

First Baptist Church
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False Teachers

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 John 4:1-3

I want to encourage you to grab your Bibles this morning. We're going to be looking at a lot of different places in the Word of God this morning, but we're going to begin in 2 Timothy, chapter 3. Before I begin to read anything, I'll give you a little background as to where we're at today and why we're about to do what we're about to do.

It is with great heaviness in my heart that I come to deliver this message to you today, because I understand the implications of what I'm going to say today can have a tendency to frustrate, to discourage, or to outright make some of you angry with me and what I have to say. I did my part to try to avoid this message today, but God wouldn't allow me to go away from it.

It all started for me with a very simple email I received back on October 12. Someone submitted an email through our website with just one sentence. The sentence said, "Would be interested in knowing your views on playing Bethel Music as worship in your church." A little bit about me. I like to try to operate with a zero-inbox policy. That means by the end of the week I like to make sure I have no emails in my inbox, that I've addressed everything, I've taken care of everything, I've replied or responded to what needs to be replied or responded to.

When I got that, I read that, and I was like, "Wait. What? What's the question behind the statement?" I really wasn't informed on a lot of details, so for the past couple of weeks, I've been immersing myself in research and discovering some things I'm just not comfortable with. Now that I know the things I know, I can no longer accept some of the things we've been doing, and we need to make a change.

This morning, I want to talk about the reason we need to make a change and the purpose behind it. Like I said, I realize there can be some resistance to the message today, and I'm okay with that. I'm going to do my best to give you the Word of God in this process, to show you in Scripture why I believe what it is I believe, and if there's any opposition to that, I welcome you to show me in Scripture your point of view as well.

We're going to go into this dialogue together, and we'll see the implications of it as the sermon comes together. I want to start in 2 Timothy, chapter 3. If you notice there, beginning in verse 16, it says, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."*

That's a fundamental truth about the Word of God. It teaches us the truth, it rebukes us in the error, it corrects us when we are wrong, and it gives us instruction to lead a righteous life. I want you to hold your place there, because I'll get back there in a moment, but right now, just turn a couple of pages to your left and look at what it says in 1 Timothy 4:1-2.

"Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead." We're living in that time. People are turning away from true faith, turning away from sound, biblical doctrine, and they're pursuing myths. They're pursuing things that sound good and feel good and seem religious but are so wrong. It's just unbelievable. Let's keep going. Go to 1 John 4:1-3.

"Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here."

We're told, "Test them. Put them to the test. Those who proclaim to speak or to deliver a word of God, put that to the test." So how do you test it? What's the measure you use to test the teaching? You take all they say about Jesus, all they say about God, all they say about grace, about redemption, about salvation.

You lay that side by side with the Word of God, and it should be abundantly clear. If it's not, it absolutely has no place...no place in our hearts, no place in our lives, because it's not true. It's not from the Spirit of God; it's from the spirit of the Antichrist. Don't be a part of it. Well, there's more. Let's go to 2 Peter, chapter 2, beginning in verse 1.

"But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money."

When you're flipping through the channels and you're stopping there and you hear the person say, "You want to grow in your faith? You want to experience a breakthrough? Would you just sow a seed of faith?" And how do you sow a seed of faith? Yeah, by giving them money. By giving a little bit of money so you can experience the breakthrough. That's what we're talking about here. ***"In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed."***

Go back to where we began: 2 Timothy. Now we transition into chapter 4. I love this passage of Scripture, because I came across this passage of Scripture shortly after surrendering to the ministry. I was a student at college at the time and feeling God's call to full-time ministry and surrendering my life to that, not really understanding what it means or what it's going to take or what it will look like as it plays out. I came across this passage of Scripture early, and it was always a source of encouragement for me, and it is still today. Notice what it says beginning in verse 1 of chapter 4.

"I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you."

One more passage of Scripture if I may. Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 5. Then we're going to unpack the implication of all of this. Listen to the instructions given to us, beginning in verse 10.

"Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, 'Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'"

The same spirit, the same heart, the same love I have for you. I want you to know: it's time to wake up, church. I warn you. Be very careful of the music you listen to. Be very careful of the music you download and purchase. Be very careful of the pastors or teachers you listen to or follow or stream their podcast. Be very careful of the books you read. Just because a song is played on a Christian radio station doesn't mean it glorifies God.

