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THIS PRESENT CRISIS by Michael Youssef

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Dedication

*To all the faithful pastors, teachers, and preachers who proclaim the truth of
the Word of God without compromise*

*Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side.*

—*THE PRESENT CRISIS* BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, 1845

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Introduction

Our Present Crisis

I have been writing this book during a time of global crisis—or rather, multiple global crises. There was a crisis known as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which triggered another global crisis, the worldwide economic shutdown. Amid these crises, civil unrest erupted across America, with protesters and rioters setting fires, looting shops, and tearing down statues and monuments from Seattle and Los Angeles to New York and Atlanta.

But none of these crises are the present crisis that I've written about in this book. There's an even greater crisis that confronts our civilization today, and this book is a warning of the destruction that is yet to come upon our land if we do not *act now* in obedience to God's Word.

Even though this book is not about the pandemic, the coronavirus crisis is a sobering reminder that our government, military might, economic power, and technological wizardry are all amazingly vulnerable to a sub-microscopic organism. It is a virus so small it can only be seen with an electron microscope. Yet, this invisible threat has shaken the foundations of human society and brought mighty corporations and governments to their knees.

But our God is sovereign and in control of world events. This virus did not take him by surprise. God is not wringing His hands and saying, "What should I do?" He controls every breath we take. He controls every beat of our hearts. He is in control of our lives from birth to death. **A crisis should not signal Christians to panic; it should ignite our faith and increase our obedience.** We must not let our hearts be troubled.

I hope and pray that by the time you read these words, the pandemic will be history, the civil unrest will subside, the economy will stabilize, and your life will return to normal. But even when these tumultuous times have passed, we must never forget that an even more dangerous crisis still confronts us. Like the COVID-19 virus, this present crisis is spreading invisibly throughout our society. It affects every one of us, though most of us are completely unaware of it.

Simply put, this present crisis is the decline of the influence of the Christian church. All across America and Europe, churches are emptying, and an entire generation is turning away from God. People today have many gods—money, pleasure, politics, the environment—but they no longer acknowledge the God of the Bible. The devaluing of the family and human life has led to countless abortions, fewer marriages, and more empty cradles. Social scientists who once warned of a population *explosion* now warn of a population *implosion*, as birth rates are declining disastrously in Western nations.¹

The traditional values and social bonds that once held our society together are disintegrating, along with traditional Christian-based morality. Addiction, suicide, and crime are epidemic in Western society. The internet and social media, once thought to be bringing the world together, have unleashed humanity's most hateful, sinful urges, dividing people into warring tribes. This is our present crisis—not an external threat from terrorists or warlike nations or a viral pandemic, but a decline of faith, truth, and morality. It is hollowing out our society from within.

We in the West have assumed that our democratic institutions, culture, and way of life would go on forever. We expected our economy to always be strong, our military to remain invulnerable, and our traditions to endure. But empires and civilizations have collapsed again and again in the past. As former US Comptroller General David M. Walker warns, Western society today shows signs of imminent collapse.

Many of us think that a superpowerful, prosperous nation like America will be a permanent fixture dominating the world scene. We are too big to fail. But you don't have to delve far into the history books to see what has happened to other once-dominant powers....Great powers rise and fall....America presents unsettling parallels with the disintegration of Rome—a decline of moral values, a loss of political civility, an overextended military, an inability to control national borders, and the growth of fiscal irresponsibility by the central government. Do these sound familiar?²

Historian Niall Ferguson suggests that when an empire falls, its demise comes swiftly, often violently, and almost always without warning: “Empires behave like all complex adaptive systems. They function in apparent equilibrium for some unknowable period. And then, quite abruptly, they collapse.”³

I have had many conversations with Muslim thinkers, and they believe the fall of the West is already well underway—a result of the decline of Christianity. They tell me that, as Christianity disintegrates, it is leaving a spiritual vacuum in the West. Their extreme form of Islam is already rushing in to fill that void. They predict that Western civilization will, like Rome, continue its steady, gradual decline until it reaches a tipping point of sudden, catastrophic downfall.

One Muslim scholar told me, “Islam spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa by the sword. But Western culture will be handed to us on a platter. The people of the West are led about by their feelings and sentimentality. Their passions rule them. Soft and undisciplined, they are no match for the determined soldiers of Islam. The West will fall into our hands like overripe fruit.”

Is there no hope? Are our children and grandchildren condemned to watch our civilization collapse around their ears?

