

It's Time to Dust Off Your Bible!

Picture,  if you will, the image of an unused dust-covered Bible. Now picture in your mind that this same dust-covered Bible is your Bible! This is not a good image to be sure, especially for a Bible-believing Christian in 2011. Sadly, many Christians now read more books about the Bible than they do the Bible itself.

Consequently, many in the church have gradually, and somewhat unknowingly become biblically ignorant, unaware or stunted. And doctrinally speaking, anything goes. There is now widespread acceptance of "marginal to heretical" doctrines. Just 25 years ago individuals would have been thrown out of the church if caught teaching these heresies.

How did this happen? Simply, we have become biblically ignorant. We have not been diligent to feed on the unadulterated Word of God. We are at best malnourished and in some cases starving to death. Biblical ignorance is on the increase in the church, even to epidemic levels! Like any form of "lack" created by ignorance that can lead to sickness, only the proper "intake," or in these cases, only proper biblical education can remedy it.

Warning:

We live in an age of “anything goes” theology! The charismatic church is in big trouble!

Before

I offer you my 11 points for 2011, however, I would like to add some clarity to explain some of what is meant in them.

CLARIFICATIONS

What

exactly is meant by the phrase “at will”? This phrase appears after a number of the “Doctrines of Concern” that

I address in Point 3. “At will” means a believer makes a decision, on his own, to initiate or attempt to duplicate a particular sovereign, supernatural experience. The individual wants a particular supernatural experience to happen so badly, he will do anything (within his power) to make it happen—to force it, to duplicate or copy it whether or not it is God’s sovereign will.

Rather, a believer should allow God to *sovereignly* cause it to happen at His chosen time, as we see recorded in all similar Bible examples.

When a believer unwisely exercises his (soulish) human will, outside of or in conflict with the sovereign will of God (anything contrary to the written Word of God, the Bible), he is producing a seemingly supernatural (source unclear) experience from his own will, or “at will.” This is the meaning

of “at will.” It is self-will, and self-will can be sinful and lead to all kinds of spiritual deception and questionable practices.

The

question of having supernatural, sovereign experiences “at will.” Do

I believe in third heaven experiences? Absolutely I do. The Bible

supports such sovereign experiences, as in the example of Paul in 2

Corinthians 12. Do I believe in being physically transported?

Absolutely I do! By a sovereign act of God, Phillip was physically

transported (see Acts 8) from one location to another. So if it's

in the Bible I believe it! I believe it all! Amen!

However,

there is a *huge*

difference between God *willing*

you to have a certain sovereign Bible experience (as Paul or Phillip

had) as opposed to *you*

willing it or trying to make it happen, or to duplicate it through

mere human effort or merely through the exercising of your human or

soulish will; in other words, “at will.” These Bible experiences

were 100 percent sovereign. They did not happen because these individuals willed them into existence or willed them to happen. God

and God alone initiated them—He and He alone willed them. This is

the very nature of a sovereign experience: God makes it happen when

He wants, where he wants and with whom He wants. Period! And they usually happened when the candidates or recipients least expected it.

Why? Because these were sovereign events not planned or initiated by man but by God.

When discussing a sovereign experience, there is a big difference between initiating vs. cooperating. God *initiates* all sovereign experiences, the believer *cooperates* with them. Mix the two, crisscross them, and this can lead to some real doctrinal confusion and counterproductive measures.

It's all about God's sovereignty. The critical issue with operating in the supernatural is, who is initiating what or who is "willing" what? Teaching believers that by following certain steps, teachings, formulas and/or merely exercising their own human wills they can duplicate any sovereign supernatural experience is dangerous and unscriptural.

One cannot go to heaven like Paul did or be transported physically like Phillip was simply because they want to or because they feel like it (at will). Teachings like this often cross over into dangerous methods and techniques that resemble New Age beliefs, mysticism, spiritism or other occultic manipulative practices. A believer cannot and must not force, manipulate or otherwise attempt to

reproduce a
sovereign supernatural Bible experience by merely following a
method,
a series of steps or, worst of all, willing it to happen.