Just because you can find the resource in a Christian bookstore doesn't mean it actually belongs in that bookstore. Be very careful. Now, I realize that with a message like today there is bound to be some resentment, some hesitation, some pushback. There are bound to be certain criticisms that will arise. So in light of that, I want to address two of them. These are two of the most often expressed criticisms when it goes to addressing false doctrine and false teachers.

First of all, the one pushback is often, "Judge not lest you be judged, Pastor. Be very careful. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." All of those things are found in Scripture. It's often the misapplication of those things that get us in trouble. I want to show you what Jesus had to say when it came to the subject of judging others. Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 7, because this is where the quote comes from. "Judge not lest you be judged." Matthew 7:1-5 says:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."

Jesus does give us a warning about judging others, but the judging he's warning us about is the hypocritical kind of judging. He says, "Look. You want to deal with the speck that is in your brother's eye, but you have a plank in your own. You can't help that brother. Deal with yourself first, and then when you're in a right place, in a right position, you can help your brother and sister deal with the speck that's in *their* eye." He's not saying, "Don't judge." He said, "Just don't be a hypocrite."

We often quote verse 1, "Judge not lest you be judged," but we don't even make it to verse 6. Look at verse 6. I'm reading out of the New Living Translation. It says, ***"Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy."*** Or another translation: "Don't give the sacred to dogs." Jesus says, "Don't give the sacred things to dogs." Then he says, ***"Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you."***

Do you catch what Jesus did? He identifies some people as dogs and some people as pigs. In order to obey verse 6, we have to make some judgmental decisions about other people's character and conduct. We have to be able to know, "Don't waste what is holy on those who are outright rebellious and unholy." Be able to discern between "Is that person a dog or is that person a pig?" using the language of our Lord in the context of what he was saying.

So, it takes discernment to recognize. Look at verse 15. You can see it right there. ***"Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"*** The answer is *no*.

"A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions."

It takes discernment to recognize, "That's not a true sheep. That's a wolf dressed up in sheep's clothing." In order to recognize false prophets and in order to be able to identify false teaching, we must exercise discernment. That's judgmental decisions and evaluations we must be willing to do, and that's what Jesus is teaching us. We live in a day and a time where tolerance is a dominant theme in our culture and in our churches.

If you dare to confront or to expose sin or if you dare to label someone's teaching as being non-biblical, you'll be accused of being judgmental and unloving. I believe the Bible is clear that the pastor is the one who's being extremely unloving if they allow for wolves to affect their flock. If you allow sinning believers to infect the flock without confronting and exposing their sin, that is what is unloving. Listen to what the Scripture says in Romans 16:17-18.

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people."

The Bible clearly teaches us that we must exercise biblical judgment and discernment. Let me show you one place in Scripture where it's so easy and clear to see. Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5. Four verses, beginning in verse 19. ***"Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil."***

Five imperatives are given to us in these four verses. The first two are negative imperatives. ***"Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies..."*** Those set the boundaries for the three positive. ***"...but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good."*** [Flee or run away or stay away from the things that are evil.]

When it comes to matters of doctrine, when it comes to the issue of theology, then we are to judge these matters, these things, within the biblical parameters we have, and we must exercise judgment, discernment, evaluations, so we know what we're receiving into our lives is true and an accurate reflection of what God's Word has to say.

So, the first pushback is often, "Judge not lest you be judged." The second one is often, "It's okay to expose false doctrine, but you kind of cross the line when you begin to expose false teachers, when you begin naming names." Oh, in a moment I'm going to name some names. Some of you are going to be like, "Really?" Some of you are following the names I'm going to mention. I'm going to tell you about these people out of my love and concern for your spiritual development.

They say you should expose the doctrine but without naming names. My first response is, "Did you even read the Bible?" Listen to what Paul says in 1 Timothy 1. ***"Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked."*** General statement. Then verse 20: ***"Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples."*** He just identifies them, just calls them out, exposes them in front of everyone.