No, there is hope. As the late social critic Charles Krauthammer once observed, “The assumption that somehow there exists some predetermined inevitable trajectory, the result of uncontrollable external forces, is wrong. Nothing is inevitable. Nothing is written. For America today, decline is not a condition. Decline is a choice.”⁴

Ours is the generation that must make that choice. We will choose whether our civilization rises or falls. We must make the wise and godly choice for the sake of our children and grandchildren and generations to come. In these pages, I offer a diagnosis of the madness that is dragging our culture down the slippery slope of decline and collapse—and I offer God’s prescription for restoring sanity to this madly careening world. In these pages, we will examine the life-and-death struggle for God’s truth in the arenas of the family, the classroom, the government, the media, the church, and individual human souls.

In the final chapter, I will lay out a practical, biblical strategy for becoming agents of change and redemption in this present crisis. I will show how you and I can become people of faith and moral principles, lovingly and persuasively communicating God’s message of wholeness to a broken world.

This is no time for fear. This is a time for faith. Trust God for a great harvest as you become His agent of redemption and His witness for the truth of the gospel to your friends, your neighbors, your social media followers, and your world.

God calls you and me to report for duty and make a difference in this present crisis. How will you answer His call?

Remember the Truth

In February 2020, Baylor University, a private Baptist Christian university in Texas, hosted author/poet Kaitlin Curtice as a chapel speaker. Though a chapel service is a worship service, Curtice’s talk was essentially a lecture on identity politics and gender equality. She never cited Scripture or named the name of Jesus. She opened and closed her talk with prayers to “O Mystery” instead of the Judeo-Christian God.¹

Curtice talked about her inner emotional conflict, the result of being raised by a Southern Baptist mother of European ancestry and abandoned at a young age by a father of Potawatomi Native American ancestry. She spoke movingly of the 1838 “Trail of Death” when more than eight hundred Potawatomi people were forcibly removed from Indiana to a reservation in Kansas.² She is on a journey, she said, of becoming a person who listens to Mother Earth as she speaks.

She talked about the need to be *woke* (which means being alert to social injustice) and about decolonizing, which she defined as “the work of breaking down systems of colonization. Colonization is the act of taking and erasing indigenous history, culture, and tradition.” She spoke of her journey of decolonizing herself: “I am reclaiming who I am, wrestling with all parts of my identity, my white privilege, my native feminism, my spirituality.”³

It saddens me that Curtice struggles in her identity, that she condemns the faith of the mother who raised her while embracing the “Mother Earth” worldview of the father who abandoned her. Her lecture might have been appropriate for a class on ethnic studies or political science, but hardly for a chapel devotional at a Christian university.

Curtice didn’t inspire students to a deeper relationship with God. Her only references to the Christian faith were denunciations of the church. She claimed, for example, that “as a mixed European and Potawatomi woman,” her “inner and outer voice has been silenced, especially by the church”—though she didn’t explain how the church had “silenced” her.⁴ Wasn’t she, in fact, paid by a church institution to speak at the chapel service?

But for me, Kaitlin Curtice’s most troubling statement was when she said that to be connected to our own spirituality, we have to be connected to the spirituality of others. What does she mean? How should Christians “connect” to the spirituality of non-Christians?

We find similar sentiments in the words of so-called “progressive Christians.” We hear it in the “love wins” universalism of Rob Bell and the “generous orthodoxy” of Brian McLaren. In context, it becomes clear that Curtice was urging Baylor students to open themselves up to other religions, such as Curtice’s pagan reverence for “Mother Earth.”⁵

This post-Christian, post-truth world tells us we should “connect” with other belief systems by embracing them. The Bible calls this idolatry. Yes, Jesus calls us to love *all* people, including people of other faiths. He demonstrated His love toward the Samaritan woman and the pagan Roman centurion.

But Jesus warns us against polluting the pure truth of the Christian faith with the falsehoods of other religions. Jesus declared Himself to be the way, the truth, and the life, and the *only* way to God the Father. “Connecting” with false religions by worshiping God’s creation (“Mother Earth”) is explicitly forbidden in God’s Word.

Near the end of her talk, Curtice said, “My spiritual liberation is tied up with all my spiritual relatives who face oppression....Are we not working to be liberated together?”⁶

No. **True liberation comes not from being “woke,” but from the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.** As Jesus said in John 8, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free....So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”⁷

Symbolic Truth

There is a scene in John 2 in which Jesus goes to the temple in Jerusalem, and He looks around and becomes angry. The temple is a house of worship, the house of God—but the greedy religious leaders were making a huge profit by turning the temple courtyard into a giant swap meet. No one could hear the prayers from the temple because the courtyard

was filled with vendors and money changers, all hawking their wares and haggling over prices.