Whether
we are discussing being translated in the Spirit or
transported
physically, or any supernatural sovereign experience we read
about in
the Bible, the critical difference between whether it is God
or not
is who “willed” it to happen: Was it you or was it God? If you
willed it to happen, it ceases to be a sovereign, God-
ordained,
supernatural, Bible experience, and you risk experiencing a
counterfeit.

So
here is my 2011 prophetic “prescription” for this beautiful
but
biblically challenged, even unhealthy, bride.

1.

Orthodoxy.

I would like to prescribe a good healthy dose of the written
Word of
God, the Bible. The church needs an immediate injection of the
truth!

We must all pray for the church to return to the orthodoxy
(traditional belief) of Scripture. This means a return to the
proper
reading, *interpretation*
and application of the Bible in our lives. There is a growing
trend
toward some really bad doctrine out there. And we, the church,
must
put a stop to it! If we don't, no one else will! The church

must
begin to police herself against unorthodox (false) teaching
and
bizarre practices. You must reacquaint yourself with the
Scriptures
and know your 40 years of serving God, I have not
heard so much bad doctrine preached from so-called Bible-
believing
Christians—specifically charismatic Christians.

2.

Berea.

We must pray for a “Berean Revival” in the church—a revival
that returns us all to our roots—our roots in the Word of God.
In
the Bible, the original Bereans were believers who searched
the
Scriptures daily to find out whether the things they were
being
taught were so. There is a lot of doctrine currently in
circulation
in the charismatic church that is highly questionable—even
heretical. Each believer must begin to search the Scriptures
for
himself to discover whether what he is believing is biblical
or not
(see Acts 17:11). Stop unequivocally trusting ministers and
their
pulpits to always and completely preach the truth—some do,
some do
not. You need to search and know the Scriptures for yourself.
If
their teachings sound too good to be true, then they very well
may
be! Know your Bible.

3.

Preach the Word!

(See 2 Tim. 4:2.) It is time for the church to return to her basic Bible beliefs (fundamental doctrines) and the core values these fundamental doctrines produce. Peripheral doctrines or beliefs are peripheral for a reason and can lead to dangerous theological positions and questionable practices. We must stop extracting obscure, vague, single, solitary verses out of context, and stop trying to make major “sound” doctrines out of them. This stretching of the truth must stop. Some of our so-called “proof texts” do not prove what’s being preached at all. We are “twisting the Scriptures to our own destruction.” We must again major in major doctrine and minor in the minor ones. My prophetic word to all pastors/teachers for 2011 is simple: Preach the Word! Know your Bible.

Here are some examples of current doctrine circulating in the church. You must believe me that I am *not* making this stuff up!

Doctrines of Concern

Open

Theism: This teaches that God does not always know the outcome of earthly events when man is involved—that man can actually catch God “off guard,” surprise Him and alter His will. For example, it teaches that God did not know Adam was going to sin. Yet there are

numerous verses that clearly teach God is sovereign and knew exactly what was going to happen and when it was going to happen. If God did not know that Adam was going to sin, then why was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world? (See I Pet.1:18-20.) Additional proof texts: Eph. 1:4, Ps. 139:4, Ps. 139:16, Is. 46:10, Eccl. 3:11, I John 3:20, John 21:17. If God is not omniscient, then He is not sovereign. If He is not sovereign, then He is not God. God is all-knowing: past, present and future. Open theism is a dangerous teaching that undermines the sovereignty, majesty, infinitude, knowledge, existence and glory of God, and exalts the nature and condition of man's own free will. A god of open theism is not as knowledgeable or as ever present as the true God of the Bible.

Ultimate Reconciliation: This teaches that hell will one day be emptied, that all of mankind (saved and unsaved) will live together eternally in heaven regardless of their actions while they lived on earth. This is an old heresy that pops up every 50 years or so. There is no biblical basis for this very dangerous doctrine.

