

**EDGEMONT BIBLE CHURCH - PASTOR DOUG WHITE**  
**BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE COMMITTED BELIEVER**  
**FALL/WINTER 2011 – SPRING/2012**  
**“LIVING AS JESUS’ SPECIAL PEOPLE”**

**“TOWARDS WADING THROUGH THE MIRE OF  
INFORMATION AVAILABLE TODAY”**

**I. WE LIVE IN A WORLD FULL OF INFORMATION**

- A. Face-to-face conversations*
- B. Telephone*
- C. Internet: email; social networking; posting*
- D. Television: network and cable*
- E. Radio: music and “talk” radio*
- F. Skype and satellite programs*
- G. You can find anything you want and a lot that you don’t!*
- H. Little time is spent discerning if what was said was true, though much time may be spent in either agreeing or disagreeing!*

**II. THE CHRISTIAN’S OBLIGATION TO TRUTH**

- A. God’s Word is Truth*
  - Ps 119:142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth. (NKJV)
  - Ps 119:151 You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth. (NKJV)
  - Ps 119:160 The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. (NKJV)
  - Joh 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (NKJV)
- B. Jesus is the Truth personified*
  - Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (NKJV)
- C. Confidence (faith) in the Truth is what saved us*
  - Eph 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (NKJV)
- D. Continued confidence (faith) in the Truth is what sets us free*
  - Joh 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (NKJV)
- E. The Spirit of God that now lives in us is the Spirit of Truth and guides us into the truth of God*
  - Joh 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (NKJV)
- F. We are commanded to speak and live the truth*

Eph 4:15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- (NKJV)

Eph 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. (NKJV)

2Co 4:2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (NKJV)

1Jo 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

1Jo 1:8 ¶ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1Jo 2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1Jo 2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

1Jo 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. {in him: or, in it}

1Jo 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

**G.** *We are commanded to rightly divide the truth and to use the truth as the way to discern the thoughts, practices and philosophies found in the world*

2Ti 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (NKJV)

1Jo 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (NKJV)

**H.** *The test of a false teacher is his relationship to the truth*

1Ti 6:5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

2Ti 2:18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. (NKJV)

2Ti 3:7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; (NKJV)

2Ti 4:4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (NKJV)

Tit 1:14 not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. (NKJV)

**I. Jesus our Lord, the living Truth, told us to be righteous in our judgment**

Joh 7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (NKJV)

Joh 8:15 "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. (NKJV)

Pr 25:8 Do not go hastily to court; For what will you do in the end, When your neighbor has put you to shame? 9 Debate your case with your neighbor, And do not disclose the secret to another; 10 Lest he who hears it expose your shame, And your reputation be ruined. (NKJV)

Pr 18:6 A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for blows.

7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul.

8 The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body. (NKJV)

Pr 18:13 He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him. (NKJV)

Pr 18:15 The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. (NKJV)

Pr 18:17 The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him. (NKJV)

Pr 18:2 A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart. (NKJV)

**III. THE POEM (See separate sheet)**

**A.** *The video is a sharp, well done and well performed video. It has class*

**B.** *I do not know Jefferson Bethke nor have I spoken with him personally.*

**C.** *I am judging his thoughts and ideas, not his person, character, salvation or sanctification. I know none of the latter.*

**D.** *I would have said nothing at all but the video went viral and I have seen it posted with several of my Facebook friends, especially those of EBC. As pastor, I know I have a responsibility to my brothers and sisters to help us all walk in truth.*

**E.** *The content of the video, while having some good thoughts in it, was inaccurate and, in my estimation, typical of an endemic problem occurring in both religion and politics.*

**F.** *I defend his right to his opinion and his right to speak his opinion into the American culture. I watched it before so many posted it and simply dismissed as another propaganda rant. But it is also right when he has publicly spoken it to have such an opinion scrutinized and examined.*