So Jesus braided a whip and strode through the courtyard, scattering the coins of the money-changers and overturning their tables. He shouted at the sellers of sacrificial animals, “Get these out of here! Stop turning My Father’s house into a market!”

Several years ago, I taught from this passage in an adult Sunday school class. A successful young Christian businessman spoke up and said, “This incident has always bothered me. I think it was pointless for Jesus to clear the temple. Didn’t He know that the very next day, all those vendors and money changers would be back in business at the very same spot?”

I was about to reply, but a stay-at-home mom in the class spoke up first. “Sometimes,” she said, “it’s important to take symbolic action. Jesus knew He couldn’t be there to cleanse the temple every day. But He used that moment to send a message to the nation of Israel. With one dramatic act, Jesus showed the nation what He stood for—and He stood for morally, spiritually pure worship to God.”

She was right. We sometimes tell ourselves, “What’s the use of taking this action? Any good I accomplish is only temporary. Tomorrow, things will be back to normal, and I might as well have done nothing.” Satan would like us to become discouraged and defeated, so we will never be effective for God. But there is power in symbolic action. There is power in speaking God’s truth boldly and without compromise, even when we think it won’t do any permanent good.

God has sent us out on a mission to proclaim His truth to the world. He didn’t send us out to be successful. He called us to be faithful and obedient. Whether the world responds to our message or ignores us or throws us in prison or crucifies us, we must faithfully proclaim His uncompromised truth—then leave the results with God.

The Transforming Power of Uncompromised Truth

A few years ago, I watched a televised debate between a prominent atheist and a well-known Christian leader. As they talked, I became increasingly alarmed as the Christian leader compromised the claims of Jesus Christ, one by one. He seemed to be trying to win the approval of the atheist—and the studio audience—by watering down the gospel.

It was embarrassing. The further this Christian leader retreated from a bold assertion of God's truth, the more the audience booed and heckled him.

We call the gospel of Jesus Christ, "the good news." But today's post-Christian world does not view the gospel as good news. Our message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is not popular in today's world. Unfortunately, some Christians try to make Jesus more popular by compromising the truth. You cannot convert the world with a weak and compromised gospel.

The message of the kingdom of God won't win any popularity contests. But it is the truth, and we need the courage to defend God's truth boldly and without compromise. We must stop chasing after the approval of this fallen world. Jesus never compromised the truth to win people over. He never soft-pedaled His message. Whenever Jesus introduced the gospel, He always led with the high cost of being His follower. He always presented the gospel in strong, even confrontational terms.

"Enter through the narrow gate," He said in the Sermon on the Mount. "For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

He taught that our love for God must be all-consuming, not lukewarm or halfhearted. "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38).

He said that being a Christian demanded a radically different way of relating to other people, including our enemies: "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

Instead of offering promises of endless health and wealth and a Cadillac in the driveway, Jesus promised His followers a life of hardship and servanthood. "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'" (Matt. 16:24).

Jesus didn't "sell" the gospel as if it were merchandise. He violated every rule of good salesmanship. When a man named Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, it was Nicodemus who sounded like a salesman. He approached Jesus with flattery and

compliments, a technique straight out of Salesmanship 101: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2).

Jesus ignored this attempt at flattery and went straight to the heart of the matter, telling Nicodemus that if he wanted to see the kingdom of God, he had to be born again. He boldly and forcefully told Nicodemus the uncompromised truth.

Nicodemus was a member of the elite Pharisee sect, who considered themselves righteous because of all the rituals and rules they kept. Jesus knew He had to penetrate this smug, self-satisfied mindset. His response to Nicodemus was blunt and even shocking: “You must be born again.” In other words, following Christ is not just a matter of believing the right doctrines, attending a particular church, or becoming more religious. It involves a complete spiritual transformation. (See John 3:1–24.)

Nicodemus didn’t become a follower of Jesus that night. But Jesus had given him a lot to think about—and Nicodemus gave it a lot of thought.

In John 7, Nicodemus makes a second appearance in John’s gospel. There, the religious leaders gathered to plot against Jesus. Though Nicodemus was not yet a follower of Jesus, he had become sympathetic to Jesus. When his fellow Pharisees wanted to condemn Jesus to death without a trial, Nicodemus courageously spoke up: “Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?” (John 7:51).