The "Nefilin" children are alive on earth:
This teaches that there are living beings currently on the earth who

are the distant offspring of the original “giants” conceived by angels and women mentioned in the book of Genesis. This is pure speculation. Recent books on the subject have caught our attention, but this topic was never supposed to be a major Bible doctrine. Some authors have taken extreme liberty and license to write about it. Again, it is pure speculation and could serve as a distraction from more important issues in the church.

Open Heaven:

Teaches that we as Christians should be asking God to “rend the heavens” and open them to us so we could experience God’s power and presence. Actually, this is totally unnecessary since God, through Jesus Christ, has already fully opened the heavens to each and every believer. Every believer has been walking under the “open heaven” atmosphere from the moment they were born again. Hebrews calls it the “throne of grace” (see Heb.4:16). This throne of grace in heaven is already open and available, 24/7, to all believers who access it in the name of Jesus. How? By faith.

Third

Heaven experiences at will: SEE CLARIFICATIONS

Going to

heaven at will to get your gifts: SEE CLARIFICATIONS. There is no biblical record of any believer having to go to heaven to get

any
gift. This is a totally unnecessary spiritual exercise. The
three
listings of gifts in Romans, I Corinthians and Ephesians all
have
been in the church for more than 2,000 years. They are not in
heaven,
so why go there to get them? The Father, Son and Holy Spirit
each
have deposited their respective gifts in the church here on
earth.
For 2,000 years, Christians have been receiving here *on earth*
from
this great deposit of gifts. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be
done,
on earth, as it is in heaven" (emphasis added), Jesus
prayed. Amen!

Cloud of witnesses / Dead saints:

This teaches that Christians should expect the intervention of
dead
saints in our daily lives. This entire deception is based on a
terribly irresponsible interpretation of a single obscure
verse in
Hebrews 12:1. We do not need dead saints intervening in our
lives. We
have Jesus as our mediator, the *only* mediator we need between
God and man (see I Tim.2:5), and He is not dead. He is alive!
Necromancy, that is, communication with the dead (any dead),
is
forbidden in Scripture.

Traveling in time at will: I

have been unable to find this in the Bible, let alone doing it
at
will.

Transporting physically at will: SEE

CLARIFICATIONS

Over-emphasis

on angels: Yes, they are real. But an angelic visitation is a rare and precious event. Most Christians will never have an encounter

with one. And it is extremely unlikely that a Christian will be

visited by an archangel. Michael and Gabriel were given specific,

significant, world-changing tasks in the Scriptures. It is likely

that they have more important things to do than to drop by your house

for a visit!

Going into trances at will: SEE

CLARIFICATIONS

Trance-Dancing: I have been unable to find this in the Bible.

Going to hell to discern evil

spirits in order to deliver someone: No one in the Bible ever had

to go to hell to discern a spirit. Why should we?

Hyper-grace

/ Christians do not need to repent of sin. The only biblical response for sin is *always* repentance for both the sinner and the saved. How else can a believer be accountable for his

sin except to repent of it? No form of grace removes the believer's

responsibility to repent for his sin.

Quick restoration of

fallen church leaders: Why should a fallen leader necessarily be

restored back to his ministry, especially after numerous failures over the space of years? Sometimes fallen leaders should not be restored back to ministry at all, but back to finding a secular job, loving their spouse and raising their kids. However, if it is decided that a fallen leader is to be restored to his ministry, I am not against restoring that leader. I am however against restoring that leader too quickly.

Divorce among Christians without

consequences: All of us are aware of the terrible increase of divorce among Christians. Yet, what troubles me more is the lack of consequences from these divorces. Covenant is very important to God.

Divorce is not God's best. Breaking the marriage covenant is a serious issue. Yet many Christians, and even ministers, never miss a step. One day they divorce, and soon after they are back in the pulpit and/or often in a new marriage.