That's not the only place. There are other places, like 2 Timothy, chapter 2. Paul writes, beginning in verse 15, ***"Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. This kind of talk spreads like cancer..."***

All very general, generic. Then he says, ***"...as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus."*** He just calls them out, two individuals. ***"They have left the path of truth, claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; in this way, they have turned some people away from the faith."*** I've heard people say, "I can never confront another person about their sin. He without sin cast the first stone," but I'm going to say to dodge this difficult and loving responsibility is the very opposite of love.

If you see your child running out into a street about to get hit by a car, I would think love would motivate you to yell, to do whatever is necessary to try to rescue that child, to protect that child from danger. Likewise, we see a fellow believer who is following the dangerous path of

dangerous teaching and heretical views, then love ought to motivate us to shout, to do whatever we can to get their attention to stay away from that danger. With that in mind, let's just rip off the Band-Aid.

First and foremost, I warn you: be very, very careful. I would stay away from the teachings, from the writings, from the spiritual wisdom that is shared from Pope Francis. Some of you are like, "Here we go." Stay away from it. It's not biblical. I can give you a list of reasons that cause me concern. I'll share with you one. Pope Francis himself said, "We are living in a time when religious believers and people of goodwill everywhere sense the need to grow a mutual understanding and respect and support each other as members of one human family."

That sounds all good. I don't have any problem with that. Then he says, "For all of us are children of God." To make sure I'm not misunderstanding what he's saying or what he's trying to express, he also says, "Many think differently, feel differently, seeking God or meeting God in different ways. In this crowd, in this range of religions, there's only one certainty that we have for all. We are all children of God."

Let me tell you what. When the pope says we are all children of God, he does not reveal the truth of Scripture. He only reveals his ignorance of the Word of God. This is what Scripture says. For those of you who are already resisting and already pushing back, this is what the Word of God says.

John 1:10-12: *"He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God."* So, who are the children of God? Those who believe and accept him. It says, *"They are reborn—not with a physical birth...but a birth that comes from God."*

Then it says in 1 John 3:9-10, *"Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God."* Who are the children of God? Those who are born into God's family. How are you born into God's family? By believing and accepting Jesus Christ into your life. It says, *"So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God."*

There are two classes of humanity: the child of God and the child of the Devil. If you don't have your faith, your belief rooted in the Son of God, then you belong to the Devil. You're *his* kid, not God's. Stay away from that teaching. It sounds religious, but it is not biblical. I warn you. Here we go. Stay away from the teachings, the declarations, the preaching, the books from people like Joel Osteen. Stay away from Bishop T.D. Jakes. It's heresy that comes out of his mouth.

Stay away from Joyce Meyer, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Benny Hinn, Brian Houston of Hillsong, Bill Johnson at Bethel. I'll come back to those guys in a moment. Stay away from Jen Hatmaker. She's a false teacher. She doesn't believe in the biblical view of marriage, the biblical view of sexuality. Don't follow her. Stay away from Sarah Young. That whole *Jesus Calling* devotional stuff ain't worth the piece of paper it's printed on.

If you research it, she basically says in her introduction, "I know that God's Word is sufficient for me, but I longed for more. It wasn't enough, and because it wasn't enough, I wanted God's personal revelation for me. So I found myself a quiet place with pen and paper in hand, and I began to write down the direct revelation of God to me." That's how Joseph Smith started Mormonism.

Isn't it interesting that her direct revelation that Jesus had to say to her has now been published and sold billions? I thought that was just for you, Sarah. It's a daily devotional. In the devotion for August 23, she talks about, "Be careful of idolizing your children." I would agree with that, but in her original book (it has been rewritten since then) she uses the story of Abraham and Isaac as her example.

She accused Abraham of having uncontrolled emotions, practicing son worship and idolatry. None of these things are mentioned in the Bible. What's interesting is if you go and buy a current edition of it today, August 23 has nothing to do with Abraham and Isaac and everything to do with a whole different story and characters in the Bible, which makes me wonder. "Wait. Jesus did a self-correct in his insight and wisdom?" Jesus doesn't make mistakes. He's the author of truth.

There are so many things. Stay away from that. I don't care if it's a Christian best seller. I think right now it's like #5 on the best-selling Christian devotions. It's garbage. You don't need to be filling your mind with it. Immerse yourself in the Word of God. Stay away from Joseph Prince, Fred Price, Creflo Dollar, Todd White, Rob Bell, and Oprah Winfrey, whatever tour they're on together.

