

# **Jesus Represents All Humanity: Interviews With Christian Kettler**

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## Introduction

This is a transcript of four interviews conducted as part of the *You're Included* series, sponsored by Grace Communion International. We have more than 100 interviews available. You may watch them or download video or audio at [www.gci.org/YI](http://www.gci.org/YI).

Please understand that when people speak, thoughts are not always put into well-formed sentences, and sometimes thoughts are not completed. In the following transcripts, we have removed occasional words that did not seem to contribute any meaning to the sentence. In some cases we could not figure out what word was intended. We apologize for any transcription errors, and if you notice any, we welcome your assistance.

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Our guest in these interviews is Christian Kettler, Professor of Religion and director of the Master of Arts and Christian Ministry program at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas. Dr. Kettler received his Ph.D. from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1986. Dr. Kettler is author of

*The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*

*The God Who Rejoices: Joy, Despair, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*

*The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation*

And editor of

*Reading Ray S. Anderson: Theology as Ministry—Ministry as Theology*

*Incarnational Ministry: The Presence of Christ in Church, Society, and Family: Essays in Honor of Ray S. Anderson*

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## The Importance of Jesus' Humanity



**JMF:** Most people are turned off by the word *theology*, and people in some churches don't even want their pastors to take a theology course – they're afraid it will corrupt them and turn them away from the Bible, and yet on this program we're talking about a specific kind of theology – *Trinitarian theology*. What difference does it make, and how does that apply to the average believer, and why should we care?

**CK:** “Theology” is what we believe about God, we're saying that what we believe about God makes a difference. What would be more important? The word sounds technical, but literally it means a study of God – we spend a great deal of time studying other things for our professions, whatever they may be – a great deal of time and money. Why not give a little bit of energy (actually we should give it as much energy as we can) to the study of God? That's what theology, at its best, is about. And Trinitarian theology says that who this God is – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is important – that your kind of theology should say something about who God has revealed himself to be.

**JMF:** Don't all theologies talk about who God is and who God has revealed himself to be? How does Trinitarian theology differ?

**CK:** The church has almost always confessed God as Trinity. But our problem is we haven't asked ourselves, what are the implications of that? We just assume, “Someone believes in the Trinity – they are orthodox Christians.” That's the end of discussion. And the Trinity often becomes just a discussion of “How can one be three?” or “How do you deal with a logical conundrum?” – rather than looking at the Bible, what the Bible says, for example in the Gospel of John, about a relationship in God himself, between the Father and the Son through the Spirit. At its depth and height, the Trinity says that God is love, and reveals what love in God means.

Love could mean a lot of things – very sentimental and superficial. What Christians say about “God is love” often ends up being that. The Trinity says, “No. Love begins with God’s very being in his relationship from all eternity – from the Father and Son, through the Spirit. You see that portrayed in the Gospel of John, in the life of Jesus, his relationship with the Father, his dependence upon the Father and his promise of the Holy Spirit. It’s a question of the implications of who God has revealed himself to be.

**JMF:** We bog down in trying to talk about the Trinity – because we want to get the doctrine across to Christians – in counting, it’s a numbers game. How is three one, like you said, and how is one three? That doesn’t make sense, and we go down that path. You’re saying that’s not the path. The path is a biblical path of the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and God’s relationship with us.

**CK:** It gets at the heart of what we mean when we say, “God is love.” Every Christian would say, “Yes, that’s important.” But what do we mean about love? That’s when we look at a relationship of love, not just an idea of love. That’s what the Trinity is all about in the Bible, in this relationship between the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit – this mutual relationship.

The Trinity means that God is love, and every Christian believes that. But love is not simply an abstract idea or a sentimental feeling – it’s this relationship between the Father and the Son, through the Spirit. There’s a richness in God. God is not simply an abstract being up there in heaven – and not just a sovereign, not just a good buddy. God is in a relationship of love himself, between the Father and Son through the Spirit. There are tremendous implications of that for that church, that we need to draw out the implications.

**JMF:** What you said is so telling, because even though Christians are Trinitarians (they believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, they accept it), when they think of God, they don’t think of the Trinity. They don’t think of Father, Son, the Holy Spirit – they think of one solitary human-like figure up in the sky with a beard or powerful or whatever, some superman-kind of figure. Even when we say “God is love,” they picture a single solitary individual who loves us. But they’re not thinking about a love relationship between Father, Son and Spirit...



