



WITH ZERO THREAT
Week 1

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brothers Ryan Sharp and Jeff Johnson at Impact Church.

Closing prayer

Introduction:

During its initial stages, Campus Crusade for Christ (when it was known as such) used to have an interesting strategy to reach college students on campuses. Their plan was to

reach the most influential students for Christ with the idea that these influential students would then in turn attract other students to Christ, the obviously the less talented and influential ones.

Now, whether that was a legitimate strategy or not, what it does tell us is that Campus Crusade developed during a time when Christianity itself still had a positive cultural image. People still felt there was a perceived social benefit to becoming a Christian or being known as a Christian, even if only for

the moral implications. (Just the fact that they could get away with naming the organization *Campus Crusade* for Christ shows us that Christianity held some cultural influence back then.)

That is no longer the case. It's just the opposite now. The social and moral implications of being a Christian today are perceived as being negative. Christianity no longer holds cultural sway. **And for some of us, that feels threatening. The goal today is to**

remove those feelings, to eliminate all feelings of threat.

So, that's evangelical Christianity in our cultural past. What about the future? What does the future hold for the evangelical church?

One prognosticator of future trends wrote: "In ten years there will likely be a good number of churches across the United States, largely made up of people younger than 35 years old, who will look like thriving evangelical

**churches in all regards except for one thing:
They will be affirming.”**

Then this writer goes on to present a false dichotomy (contrast) by saying: “On the other side of the pendulum will be a large group of churches who increasingly pull away from healthy and faithful cultural engagement on these issues because they simply don’t know how as they feel completely overwhelmed with the speed of the changing sexual terrain.”

It's a false dichotomy, because he's basically saying that you can either be a church that affirms same-sex relationships or you can be a church that is completely out of touch with culture and doesn't know how to engage it, as if those are the only two options. As if a church faithful to Scripture and Truth and Christ can't engage with culture in a healthy and loving way. His premise is simply false.

However, I do happen to agree that the evangelical church is moving toward a theological liberalization of beliefs. And that's

not a good thing, because Truth isn't a matter of opinion or feeling.

But this series isn't about the past or the future. It's not about where our culture is now. As a biblically faithful church we need to understand how to lovingly engage our culture. How do we live in the midst of this rapidly changing landscape? How do we live now?

And to give you an idea of where now is, and how high the stakes are, listen to this letter

from Denny Burk, president of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood:

“Last month, I read the heartbreaking story of a mother of a transgender child—a story that she shared at a recent demonstration outside the Supreme Court. In her speech, this mother testifies about what transgender propaganda has done to her daughter. The propaganda has created official medical “standards of care” that are harmful to children.”

Let me read you what this mother wrote:

“Like any parent, I felt betrayed when I found out a pediatric endocrinologist, someone who knows how powerful our bodies’ natural hormones are, would teach my 16-year old daughter to inject herself with testosterone, a primarily male hormone known and documented to have many horrible side effects on young girls including male pattern baldness, [genital] atrophy, infertility, and an increased risk of heart disease and cancer.

“Like any parent, it is hard to believe that my once beautiful, healthy child, now 19 years old, is in and out of homelessness, bearded, her breasts amputated and reproductive organs removed, and living in extreme poverty, all just to be her ‘authentic self.’ Doctors did this to her while she was still a minor, without my consent or any involvement. My child is mentally ill, no longer thriving, and yet our public schools, government, mental health professionals, medical doctors and pharmaceutical companies are telling me what is best for my

child and that being opposed to this form of self-actualization is tantamount to abuse.

“Like any parent, I am angry and full of rage that this is the only kind of ‘help’ offered to my child and that parental rights are being stripped away, while doctors strip our children of their healthy reproductive organs. But most of all, my heart is shattered and I grieve for my child and for the life she now faces. Like any parent would.”

