

Pastor Carl Lentz Says Jesus Is the Only Way to God

According to Carl Lentz, pastor of the Hillsong megachurch in New York City, people are lost without Jesus and salvation is only found in Him.

Pastor Lentz shared this with me when we talked by phone on Tuesday, Nov. 1, in response to my Oct. 27 article, "Pastor Lentz, Can You Clarify Your Comments to Oprah?"

He was clear, unambiguous and unashamed: Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

But first, a word of background.

I began my Oct. 27 article stating, "Pastor Lentz, as you know, I've tried on several occasions to reach out to you privately (most recently this week), but without a response, so I'm asking you publicly if you would please clarify your recent comments made to Oprah Winfrey."

My office had reached out to his office earlier in the week, but we were unable to get a response from Pastor Lentz (although we heard from other church staff), which was the same thing we experienced over the last two years.

Well, it turns out, he had no idea we were trying to contact him, and the moment he found out I wanted to interact, he tweeted me saying he was easy to reach. Within minutes, we had each other's email addresses and were in contact.

But there's more to the story.

Not only did he have no idea I had tried to contact him several times over the last couple of years, but he told me that he had actually tried to contact me after reading my

letter to him on LGBT issues, and somehow, his email never got to me.

I had my staff check all our emails and sure enough, on Oct. 18, 2014, at 9:17 PM, Pastor Lentz had written this to me through our website.

Hi sir:

I read your letter and would love to get to know you. I gave my email info on this, look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your letter and for its gracious tone while you expressed your views. It's appreciated.

Sincerely Carl Lentz

Somehow, his email fell through the cracks in our system, and I had no clue he had tried to reach out to me. And since I prize godly communication, I was mortified to see that this happened (no one on our staff can figure out how we overlooked the email).

That is one reason why we do our best to get a negative response from a leader—in other words, a leader telling us he or she is not interested in interacting—before addressing things publicly. Miscommunication is more common than we realize, and we do well not to rush to judgment before we have all the facts.

So, to be clear, Pastor Lentz had no idea I had been trying to reach him, I had no idea he had tried to reach me, and he was eager to interact with me now.

And that leads me back to the present: Is Carl Lentz a heretic who believes there are many ways to God, as one of my Twitter followers recently alleged?

Pastor Lentz told me with passion that while people might differ with some things at Hillsong, there was no possible way anyone could accuse them (or him) of believing in

universalism.

He said that he believes in John 14:6 with every fiber of his being, with his entire life, and so he doesn't know why he didn't quote the rest of the verse to Oprah (namely, that no one comes to the Father apart from Jesus) because that is absolutely what he believes.

When I asked him why he told Oprah that people can have a relationship with God without being a Christian, he said his intent was to say that everyone can have a relationship with God, but the question was will they, then he pointed to Jesus as the way.

But he was quite humble about these things, saying that he continues to learn and grow and wants to do a better and better job when he is in the public eye. At the same time, he wondered who had ever said to Oprah's audience that the most important question is "Who is Jesus?" And as I pointed out in my previous article, Pastor Lentz said plainly in the Oprah interview that people needed to repent of their sin and bow their knee to God.

In that context, he urged people to listen to the whole interview and told me that he has heard from many people since the interview who want to get right with God.

When I asked him the question, "Are people lost without Jesus?" he said, "Without a doubt! He's the only hope of salvation. One hundred percent." And he added, "Without Jesus, you can have everything but have nothing. That's why I've given my life for Jesus and for souls."

Can you be any more plain than that? And while Pastor Lentz made clear to me that he was glad to answer my questions (because he recognized me as a brother with a redemptive heart) and that he had no desire to please his critics, I would say to his critics: You have no business accusing him of universalism in any shape, size or form. He could not have

been more clear.

I would also say to his critics: I am not here as an apologist for Hillsong, since I have never attended a Hillsong service in my life or read a book or listened to a full sermon by Brian Houston. I can only address my conversation with Pastor Lentz.

I would encourage you to watch his entire interview with Oprah, and if you feel you could have done a better job than he did, ask God to open the door for you to be on her show. And if that doesn't happen, pray for Pastor Lentz to be an even more effective vessel, since God has opened great doors for him.

I am posting this article with the permission of Pastor Lentz.