**CK:** Exactly, and that colors how we view love. We often think of love as what *I* get out of it. I want to be loved, and all of us want to be loved. But we often don't see that love, first of all, is giving. Giving is in God's very being from all eternity – the Father and the Son are involved in a relationship of giving to one another, through the Spirit. Love isn't something God just decided to do one day because we messed it up, now what – got to love these people. Love is something that is in God's eternal being. It's not something accidental to God, but essential. That's exciting. It puts a different dynamic and richness into our understanding of love – what can be more practical?

**JMF:** We often use terms when we talk about Trinitarian theology – we describe it with terms like “Christ-centered Trinitarian theology.” How does that work with ...

**CK:** That's essential, because the only way we know of the Trinity is through Jesus Christ. It's because of his revelation, his incarnation. It's the incarnation of the Son that reveals God to be Father. This is how we know God to be Father, not from our ideas of father. But we get into big trouble if we try to force our ideas of fatherhood upon God. They may be very good experiences, they may be very bad experiences. Either way, that's a bad theological method. Rather, we need to allow *God* to define what he means when he speaks of himself as Father. And we know that through the Son. It's through the Son's relationship with the Father.

The incarnation and God in Jesus Christ is absolutely essential for us to know God the Father and know the Spirit, because the Father sends the Spirit through the Son. The Son promises the Spirit to be with us, to be our helper, to be the power of presence of Jesus Christ after his ascension. So it's through the Son that we know of the Spirit as well. We can get to all sorts of problems when we develop experiences of the Holy Spirit, or theology of the Holy Spirit, divorced from Christ. And some groups do.

**JMF:** We use the term *Christ-centered* Trinitarian theology, and we also call it an

*incarnational theology*. You mentioned the term *incarnation*, Christ became one of us, draws us into the relationship he shares with the Father. In that way Trinitarian theology has a focus very different from most theologies.

**CK:** Yes. It's not saying that this is a new theology with new revelation. This is something that all Christians confess. The problem is that often the church hasn't seen the implications of God as Trinity, the implications of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. That's what a lot of us are seeing today. It's very exciting. It's not a new gospel. It's not a new idea. But it's building upon what the church has always confessed but failed to act upon, failed to think through, and to be a generally Trinitarian incarnational church and have a Trinitarian incarnational ministry.

**JMF:** That's why we're here, to talk about more of those implications. One of them has to do with the title of your book, *The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*. "*The God Who Believes*" is an interesting title. Can you tell us about that?

**CK:** We often think of faith and belief in terms of something that *we* do. Often it that "grace" is what God did. He did 50% of it, now it's up to us to have the faith part, the belief part. The Bible says something very different. It says that God isn't just on one side, he is on both sides. He is on the first action of grace and revelation. But in Jesus Christ, he has also become the one who responds, the one who believes.

The New Testament speaks of Jesus having faith. When I read the four Gospels, the entirety of the Gospel narrative is a story of Jesus' trust in the Father. Shouldn't it affect how we view faith? I think the New Testament also elaborates on that, particularly in the letter to Hebrews ... that the basis of our faith is in the fact that first of all, Jesus believes in our place and on our behalf. Faith isn't simply something "we have to work up enough faith." Often we don't have enough faith.

**JMF:** Usually we think in terms of trying to emulate or imitate the faith of Christ. We hear in sermons, the pastor would say, "Look at this faith Christ had. That's the kind of faith we need to have." Instead of looking at Christ as who he is for us.

**CK:** Yes, we should imitate Christ, but what comes before that is our participation in Christ, our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit, and therefore our union with his faith ...

**JMF:** And that union isn't something we work up.

**CK:** Exactly. It's something given to us by grace. That's the implications of the faith that Jesus has already had in the Father, that we through the Spirit then participate, and therefore faith

isn't something that is simply a burden and for people who are plagued with doubts. That's a part of my audience for the book. Often the response we give to them is, "You just need to have more faith." That's the problem I have in the first place. I don't have enough faith. As James Torrance used to put it, "We throw people back upon themselves."