The other religious leaders sneered at Nicodemus, saying: “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee” (John 7:52).

After the crucifixion of Jesus, Nicodemus made a third appearance in the Gospel of John. He went with Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy nobleman, to claim the body of Jesus. Nicodemus brought with him a hundred pounds of spices to prepare the body for burial. By this action, he openly and courageously declared himself to be a disciple of Jesus.

Now, here’s an intriguing question: when was Nicodemus born again? His spiritual rebirth didn’t occur on the night that Jesus told him, “You must be born again.”

And I don't think Nicodemus was born again when he spoke up in the meeting of the religious leaders.

We don't know the exact moment of conversion experience of Nicodemus. It may be that Nicodemus was there at the foot of the cross during those awful hours of the crucifixion. Perhaps he remembered the words Jesus spoke to him during their late-night visit: "As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (John 3:14–15). It may be that he was born again right there at the foot of the cross.

One thing is clear: the bold, uncompromised gospel that Jesus proclaimed accomplished its purpose. Nicodemus was transformed—born again. That's the power of God's truth, proclaimed without compromise or hesitation. It's the power to transform lives—and transformed lives change societies and revive dying nations.

Trust Your Feelings?

The Christian faith stands on a firm foundation of truth, sound reasoning, and solid evidence. In Acts 17, the apostle Paul and his companions arrived in Thessalonica and went first to the Jewish synagogue. The Scriptures tell us, "On three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead" (Acts 17:2–3).

Later, Paul reached the city of Athens and went to Areopagus (Mars Hill), where he addressed the learned scholars and debaters of that city. He proclaimed the gospel to them and explained that Jesus would one day judge the world. Paul concluded, "He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Because Paul preached a rational gospel, rooted in objective evidence and biblical truth, the Holy Spirit drew many of these logically minded, rational Greeks to faith in Jesus Christ.

As the apostle Peter wrote, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15). Our faith is a reasonable faith, founded on objective truth. The truth of God's Word has played a major role in shaping our civilization.

Many historians agree that the Age of Enlightenment began with the 1687 publication of *Principia Mathematica* by the devoutly Christian scientist and

mathematician Sir Isaac Newton. He believed that the universe was created by a rational God whose thoughts could be understood not only through Scripture but through the objective observation of God's created order. Newton wrote:

This most beautiful System of the Sun, Planets and Comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being....This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all: And on account of his dominion he is wont to be called *Lord God παντοκράτωρ* or *Universal Ruler*....The supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect.⁸

With such an exalted view of God's truth, Newton provided the intellectual jumpstart to the period of history we call the Enlightenment. The era of the Enlightenment extolled the virtues of rational scientific inquiry, objective truth, and human liberty and equality. The Enlightenment undermined the authority of monarchies and aristocracies across Europe. Enlightenment ideals inspired colonial Americans to revolt against the British crown and establish a democratic, constitutional government founded on a belief that "all [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."⁹

The Enlightenment era was marked by a rapid increase in scientific knowledge, technological and medical advances, increased food production—progress and knowledge that has contributed to the reduction of poverty and suffering and the elevation of human dignity. I firmly believe that it was the combination of the Protestant Reformation (beginning with the publication of Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517) and the Enlightenment (beginning with Newton's *Principia Mathematica* in 1687) that created what we now know as Western Civilization.

Ever since the Enlightenment, Western culture has been built on a foundation of reason and objective truth. That foundation began to crumble in the 1960s. During that decade, our culture underwent a radical transformation. An entire generation was profoundly impacted by a new way of looking at reality in which subjective experience was viewed as superior to objective truth. The tipping point occurred in 1967.

That year, Dr. Timothy Leary began touring college campuses with a psychedelic light-and-sound presentation, “The Death of the Mind.” He urged an entire generation to destroy their minds with LSD—to “turn on, tune in, and drop out.” It was also the year of the “Summer of Love” when waves of hippies gathered in cities across North America and Europe—a vast culture-wide experiment with drugs, sex, and acid rock with a theme (according to *Time* magazine) of “trust your feelings.”¹⁰ Also that year, the Beatles made their pilgrimage to the meet the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and the most famous rock band in the world went on to promote mysticism and Eastern religion to a generation through their music. These antirational notions spread like the COVID-19 virus: Turn off your mind. Don’t trust reason and evidence. Trust your feelings.

Today, the Baby Boomers and hippies are all on Social Security, but they have taught the “trust your feelings” mantra to their children and grandchildren. As a result, succeeding generations have become even more divorced from rational thinking and truth than ever before.