She literally says there are millions of different paths to get to God, and what you call Jesus is good for you, but all that matters is that you're faithful and true on whatever path you're on; we all end up in the same place. It's just garbage. Stay away from this stuff. It's not just the pastors or the teachers we listen to. It's also found in the music we listen to as well, to which that question was posed to me.

In light of that, we're making the decision that, right now, we as a church will no longer sing songs from Bethel, from Bethel Collective, from Hillsong or Hillsong United. We're not singing songs from Jesus Culture. We're not singing songs from Jeremy Riddle, from Cory Asbury, and a list of 15 or 16 other different artists.

So, why are we taking this position? Why are we no longer singing their music? Why are we no longer going to be doing that? Because they align themselves with or they come from churches that are theologically problematic, if not outright heretical. You have to be careful. You can't just pull the good that's in those songs and say, "It's okay for us just to sing the good stuff and avoid the other stuff." That's not how it works.

You do realize (or maybe you don't), you purchase an album from them or when the church sings a song of theirs we are financially supporting their ministries. In order to be able to play music that is copyrighted at this church, we have to purchase on an annual basis something that's called

the *CCLI*. It's a license. It gives you permission to sing copyrighted music. Then you turn in a list of songs and how many times you sing them. You have to report this kind of stuff.

What happens is each church that pays the license fee... When they collect all the data and information, those artists or those groups receive compensation based upon the number of times their song gets sung in the number of churches. So when we sing one of their songs, we become financial contributors of the churches they come from. There's where the problem comes in.

I told you I'd come back to them, so let's just camp out here for a moment. I'll start with Brian Houston of Hillsong and Hillsong United. Hillsong Church is a Pentecostal megachurch that's affiliated within the Australian Christian Churches. It is the Australian branch of the Assemblies of God. Part of their doctrinal belief is that of the prosperity gospel.

This quote comes directly from Hillsong's website. It says, "We believe that God wants to heal and transform us so that we can live healthy and blessed lives in order to help others more effectively." This falls in line with the teaching that God always wills to heal and that blessed equals healthy. That's the prosperity gospel, which adds that God's desire is to enrich you financially.

Just to make sure you don't think I'm stretching or grabbing at straws just from one line from their website, let me read to you a direct quote from their pastor who published a book. This book was published many years ago, but the name of the book ought to get our attention: *You Need More Money*. That's his book.

In his book *You Need More Money*, on page 8, Brian Houston says, "We have to become comfortable with wealth and break the bondage, guilt, and condemnation of impoverished thinking. Poverty is definitely not God's will for his people. In fact, he promises talk of blessing and prosperity." The prosperity gospel is either a perversion of the true gospel or it falls so far off course it is another gospel completely. Either way, it has no place in the church and ought to have no place in the life of a true Christian in their biblical worldview.

Let me read to you what Paul says. He gives a warning to Timothy. In fact, I want you to see it for yourself. Turn with me to 1 Timothy, chapter 6. I know some of you are done listening to me. You've checked out. I get it. Just thank you for not walking out. First Timothy 6. Listen to what Paul says, beginning at the very end of verse 2.

"Teach these things, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them. Some people may contradict our teaching, but these are the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings promote a godly life. Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions.

These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food

and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction."

Then it says in verse 10, *"For the love of money..."* Not money in and of itself; it's the love of money. *"...is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows."* Paul also says in 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, *"I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ."*

But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed."

Brian Houston and the whole prosperity gospel pursuit and doctrine is corrupt, unbiblical, and you should stay away from it. We get to the matter of Bethel and their pastor Bill Johnson. This is a little bit more weird at times. I didn't know much about their ministry and what they do and how they're organized and the school they have in order to train other prophets and healers and whatnot.

The leadership practices, promotes, endorses... I don't really know which one is the right word, but something that has been referred to as *grave sucking*. Other words are *grave soaking* or *mantle passing*. Some of you have never even heard of this before, nor did I. This is what it is. The practice is based upon the idea that the spiritual calling of an individual who has died may be reclaimed by somebody else.