We need to re-think that because of who Jesus Christ is. Yes, he is God, he is fully God. Make no mistake about that. But he is also fully human. That includes faith, and his faith becomes the foundation, the ground for our faith. It doesn't mean that we don't have to believe. No, quite the contrary: it's the fact that because Jesus has believed, there's the imperative for us to join with him through the Spirit, in his faith. That can be a tremendous relief (it has been for me), to think of that when I struggle with doubts, the death of my faith, and questions I have, and if these questions aren't resolved, am I no longer a Christian? Often Christians will play with that terribly.

When I counsel people, I say, "Look to Jesus, look to his faith. You may not feel very faithful right now. It may be difficult, if not impossible for you to believe. But look to his faith, to uphold you, to support you in your times of doubt." It brings a tremendous amount of release and relief to people.

**JMF:** So it's fair to say that Jesus is believing for us, and therefore we're trusting him to be full of faith in our place...

**CK:** Exactly. When it comes down to it after my death, it depends upon what Jesus believes about God. That's a solid rock on which I stand. Not what I believe about God. Because my beliefs can come and go. [**JMF:** Right.] But to place your faith in Jesus' faith, is the foundation that the New Testament really calls us to. But often the church has emphasized, no, faith is your part. God has done this part, 50%, and now the other 50%...

**JMF:** That's how it's usually said. [**CK:** And that's tragic.] Then, we know our faith waivers or is weak, and so we're thrown back into doubt and frustration.

**CK:** Exactly. That's a tremendous tragedy when we just throw people back upon themselves.

**JMF:** So their trust should be in Christ himself, not in our faith.

**CK:** Right. Yes, faith is in Christ. In the Reformation, Luther made a great deal about that. But Christ is both God and human. Yes, he is God, but he is also human, and therefore he has faith. As the centurion at the cross said, he trusts in God, let God deliver him. He was saying

that, “Yes, this one trusts in God.” And he trusts in God even in the moment of the cross.

**JMF:** You wrote this book in what year? [**CK:** 2005.] What led up to wanting to give your attention to this project?

**CK:** It goes back to my studies at Fuller Seminary, where I met Thomas Torrance, the famous Scottish theologian, and I was able to be his teaching assistant. That was a life-transforming experience, and I became more and more familiar with Torrance’s theology. One aspect of that is what he calls the vicarious humanity of Christ – it’s not just Christ’s death that’s vicarious – the atonement for us, but it’s the entirety of his humanity that is atoning. This captured me so much and became so transforming for me personally, I wanted to explore this more, and so I did my PhD dissertation on the vicarious humanity of Christ and its implications for contemporary views of salvation. There’s so much more on this that needs to be unpacked, that I decided to devote my scholarly pursuits to drawing out those implications.

**JMF:** As you got into the vicarious humanity of Christ, what struck you or moved you along and kept you excited?

**CK:** It was a personal and pastoral thing, and wrestling with my own faith. I came from a point as a young Christian of wanting to reconcile faith and reason. Apologetics – the studies of the defense of the faith – became important to me. But the more I studied, then the more anxious I got, the more insecure I felt. What if I didn’t consider this objection of faith... or maybe I missed that objection. It became a great trial of insecurity for me.

Karl Barth’s theology was very helpful at this point. He was the mentor to Thomas Torrance. That question, how Christian apologetics went about trying to find external evidences for God... [Barth said] “if we know God, it’s only through God’s grace,” and that became very liberating. The vicarious humanity of Christ doctrine built on that, because it said, “Yes, my trust is in Christ.” But then, who is Jesus Christ? What do you do with his humanity? His humanity is, as you said, not just something to imitate, because if we just said, “Be like Jesus,” we look in the mirror and realize we’re not like Jesus, and we just become frustrated.

But the vicarious humanity means that he represents us, and he takes our place, in every aspect of our lives. My former professor Geoffrey Bromiley used to say that the problem with evangelicals is they say they believe in a substitutionary atonement – that Christ died for our sins, but we don’t really believe in it enough. We’re not radical enough about the substitutionary atonement. It’s not just that Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He did. But often evangelicals



stop at that point, and the atonement therefore has little relevance for their lives. No, the substitutionary atonement means that Christ's humanity took the place of every aspect of our humanity.