#### **IV. THE PROBLEM**

- A. I have witnessed the unchecked acceptance of bodies of false information if the tenor of the piece agrees with the reader's world view.*
- B. I have witnessed a callous disregard for these inaccuracies and a continued repetition of them for the sake of inflaming people to a desired response.*
- C. I have witnessed the continued use of "buzz" words, labels or name-calling to put people into a controllable "box" to perpetuate a bias, prejudice or even bigotry.*
- D. I have witnessed the habit of generalizing movements and people with statistical data or survey data that leaves no room for differences of opinion or practice within that group in the mind of the generalizer. Added to C. above, with a label added, a person identifying or identified with the generalized group does not have to be known or dealt with; prejudice already has him identified and he is dehumanized.*
- E. With these processes at work there seems to be a rush to get it into print and let the audience know who the group is or what the opinion is. Now the spinning begins. With controlled information release, the goal is to get the desired view of the information in the ears of the hearer as quickly as possible. This is properly called propagating and the information released is propaganda as it was what the Nazis, the communists, our intelligence community and world-wide state departments, including our own, have been using for years! This is not a popular word to be used for this process today. It seems the words "reporting", "statistical find", "intelligence data or gathering", "polls" or "recent study" are the preferred words to add dignity to an act of creative interpretation for the goal of controlled informing.*
- F. I see this has led to more extremist views, distrust, incivility and error. Violence cannot be far behind!*

Jas 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

(NKJV)

#### **V. THE PROBLEM APPLIED TO THIS POEM**

- A. "What if..." removes himself from the responsibility of whether it is true or not. He merely wants to know what might happen if he said these things.*
- B. "Jesus came to abolish religion..." By using this "buzz word" he already has the attention of the crowd who believes religion is the problem in the world. **This is the presupposition for the rest of the poem.***
  - 1. Using this phrase ignites those who are uncommitted but feel that something about the church or Christianity is just not good. They*

*do not want the life of their church since they can identify their church with his rant. But they have not been motivated to commit their time, money or life to actually following Christ. He has given the inarticulate a voice. It is easier to fire volleys at those who they count hypocrites. Life is hard and full of tough decisions; some just do not want to have to make them and would rather do more pleasant things. He makes a good appeal to them; they are now free of the religious people and free to continue living an uncommitted life doing that which is right in their own eyes as long as they do not match his religious definition!*

- 2.** *It will also ignite those who have an axe to grind with some Christian group they may have been disappointed in or whom they disappointed and were disciplined for it. Either way they have a bad taste in their mouth from what they count unloving behavior.*
- 3.** *Too it ignites those irreligious people or “secular” people who are looking for a good excuse to blast the church for whatever of a multitude of motives they have. They now have the confirming testimony of an “insider” to what they have suspicioned all along.*
- 4.** *What does he mean by religion?*
  - a.** *Throughout the poem his definition wanders. It is variously used for: the republican party, “huge churches”, the Jews of Jesus’ and John’s day and their modern-day counterparts, those who castigate single moms, don’t feed the poor, start wars, dress up the outside, Facebook Christians, it’s a “man made invention”,... The final conclusion we reach from his comparisons and blasts that he is speaking of some form of Christianity, in particular the conservative kind.*
  - b.** *He excludes Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, spiritists, philosophers, communists, Nazis, facists, dictators, witchcraft etc as they do not build huge churches or attempt to be Christians! These are all known as or defined as “religions” but they are excluded from his post. His rant is against the Christian religion specifically.*
  - c.** *Religion is too broad a term for him to use. In the common language it means any system of non-empirical beliefs, worship and practices usually but not always in relation to an unseen controlling power or powers regardless of its point of origin.*
  - d.** *“Religion” winds up being what other people do, not the one making the comment about it! None of us like to think of ourselves as religious as our brother is using the term here, but who among us is without sin? Hypocrisy? Self-righteous behavior? See even our brother here cannot avoid it for he wants us to know he is doing it right! He used to do it the religious way but now he knows better and is doing better. He has dumped all rules and religion! Does He now obey the rules of Jesus? Does he do what Jesus’ commanded? By*

*starting from a bad presupposition, he concludes himself righteous and anyone attempting a disciplined life out of obedience to Christ as “religious” and therefore condemned.*

*e. He would have been better off to stick with a term that describes people and their erroneous response to the commands of the Lord Jesus, not an amorphous, bodiless, soulless entity vaguely labeled “religion”. He apparently meant self-righteous people since he used the phrase “man-made invention”*

**2. Did Jesus come to “abolish religion”?**

*a. If by religion he means rules, rituals and disciplines, then he is in error for sure. Jesus came bringing rules He said if were not obeyed we did not love Him; He gave the ritual of baptism and the Lord’s Table; He gave the command to make disciples of other people groups. Jesus was Jewish and followed the rules of the law since He is the one who gave it to the Israel in the first place!*