The theory is that God uses the Holy Spirit to anoint certain believers with a specific purpose, such as healing or prophecy, but when that person dies, the work of God has been thwarted. Thus the Holy Spirit is wasted. It's lying upon the bones and unable to continue the calling. So this unrecovered, is how they phrase it... The unrecovered anointing is apparently available to anyone who would physically come and claim it for themselves.

Some people have said, "Oh, it's just an inside joke. It's not really serious. It's something that's just taken out of context." I've seen that argument. I've heard that argument. But *this* isn't taking it out of context. Take a look at this picture. There we go. That's the pastor's wife, Beni Johnson. She's in Oxford. In that picture, she's lying at the tomb of C.S. Lewis, soaking it up, trying to get the residual anointing that's contained within that grave.

You can't really see it from there. I get it, but the little comments on the side become evident that this is a practice, a teaching that exists among them, when they say, "Grab some for me. Grab some for me too. Wow!" Then the next one, so it's not an isolated incident. There's a picture of her hugging onto the tombstone of Charles Finney, trying to soak in his anointing.

If you need further evidence... I don't know why you would, but just in case you do, Bill Johnson himself contributed to a book called *The Physics of Heaven*, and in chapter 4 he says, "There are anointings, mantles, revelations, and mysteries that have lain unclaimed, literally where they were left, because the generation that walked in them never passed them on. I believe it's possible for us to recover realms of anointing, realms of insight, realms of God that have been untended for decades simply by choosing to reclaim them and perpetuate them for future generations."

That's superstitious practice. It's superstition. It's unbiblical. It's crazy. There's nowhere in Scripture that teaches this. Stay away from it. He also promotes something called the *kenosis theory*. This is problematic too. This is a whole other gospel. This is the warning we read in 1 John 4:3. "If they don't teach the truth about Jesus, then it's not from God; it's from the spirit of the Antichrist."

The kenosis theory goes like this: Jesus when he left heaven to come to earth abandoned his deity in heaven, so when he was on earth he was on earth 100 percent man and that's it. They base that on Philippians 2:5-8. Let me read that for you really quickly.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

They pick up on the phrase *emptied himself*, and that's what they say. They say he left his divine attributes in heaven when he emptied himself, but that's not what this verse is talking about. This verse doesn't talk anything about his divine attributes. This verse is talking about the humility of our Lord when he abandoned the praise and worship of heaven to enter into our mess and our muck here on earth. It's talking about his humility.

The kenosis theory is dangerous, because if you believe that Jesus was only a man, then, their logic goes, Jesus was able to perform the miracles and raise the dead because he was a man walking in right relationship with God, and if you, being a man, are also walking in a right relationship with God, then you can do those miracles too, and we can train you how to do them.

If the kenosis theory is correct (and it's not), it would mean Jesus was not fully divine, and if Jesus was not fully divine, then the atoning work that was accomplished on the cross would not be sufficient to atone for the sins of the world. The proper view is the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union is the belief that teaches us that Jesus was 100 percent God and 100 percent man. Jesus said himself in John 10:30, ***"I and the Father are one."***

Colossians 2:8-10 says, *"Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body."* It says it there too. *"So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority."*

These are just a few reasons that should give us pause for concern. Each time we gather to worship, there are two messages that get proclaimed. There is the message we preach and teach through the songs we sing, and then there's the message we preach and teach through the word we give. Make no mistake: Doctrine matters. Proper theology is important. If we're not going to quote their pastors or quote their leaders, teach their theology, then why in the world are we going to sing their songs? It's deceptive. It's not worth it.

Don't leave here thinking, "Yeah, way to go. Way to attack all that contemporary garbage that's out there today." Let me tell you, those little hymnals that are in that pew right in front of you are problematic too. It's not just current contemporary music that causes problems with theology and doctrine. There are some hymns in those hymnals that we ought not to be partaking in singing of too, because it's not true and it's not accurate and it's not a true reflection of the Word of God. Don't worry; we're going to adjust that too.