In a way, that's threatening to us. It's why some people fight against it. Because we want that one little aspect of our life – a religious niche that we control, that we still are sovereign over. But the claim of the gospel is that God claims our entire life, and that's what the vicarious humanity of Christ is about. The atonement reaches into every aspect, every nook and cranny of our humanity, because Christ took on the entirety of our humanity. Even though that appears to be threatening at first, ultimately it's just liberating – it's the essence of the gospel, being in Christ. It's why Paul so much talks about being "in Christ," a man in Christ – because it is only in this union with Christ that we really have hope, for now and in the life to come.

**JMF:** If that's true for us, or that's true for me, then one of the reasons I might have trouble wanting to accept that will be that it would be true for the guy across the street that I don't like, who does a lot of things that I don't like or agree with. It's true for him, too.

**CK:** Right. There are implications that are beyond my own piety but extends to how I treat others, to ethics and so forth, that the humanity of Christ means that the Word became the flesh of all people. The Word became flesh, John says in his first chapter. It doesn't say that the Word became Christian flesh of those who believed. No. The Word became the flesh of all people.

In that context of John, it's the context in which he came into the world – the true light came into the world, but the world knew him not, the world rejected him. The important thing is that the Word became the flesh of all people, and therefore we have to view other people in a different way now. That person is loved by God. That cantankerous neighbor Harry that we can't stand – our approach to him has to be as one who is already loved by God. Not as one who just has the potential to be loved by God – that's how we often are in evangelism. We view people as just potential converts. That's a wrong kind of evangelism. The gospel evangelism says that they are already loved in Christ. That's a theological issue, and that's why theology is important, to get at the nature of the gospel, who God is, who Christ is – that affects how we then minister as a church in the world.

**JMF:** Typically, we'll take the worst example that springs to mind and we say, "God can't possibly love, let's say, Adolph Hitler – you're saying that God loves everyone unconditionally and he's done this in Christ for everyone. But what about Adolph Hitler, surely God doesn't love

Adolph Hitler.”

**CK:** Right. It’s one thing to say that “God loves everyone.” It’s another thing to say what they *do* with that love... because we’re not talking about universalism, that everyone is going to be saved. We’re saying that God’s love, nonetheless, is unconditional to all. Jesus loved his enemies, and the moral implication of the gospel is for us to love our enemies. That is something that we can do only through the Holy Spirit. That is impossible, but that’s what we are called to do, because God is doing that and has done that. But that doesn’t necessarily mean that people are ultimately saved because of it.

**JMF:** There’s a response to love – love does go two ways, and if it doesn’t, if it’s forced – if God were to make people (which doesn’t even make sense) love him, in response to his love – then it would not even be love, would it?

**CK:** A coercive God is not a loving God. In any loving relationship, if there is coercion, it is not a loving relationship. What’s ironic is that those who say that some are predestined to be saved – that’s a coercive relationship, that God’s going to choose A, B, and C and not choose X, Y, and Z. That’s just as coercive as saying that God is going to make the entire world love him – what is called *universalism*.

The predestination doctrine and universalism (that’s something that T. F. Torrance points out) are similar, in that they both have a kind of determinism, a coercion to them – which is the opposite of the biblical portrayal of the love God has for Israel, for example. God unconditionally pledges himself to Israel, not because they’re better or superior to other people in the world – but simply because God chooses to love them. They unfortunately rebel and reject that, but God continues to love them, continues to pursue them. That’s the story of the Old Testament, in a nutshell.

**JMF:** It’s a story that many parents experience [**CK:** Oh, yes.] We love our children and yet for whatever reason they become anti-parents, and rebellious, and they go away in a direction of life that is destructive and harmful. They cut themselves off – the parent continues to love and would welcome them home, and yet they have no intention of coming home (at least, not in any kind of a loving way). That doesn’t change the fact that they belong to the parent, that they are the parent’s child, and the parent never ceases to love them.

**CK:** For some reason people have this idea that there is a sin I can do, or do enough sins – then God will have nothing more to do with me. That’s a pernicious theology. We need to call

that theology on the carpet and say, “no, that’s wrong.” That’s not the unconditional grace of God that we see portrayed in the Bible, and most of all in Jesus Christ.

**JMF:** That’s often done with the passage about the so-called unpardonable sin, that all manner of sin will be forgiven except blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Maybe you can comment on that just as we conclude...

