believed there was no resurrection of the dead by citing Exodus 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham...” Jesus’s point was that God did not say He “was” the God of Abraham (past tense), as if Abraham was no more after his death, but that He is (present tense) the God of Abraham. In doing this, Jesus made his argument based on the tense of a verb in the Hebrew language. This revealed extreme trust in the integrity and reliability of the Old Testament scriptures.<sup>1</sup> Jesus also said, “it is written” in the gospels (referring to Matthew–John) nearly 100 times, revealing that He fully trusted and used the authority of the Bible. Jesus taught that prophesy was fulfilled (Luke 4:21; John 15:25), and indeed, hundreds of prophesies from the old testament have been fulfilled. In speaking of the new testament, Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away,

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1. Norman L. Geisler, “Scriptures Claims,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 92.

but My words will not pass away,” and that “not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18, 24:35). Moreover, Jesus’s words have been confirmed by God’s providential preservation of the new testament over time. The Bible has more manuscripts than any other historical document in antiquity. That means there are over 5,600 manuscripts (or fragments) available to study, some which date to less than 100 years of its original authorship.<sup>2</sup> These facts only scratch the surface of the evidence that God has made available to confirm His Word.

### **Do Paul and Jesus teach different things regarding homosexuality?**

In the gospels of Matthew and Mark, the Pharisees try to test Jesus by asking him a difficult question regarding to marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:2-9). In answering their question, Jesus cites Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, “[God] made them male and female” and “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become one flesh.” In citing these verses, Jesus was not only confirming the sole responsibility of one spouse to another in marriage (so that they couldn’t simply give up and find another), but he was also, by implication, limiting the possibilities of marriage itself to one man and one woman (“male and female”—“man” and “his wife”). Paul quoted this same verse from Genesis in Ephesians 5:31, yet Paul, in his writings, is even more explicit about excluding homosexuality from being a possibility for the Christian. He writes in Romans 1:26-27 of “degrading passions,” where both men and women are described as giving up their “natural function” for what is “unnatural” and “committing indecent acts” that lead to what Paul describes as a “depraved mind” (Romans 1:28). It is because Paul is so explicit in communicating God’s condemnation of homosexuality that some will try to pit Paul against Jesus, but such attempts only distract from taking a good look at the Biblical text.

### **Is the gospel the same before and after Jesus died? What is the gospel?**

The gospel before Jesus died is the same as the gospel after Jesus died. The gospel is believing in the person of Jesus Christ and simultaneously trusting in His work on your behalf. Before Jesus died, He preached Himself as the long awaited Messiah-King who would accomplish all that the Father had set Him into the world to do (Matthew 16:16, 26:63-64; John 5:36, 17:4; Isaiah 53). Those who

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2. Norman L. Geisler, “New Testament Manuscripts,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 532.

put their trust in the Messiah would be saved (John 11:25-26). After Jesus accomplished His mission, the gospel specifics were revealed in His works. Paul lays them out in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 where he says that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and was raised on the third day. The gospel, or good news, is often rightly presented in contrast first to the *bad news*—that you have rebelled against God by seeking other gods, worshipping something other than the true God and breaking His moral law (Exodus 20:1-17; Romans 3:9-18, 23). God requires perfection, because He is perfect (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). Your sins deserve a sentence in hell forever (Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43). Even Isaiah, hundreds of years before Jesus, presented the bad news saying, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). But Isaiah also presented the gospel, the good news, when he said, “He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities... the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him” (53:5-6). John the Baptist, before Jesus’s death, recognized Jesus by *who He was* and *what He came to do* when he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus died as the spotless, sacrificial Lamb, paying for the sin-debt which you owe. He “canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). The innocence of Jesus uniquely qualified Him as the only one who could pay the unpayable debt you owe to God: “[God] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The *command* of the gospel is that you demonstrate faith in Jesus by repenting, turning from your sin, and placing your faith alone in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior (Mark 1:15).

Consider working through these three additional questions on the gospel:

**A.** How do the person and work of Christ go together? What does this mean based on what scriptures were referenced in chapter 1? (Mark 1:14-15; 2:5-7; 1 Corinthians 15:2-4; Matthew 5:3-4; Luke 18:13; John 10:11; Isaiah 53:6)

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**B.** When Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd” in John 10:11, what significant act does he say He will do? What does His act communicate? What does Jesus being “the good shepherd” mean?

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**C.** Jesus is called the Lamb of God. Consider these passages together: Genesis 22:8, 9-14; Exodus 12:1-13; Leviticus 4:32-35; Isaiah 53:7, John 1:29, & 1 Peter 1:17-19. What is significant about Jesus being called the Lamb?

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## RESOURCES ON IMPORTANT TOPICS

How can I understand the gospel better?

- ▶ *What Is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert
- ▶ *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ* by John Piper

What does it really mean to be a Christian?

- ▶ *Being a Christian* by R. W. Stott
- ▶ *The Gospel According to Jesus* by John MacArthur (or *Only Jesus*)

How can I better understand the aspects of salvation?

- ▶ *Chosen by God* by R. C. Sproul
- ▶ *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* by John Owen
- ▶ *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Loraine Boettner



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