Burk goes on to say: *This poor mother watched her daughter transform from a healthy baby girl into a surgically mutilated shell of her former self. Why? Because the entire medical establishment is not being driven by science when it comes to dealing with gender-confused children. It is horrific, but it is a reminder of how high the stakes are in our current cultural moment. Real harm is happening to real children, and hardly anyone seems to notice. Instead, many people who should know better are becoming*

complicit.” (Denny Burk, The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood)

We cannot be a complicit people. We will not be a complicit people. After so many years of feeling culturally affirmed, can we find the strength to stand? How do we live now? For the Christian, the answer lies in two areas — who do we listen to and who we are.

As we turn to the text of 1 Peter today, these two issues will be addressed.

First, who do we listen to? In other words, there are many voices we listen to in life, but what voice has the final say. It comes down to authority.

All worldview debates are about this — what authority do you listen to? What's the primary authority in your life? Everyone has one. No one is exempt.

If you think science answers the primary questions about life, then science is your authority. And it's an authority that you place

your faith in. It is simply false to contend that someone with a scientific worldview doesn't engage that worldview based upon faith, because:

- Science alone cannot explain the origins of the universe.**
- Science alone cannot explain the fundamental laws of nature.**
- Science alone cannot explain the fine-tuning of the universe.**
- Science alone cannot explain consciousness.**

- **Science alone cannot explain the existence of our moral inclinations.**
- **Science alone cannot explain the existence of the laws of reason.**

This isn't to say science can't speak with an authority in our lives. But the question is what voice is the final authority? What voice do other voices bow to in your life?

Who do we listen to?

Consider how Peter introduces himself in this letter.

1 Peter 1:1 (953)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

Peter didn't need to list a set of accomplishments to get their attention, to gain the ears of those he was addressing. All he had to do was use that simple title — Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Because an Apostle was a man who had a unique office specifically ordained by Jesus Christ. The authority Jesus Christ gave Peter, the man, as an Apostle was confirmed by signs and wonders in his public ministry, just as it was in His Master's ministry.

Mark 6:7

⁷ And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

Jesus gave them authority. That's the sign of an Apostle and that authority came with confirmations that other ministers just don't have, such as healing in the same manner as Jesus.

Now, the issue for any professing Christian is this: Does Peter speak with the authority of an Apostle in your life, which means that as an Apostle he speaks with the authority of Jesus Himself? And only the original Apostles speak with Apostolic authority. I don't speak with Apostolic authority. Now, I teach what they

say. In other words, as a church we are in the tradition of the Apostle's teaching. That's going to be the defining issue regarding churches that remain biblically faithful. Your theology is either going to be defined by Apostolic authority or human authority.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus was once asked by religious leaders, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" That's a question religious teachers like Rob Bell and Richard Rohr and others endorsed by Oprah aren't asking

anymore, because they aren't teaching a spirituality revealed by God but a spirituality discovered by self. They are simply self-authoritative prophets of self.

Let's look at how Jesus answered this question.

Matthew 21:24-27

²⁴ Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do

these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

If you will not stand for the Truth, you will not be given Truth. You will grow more confused in your understanding. You will become blind to the Truth.

Jesus does not answer every person's question because there are times when the motives behind the question show that the answer won't do the person any good.

But this is an honest question that many people (like Rob Bell and Richard Rohr and Oprah and others) are unwilling to answer

about their worldview — by what authority do you believe these things? You believe certain things are right and that it's a hate crime when people don't believe the way you do. Okay, by what authority do you believe what you believe? That's a fair question.

That's why I was a budding nihilist in college, because the answer many gave had something to do with humanity determining these things, masters of our own destiny, creators of our own spirituality kind of thing. That wasn't a high enough authority for me.

Group think never appealed to me. In a more negative light, it's called being a lemming. You believe the things you do because great authorities like Netflix have shown you the way. Even before I became a Christian, I always understood the flow of culture was primarily that of lemmings, not that of critical thinkers.

Peter speaks with Apostolic authority, which means authority granted by God Himself. And just because he is now dead doesn't mean his Apostolic authority on these pages wanes. He

**speaks to the church today (and to everyone)
with just as much authority as he did then.
And that's how we preach it. This is reality.
This is Truth. These are the thoughts of God.**