*b. Jesus speaking of the very law and prophets He gave before His time on earth said he was NOT coming to destroy them but to fulfill them.*

*c. If by religion, he means any self-righteous effort, Jesus did come to oppose that! It must be remembered He came to His own covenant people many of whom had become self-righteous to redeem them. The other self-righteous people of the world not believing in God or a part of His covenant, Jesus would send His disciples to redeem them from sin and death.*

*d. Jesus and “religion” are not on opposite spectrums as Jesus brought us a system of beliefs, worship, and practices to which He expected earnest, life-sacrificing devotion. Jesus and self-righteousness are on opposite spectrums!*

**C. “...republican doesn’t automatically mean Christian”**

**1. Does it ever mean it?**

**2. Does it mean democratic, independent, libertarian, constitutional... then?**

**3. Here is another “buzz word” that ignites those who are democrats and Christians and carries their favor. They are tired of the “republicans” having the “evangelical and Christian” spotlighted by the media as if all Christians were in this category. They are Christians too and do not appreciate the generalizations that “all Christians are republican” that the media often paints and that evangelical leaders may have portrayed.**

**4. It especially ignites those who are uncommitted but feel outnumbered by all the “republican” Christians around them. They dislike politics as a whole as they do not understand it nor are they motivated to learn; too much work for not enough gain. They see the greed that is sometimes a characteristic of “capitalist**

republicans.” They feel uncomfortable with the drive to get ahead that such a group of people seem to push. They hear the prejudice and bigotry in the voices of those who believe they are right. They do not want to identify with them. They believe they are to be compassionate and they do not hear that from the “church republicans”. They find in his video enough of the truth to “Like” it and repost it. But they still may not get out of their seats and into the action!

5. It also ignites those who do not like the way the evangelical community has united behind “conservative” causes and “social issues” with which they do not agree and have often recently swayed elections against their position. One of the Christians’ own people is blasting away at the church and they are cheering. They also see the church as a bunch of disorganized moralizers who cannot get along.
  6. By using this buzzword we now see that by “religious” he means “Christian” and likely “conservative”. He excludes others for it is clear that there are some parts of “Christianity” that vote democratic or who do not vote at all not wishing to involve themselves in the political process. They are not religious and are not under consideration here.
  7. His statement is a true one but only legitimate in its use here if someone had made the statement that republican and Christian are the same thing! If he knew someone who had made that statement he should be speaking with them not shotgunning everyone else. People get hurt in collateral damage!
- D.** The rest of the poem only adds fuel to the fire. The information does not have to be confirmed as true as the prejudice has already proven it!
1. Using incendiary phrases like “...why has it started so many wars?” “...fails to feed the poor”, “...tells single moms God doesn’t love them...”. He follows these mines with an explosion using God calling “religious people whores...” Where did he get this stuff? Bits and pieces here and there thrown together to make a terrorist propaganda bomb!
  2. He then delivers the Hypocrisy Punch; they don’t do what they preach, even taking down the prophets that could help them get real. Add a little corpse dust and perfume to it and our minds are moving along with his analogies with memories of Jesus’ speech to the Pharisees and scribes. Those “feeling” with him instead of “thinking” are being led to the conclusion he has reached.
  3. He then takes what he believes is the Moral High Ground. He disingenuously tells us “Now I ain’t judgin’...”! He most certainly is and he should not be offering such a pious apology. He has evaluated the flaws of those he has been around in the church. He is not wrong and should not have apologized for it! He is wrong for blasting everyone that fits in his sloppily crafted categories.

*He is wrong for blaming anyone not doing what he is doing as being wrong. But he is not wrong for evaluating.*

- 4. He again blasts appearance Christianity and give us his authority for this inside information - He used to be one of them! We can here appreciate his humility and transparency. His phoniness however does not mean all others in the church were doing the same.*
- 5. He then explains his understanding of the purpose of the church - "a hospital for the broken." Does he forget that the goal of every hospital is to get the broken well and into some other form of living than broken? He is not wrong in what he is saying here, just incomplete.*
- 6. He attempts to explain the beauty of grace and his salvation as one of the objects of God's redeeming plan. He is right again in that it is God and God alone that redeemed him. He then repeats his presupposition that Jesus hates religion for strength in the position he has taken. The presupposition was wrong as above.*
- 7. He has a great couple of lines about what the self-righteous thought of Jesus. He would have been more accurate had he stayed with this correct term, self-righteousness.*
- 8. Same religious misnomer, in Verse 6, no comment. Substitute "self-righteousness"*
- 9. Only a couple of issues with Verse 7. Not sure what he means by Jesus "absorbed" all of your sin. I do not have biblical reason for saying "he was thinking of you" while "dangling on that cross" though he is not the first one to make such a statement and probably won't be the last! The biblical statement is that Christ paid for our sin with His own life since the wages of sin is death. I don't know if he was referring to Isaiah 53:6 to use the word "absorbed" and I don't know what He meant by He buried them in the tomb. Does that mean that in a tomb somewhere can be found my sins that God said have been moved as far as the east is from the west?*