The idea that emotions are more reliable than truth, reason, and evidence is pervasive in the self-help industry. For example, a book was published a few years ago with a chapter called “Trust Your Feelings, Not Your Reasoning.” In that chapter, the author wrote, “Don’t trust your thinking. It could be warped. Pay attention to your emotions, feelings, and moods, because they are clear indicators of the quality of your thinking, your current level of consciousness....Emotions have their own logic. They are linked to an inner knowing that we can trust.”¹¹

What poisonous advice! Rational thought may be warped, but emotions are trustworthy? How wise and reliable are the emotions of a person contemplating suicide? Or the husband tempted to cheat on his wife? Or the teenager tempted to give her virginity to her boyfriend? Or the driver venting his road rage at a hundred miles an hour? Or the embittered boy planning a school shooting? Should we tell them, “Trust your feelings”?

God gave us our emotions for a reason. Feelings of joy and love give meaning to our lives. Feelings of anger and fear warn us of danger and protect us from harm. But

God never intended that our emotions should rule us. He gave us rational minds so that we could receive His truth and manage our emotions.

A few years before John R. W. Stott went to be with the Lord in 2011, I visited him at his London home. John was Rector of All Souls Church, Langham Place, London, from 1950 to 1975. I met him in 1971, and he became my mentor and friend for many years. During our conversation, we discussed the danger of allowing ourselves to be controlled by emotion instead of reason and truth. “The mind,” he said to me at one point, “should be the thermostat which sets the temperature for the emotions.”

That’s an excellent analogy. If we kept the mind in control of the temperature of our emotions, we would make wiser decisions—and we would save ourselves much grief.

A Cascade of Delusion

In recent years, sociologists have been studying phenomena in our culture that they call “information cascade” and “availability cascade.” I believe a better term would be “delusion cascade.” A delusion cascade occurs when a false and dangerous idea spreads through a large group of people, becoming a self-reinforcing collective belief.

Here’s how it works: One person announces a new idea—usually a simplistic explanation for a frightening and complex situation. Soon a few like-minded people accept the idea and begin repeating it. At first, the new concept may meet resistance and skepticism. But as it is repeated and more people start to accept it, the idea builds a momentum of its own. As the idea spreads by word of mouth, social media, or mainstream media, it creates pressure for people to conform.

When we hear an idea repeated again and again, our need for approval and acceptance begins to overwhelm our discernment and reasoning ability. Instead of asking ourselves, “Is this idea true?” we think, “I don’t want people to judge me or reject me! I need to get in step with what everyone else is saying.” So the cascade of delusion spreads from person to person and becomes a self-reinforcing lie that significant numbers of people believe.

A prime example of a delusion cascade occurred in April 2020 when someone started a rumor on social media that 5G cellphone towers caused the COVID-19 pandemic. How could cellphone towers cause the spread of disease? There were many

theories—each more absurd and irrational than the one before. Some said the virus was a cover story to explain away radiation sickness caused by the towers. Others said cell phone radiation accelerated the growth of the virus. Still others said the cellular waves implanted the virus in human cells.

It was all nonsense, of course—an absurd delusion spread by people who wanted a simple explanation for a frightening global contagion. Several people took it seriously enough to set fire to 5G cellular towers in Great Britain and China—and celebrities, including actor Woody Harrelson and British rap star M.I.A., posted their concerns about the subject on social media.¹²

I believe Satan uses delusion cascades to spread his lies and blind people to the truth. He even implants the delusional notion that objective truth doesn't matter. When people reach a place in their thinking where truth is no longer a relevant or meaningful concept, then their hearts become darkened and impenetrable to the gospel. You cannot persuade a person that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) if that person has no respect for truth.

A Post-Truth Church?

Today, information comes at us like water gushing from a fire hose. It comes at us from the internet, from twenty-four-hour cable news channels, from social media on our computers and phones. Unfortunately, not all information is truth. We all face the challenge of trying to discern the difference between truth and falsehood, between real news and fake news. Even so-called “fact-checking” websites have become propaganda tools for people with a hidden agenda.

Surrounded by so many competing voices, all claiming to be true, many have given up trying to discern truth from falsehood. They say, “You have your truth, and I have mine.” They have decided that all opinions are equally valid and that subjective feelings are just as reliable as objective truth and reason. In their confused worldview, it doesn't matter what we believe: “Don't confuse me with facts.”