We're going to work on getting the right kind of hymnals with the right kind of hymns that support our theological position as a church. In light of Scripture, make no mistake that dangerous doctrines should be silenced, not supported. It matters what we do and how we do it. So, we will take all of the steps that are necessary in order to make sure the proper theology is taught and that improper or false theology is identified and corrected as well.

How do you know the difference? "Pastor, that seems like a lot of work. There's a lot of music I've been singing and I listen to that sounds good, and now you're saying I need to take extra steps. How am I supposed to know? What am I supposed to do?" Let me tell you this. The way you identify a counterfeit is by knowing the original. Don't immerse yourself in trying to discover all the counterfeit theology that is out there.

Don't try to discover all the false doctrine that exists. Immerse yourself in the Word of God. Study the true thing so that when you see something that's contrary to what's true, you'll be able to say, "That ain't right. That's wrong. It sounds good, it feels good, but it ain't right." Love the Word of God. Immerse yourself in God's Word.

Let me encourage you to take the time today, this week, to immerse yourself in Psalm 119. It's the longest chapter in the Bible, 176 verses, broken down into 26 different stanzas. Each stanza begins with a different Hebrew letter. You have to read this in Hebrew to see it and understand it, but this was a learning tool. They took each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each stanza represented the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet, so each verse in each stanza began with the letter that came from that section.

This first section, for us, it would be like saying it's A. So verses 1-8 would begin with the letter A, and then the next section would begin with the next letter. That's how it was written. The prominent theme of Psalm 119 is that the Word of God is sufficient. Let me read through some of this with you. Not all of it, just some.

Verse 1: *"Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts."* Verse 4: *"You have charged*

us to keep your commandments carefully." You have to understand when he's saying *law, commandments, decrees*, it's all talking about the Scriptures.

He says, *"You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully. Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees! Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands."* I wonder how many of us could say that today. "When I compare my life to your Word, that I would not be ashamed."

Verse 11: *"I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."* Verse 24: *"Your laws please me; they give me wise advice."* Verse 35: *"Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found."* Where is the happiness found? Walking in the path of God's Word. That's how you have a happy life.

Joel Osteen writes that book *Your Best Life Now*. The only way this can be your best life now is if you're going to hell when you die. For the believer, no matter how bad it is, it's as bad as it'll ever be. Everything is eternal glory after that. For the nonbeliever, this is as good as it'll ever get.

Verse 37: *"Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word."* Verse 47: *"How I delight in your commands! How I love them! I honor and love your commands. I meditate on your decrees."* Verse 54: *"Your decrees have been the theme of my songs wherever I have lived. I reflect at night on who you are, O LORD; therefore, I obey your instructions. This is how I spend my life: obeying your commandments."*

"This is how I spend my life." Wouldn't that be a great testimony of us all if we would embrace that? "I spend my life obeying your Word." Verse 66: *"I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge. I used to wander off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word."* Verse 72: *"Your instructions are more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver."*

How many of you can agree with verse 81? *"I am worn out waiting for your rescue, but I have put my hope in your word."* Verse 86: *"All your commands are trustworthy. Protect me from those who hunt me down without cause."* Verse 89: *"Your eternal word, O LORD, stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created. Your regulations remain true to this day, for everything serves your plans."*

Verse 103: *"How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life."* Verse 129: *"Your laws are wonderful. No wonder I obey them! The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple [like me] can understand."* Verse 140: *"Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much."*

Verse 144: *"Your laws are always right; help me to understand them so I may live."* Verse 149: *"In your faithful love, O LORD, hear my cry; let me be revived by following your regulations."* A couple more. Let's do verse 160. *"The very essence of your words is truth; all your just regulations will stand forever."* Verse 174: *"O LORD, I have longed for your rescue,*

and your instructions are my delight. Let me live so I can praise you, and may your regulations help me."

May we live to praise God, and may the Word of God help us to understand what that means and how that looks. Let us be very good students of the Word of God. Let us be very careful, exercise great discernment in what we take in with our lives...the music we listen to, the people we listen to, the books and the devotions we read. Be very, very careful.

No invitation. My challenge for you today, church, is to exercise great caution. For those who have checked out a long time ago, may you know I say this to you because I love you. I want what's best for you. I want you to pursue the truth, because the truth is life-giving. Freedom is found in and through a relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.