The Bible contains

cultural and gender biases: No, it does not! I've actually been told by pastors that they have made decisions to counter the various biases that they perceive in the Bible. I was stunned! How can the Bible be inerrant, infallible and contain biases and/or prejudices at

the same time? It cannot! But some preach this from their pulpits, misrepresenting God's Word.

4. Seducing Spirits.

(See I Tim. 4:1-4.) There has been loosed on the church for 2,000 years a literal army of demons whose sole task is to deceive the church! Unfortunately, these deceiving and seducing spirits are enjoying some of their most successful efforts. Why? The average believer does not know his Bible. The Bible is absolute truth, forever settled in heaven. It is our sword of the Spirit—two-edged and deadly. To be Bible ignorant is to have no offensive weapon against our enemy Satan. Our *only* defense against our enemy is a proven offense. And our proven offense against this hoard of demons is the written Word of God. Jesus wielded this same written Word-sword against Satan in the wilderness with great results. So should you! I hear the church saying again, "Devil, it is written!" It does not matter what you think, feel, sense or even believe. It does not matter what experience you claim to have had, or how many trips to heaven you claim to have made, or how many angels you claim to know on a first-name basis. The only thing that matters is what God said in His Word. Know your Bible.

5. The Devourer.

(See Mal. 3:11.) *Warning:* All nontithing believers are going to fall victim to a spirit called the “Devourer” unless they return to a systematic lifestyle of financial giving that the Bible calls tithes and offerings! This demonic entity, an actual living thing, will attach itself to the finances of any nontithing believer. However, for all faithful, tithing believers, the results will be the opposite: God will rebuke this devourer for their sake, and they will enjoy the “open windows of heaven” lifestyle promised for all who do not “rob” God. They will be a “blessed land” with showers of financial provision from above! Know your Bible.

6.
Divorce. Some believers will suffer the consequences of unwisely entering into unscriptural divorces. These divorces of convenience have angered God, bringing Him to place judgments upon many believers and some ministers and their ministries. We need to be reminded that God hates divorce. Know your Bible.

7. Deception.
Many will willingly and increasingly enter into incorrect thinking. Hardcore deception will find a home in the church in 2011, if we are not diligent to know and follow the Word of God. Remember these words from Scripture: “Be not deceived!” This is a command, and the responsibility of all Bible-believing believers.

Notice that
deception is a choice! We must choose not to be deceived in
2011.

How? Know your Bible!

8. Prophets. As a prophet, Jesus
Christ enjoyed only a very brief season of popularity,
followed by
His crucifixion as a falsely convicted criminal. Many prophets
will
suffer the same fate in 2011. I fear that the season of
popularity
for many prophets is over. As James wrote, "As an example of
suffering, take the prophets" (emphasis added). Know your
Bible.

9. Underground. An exciting and even more
powerful supernatural "underground church" will emerge in
2011.

The true church is much smaller than many think it is. True
apostles

and prophets will emerge within this true underground church.
Essentially, a nameless and faceless core, these foundational
ministries will re-direct their efforts away from their so
called

network, and will devote themselves to returning to the local
church

level where their greatest effect and spiritual impact on the
body of

Christ will be realized. Know your Bible.

10. Prize.

God gave me this verse for literally every believer worldwide
for

2011. "I press toward the goal [in 2011] for the *prize* of
the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (emphasis added).

Remember

that you have been apprehended by God, for God. Let's all

forget

about those things that are behind, and reach forward in 2011
for

those things that are ahead. There is an eternal prize
awaiting you!

Know your Bible.

11. Pearl. Jesus Christ is the “pearl

of great price.” He is your ultimate reward for 2011. He is
your

master and you serve Him and Him alone for 2011! Make 2011 the
year

in which you live for Him again without reservation. It is
time to

sell everything (figuratively speaking) and purchase that
Pearl of

great price in 2011 and beyond Amen! Know your bible.

Beloved,

I think you get my point: Know your Bible!

About the author: Dennis Cramer is founder and president of
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