The Barna Group of Ventura, California, has conducted nationwide surveys showing that worldly, anti-Christian beliefs have profoundly infected the Christian

community. Reporting on a 2017 study conducted for Summit Ministries, Barna researchers wrote:

We live in a world of competing ideas and worldviews. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, Christians are more aware of (and influenced by) disparate views than ever. But just how much have other worldviews crept into Christians' perspectives? Barna's research shows that only 17 percent of Christians who consider their faith important and attend church regularly actually have a biblical worldview.¹³

How can this be? Are we becoming a post-truth church in the twenty-first century? How is it possible that *only 17 percent* of serious Christians, regular church-attenders, look at the world through the lens of God's Word? Barna Group researchers went on to explain the definition of a biblical worldview:

[The Barna Group] defines "biblical worldview" as believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.¹⁴

What are the prevailing ideas and worldviews that are reshaping and distorting the beliefs of today's Christians?

Barna Group found that 61 percent of Christians agree with ideas from the New Spirituality movement, which includes influences of Eastern religion, New Age mysticism, and reincarnation. They found that 54 percent of Christians have a postmodern worldview, which is influenced by skepticism toward objective truth, moral relativism, and a pluralistic acceptance of non-Christian religion. The research group found that 38 percent of Christians are sympathetic to some of the teachings of Islam, and 36 percent have adopted a Marxist view (apparently unaware that the Marxist ideology has murdered and enslaved hundreds of millions of people down through history). They also found that 29 percent believe ideas rooted in secularism, which is explicitly anti-Christian and seeks to banish the Christian message from the public square.¹⁵

We look around us and lament the lostness and blindness of the world. But why is the world lost and blind? Could it be that we who call ourselves Christians have failed to exemplify Jesus Christ to the world? Could it be that we have neglected to hold firmly to the teachings of our Lord? Could it be that we have polluted the gospel purity of Christianity with deceptive ideas from false religions, Marxism, and secularism?

We must cling to the truth of the gospel—the truth that Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life. We must never be ashamed of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with friends, neighbors, and social media acquaintances. We must reject the temptation to dilute and pollute the truth of the gospel to win friendship with this dying world.

As Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot” (Matt. 5:13). The saltiness Jesus speaks of is His truth exemplified in our lives through both word and deed.

Don’t lose your saltiness, my friend. Sprinkle the salty truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever you go.

Headed for a Crash

God’s truth can be mocked, ridiculed, ignored, disbelieved, despised, or rejected, but God’s truth cannot be destroyed. His truth stands firm even if the world around us collapses into ruin. His truth stands firm even if no human heart on earth believes it. **We are free to say no to God’s truth, but we cannot bend His truth to our will.** God’s truth is immovable, unchangeable, and indestructible.

We cannot say to God, “You have your truth, and I have my truth.” If our so-called “truth” does not align perfectly with God’s truth, then we are hopelessly self-deceived—and we are in great spiritual danger. Let me suggest an analogy.

One July night in 1999, thirty-eight-year-old John F. Kennedy Jr.—the son of President Kennedy—was piloting his single-engine Piper Saratoga airplane over the Atlantic, from New Jersey to Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. His passengers were his wife, Carolyn, and sister-in-law, Lauren Bessette. They were planning to attend the wedding of Rory Elizabeth Kennedy, their cousin.

JFK Jr. had flown this route many times—yet he was only halfway through his instrument training course and had rarely flown at night. This was a moonless night, and a thick haze hid the shore lights. Kennedy could not see the horizon.

The mind and senses can be fooled by the motion of the plane, especially in the dark of night. An airplane’s instruments, when properly calibrated, tell us the objective truth. They show whether an aircraft is climbing, descending, or flying level. A pilot who trusts the objective truth of his instruments can’t go wrong. But a pilot who trusts his feelings is likely to slip into what pilots call “the graveyard spiral.”

A mere twenty miles from his destination, John F. Kennedy Jr. began to doubt his instruments—and he started to trust his feelings. Airport radar showed that his plane was on course for the airstrip—but for some inexplicable reason, he made two turns that took him away from the landing site. Those turns tipped the plane into a graveyard spiral—and the aircraft crashed into the sea, killing everyone aboard.

Investigators concluded that Kennedy experienced “spatial disorientation” and lost his sense of equilibrium and direction. Had he trusted his instruments, he would have arrived safely on the ground.¹⁶ But Kennedy trusted his feelings, not the objective truth of his instruments—and his feelings betrayed him.

Today, our nation and our entire culture are flying through the darkness, ignoring the authoritative truth of God’s Word—and we, too, are headed for a crash.