**CONCLUSION:** *From some of the content of the poem I am assuming Brother Bethke is a brother! I am not questioning his salvation, just his manner of communicating to all the world his less than omniscient opinion. He has some good stuff; he has some junk. I hope we all learn not to repeat this process of misinformation that is so prevalent in much of the informational world today.*

# ***Why I hate religion, but love Jesus***

***A poem by Jefferson Bethke as found on youtube***

## ***Verse 1***

*What if I told you Jesus came to abolish religion  
What if I told you voting republican really wasn't his mission  
What if I told you republican doesn't automatically mean Christian  
And just because you call some people blind  
Doesn't automatically give you vision*

## ***Verse 2***

*I mean if religion is so great, why has it started so many wars  
Why does it build huge churches, but fails to feed the poor  
Tells single moms God doesn't love them if they've ever had a divorce  
But in the old testament God actually calls religious people whores*

## ***Verse 3***

*Religion might preach grace, but another thing they practice  
Tend to ridicule God's people, they did it to John The Baptist  
They can't fix their problems, and so they just mask it  
Not realizing religions like spraying perfume on a casket  
See the problem with religion, is it never gets to the core  
It's just behavior modification, like a long list of chores  
Like lets dress up the outside make look nice and neat  
But it's funny that's what they use to do to mummies  
While the corpse rots underneath*

## ***Verse 4***

*Now I ain't judgin, I'm just saying quit putting on a fake look  
Cause there's a problem  
If people only know you're a Christian by your Facebook  
I mean in every other aspect of life, you know that logic's unworthy  
It's like saying you play for the Lakers just because you bought a jersey  
You see this was me too, but no one seemed to be on to me  
Acting like a church kid, while addicted to pornography  
See on Sunday I'd go to church, but Saturday getting faded  
Acting if I was simply created just to have sex and get wasted  
See I spent my whole life building this facade of neatness  
But now that I know Jesus, I boast in my weakness*

### **Verse 5**

*Because if grace is water, then the church should be an ocean  
It's not a museum for good people, it's a hospital for the broken  
Which means I don't have to hide my failure, I don't have to hide my sin  
Because it doesn't depend on me it depends on him  
See because when I was God's enemy and certainly not a fan  
He looked down and said I want, that, man  
Which is why Jesus hated religion, and for it he called them fools  
Don't you see so much better than just following some rules  
Now let me clarify, I love the church, I love the Bible, and yes I believe in sin  
But if Jesus came to your church would they actually let him in  
See remember he was called a glutton, and a drunkard by religious men  
But the Son of God never supports self righteousness not now, not then*

### **Verse 6**

*Now back to the point, one thing is vital to mention  
How Jesus and religion are on opposite spectrums  
See one's the work of God, but one's a man made invention  
See one is the cure, but the other's the infection  
See because religion says do, Jesus says done  
Religion says slave, Jesus says son  
Religion puts you in bondage, while Jesus sets you free  
Religion makes you blind, but Jesus makes you see  
And that's why religion and Jesus are two different clans*

### **Verse 7**

*Religion is man searching for God, Christianity is God searching for man  
Which is why salvation is freely mine, and forgiveness is my own  
Not based on my merits but Jesus's obedience alone  
Because he took the crown of thorns, and the blood dripped down his face  
He took what we all deserved, I guess that's why you call it grace  
And while being murdered he yelled  
"Father forgive them they know not what they do."  
Because when he was dangling on that cross, he was thinking of you  
And he absorbed all of your sin, and buried it in the tomb  
Which is why I'm kneeling at the cross, saying come on there's room  
So for religion, no I hate it, in fact I literally resent it  
Because when Jesus said it is finished, I believe he meant it*