**CK:** I don’t think anybody really knows what the unpardonable sin is. I don’t think it’s our purpose to know what that is. Our purpose is to bear witness to Jesus Christ who spoke that. Remember, that saying is not said by just anyone. It’s said by Jesus Christ. That means we go to him for refuge. We realize that, yes, it’s only in him, faith in him that I have any hope. Then, whether I blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is obviously a ...

**JMF:** Isn’t the only way we can come to understand, trust, and know Christ, is with the Holy Spirit? Rejecting the Spirit’s witness to Christ is rejecting the only salvation there is. It isn’t the question of somebody saying certain words, and God says, that’s it.

**CK:** That’s a pernicious myth we have, that God’s love is conditioned by what we do, what we say, that we really are in control. Ironically, we think that that is freedom. That’s not freedom – that’s slavery. The true freedom is to be in obedience to the Father, and that’s what we see in Jesus Christ – the only one who can do that, however, is Jesus Christ – only in Christ do we see freedom and obedience come together.

In our experience, we seek to be free, and that’s big for Americans, it’s big for the post-Enlightenment person. Freedom is our mentor. But we also know there are times to be obedient, and certainly we’ve seen times in the 20th century when entire nations have become obedient to demonic forces. We have trouble putting together freedom and obedience.

The only person who’s ever put those two together is Jesus Christ. When we read the Gospels, the story of Christ is a human being who perfectly puts together his freedom (Jesus was the most free person of all), but he also was the most obedient to the Father. He puts those together, and in our union with him, that becomes the basis for our new humanity, in participating by faith in his humanity.

**JMF:** We have rest.

**CK:** Exactly. That’s exciting – it means we don’t have to be burdened by “Am I doing enough for God?” or “If I do enough for God, if I’m obedient enough, maybe I’ll lose this freedom.” That’s what we often think, and so we are afraid of actually becoming more

committed to Christ – I might lose this freedom. No, Jesus Christ puts that freedom and obedience together.

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## The Actuality of Salvation

**JMF:** In your book, *The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation*, what is the connection between the reality of salvation and the vicarious humanity of Christ?

**CK:** It's part of a personal odyssey, I guess, in the sense that I always try to think in terms of "where is the reality of Christ in the world today?" Our world does not seem to be very Christ-like; it's filled with so much innocent suffering, needless war, strife. So how can Christians meaningfully talk about salvation?

The more I thought about it, and truthfully, looking at it biblically, it seems to me that obviously it's in Christ. There is no salvation apart from Christ. He's not just the means of salvation – he's the *substance* of salvation. Looking to him is where salvation is, not looking at the church necessarily, not looking at political or religious forces in the world, but looking at him.

**JMF:** When you say he is the substance of salvation, he is the salvation itself.

**CK:** Exactly.

**JMF:** How does that play out?

**CK:** This is where the vicarious humanity of Christ becomes important, in that his response to the Father is the saving and atoning reality of salvation. Around us is so much chaos (and so much that is less than salvation) that we only find a source of salvation when we look at him, and particularly in his humanity, in which he provides the perfect and obedient response to the Father that we have been unable to present – not just in paying the penalty for our sins, although he does that, but in the entirety of his life and the entirety of his faith and obedience to the Father. That is done for us, on our behalf, and it takes our place, because we're not able to be that obedient. We're not able to be that faithful. In him, we see the reality of salvation. Not in our own religiosity, our own spirituality, our own spiritual formation. Not in the world's religions, certainly not in political forces, but simply in him.

**JMF:** Most Christians think that salvation has to do with measuring up to a certain level of morality or righteousness or holiness. It's a goal to achieve by measuring up to a certain level of obedience. But you're saying that's not what it is at all.

**CK:** That ends up bypassing Jesus Christ. Often we say yes, we confess Jesus is Lord, he's God, and he is! But we forget that he is truly human, and in his humanity he was perfectly

faithful and obedient to the Father. In that movement of faithfulness, that was an atoning movement for us in our place. He lives the life, in other words, that we have been unable to live.

So salvation shouldn't be seen as just a goal for me to be religious and good. Quite the contrary. It's a goal that Jesus Christ has already done for us, that he invites us to enter in by his grace through the power of the Spirit and to participate in his faith and obedience. That's where the reality of salvation is. Not in me and my religiosity and my spirituality. That's where we often go astray.

**JMF:** In the New Testament and with Paul, you find the term "in Christ," being "in Christ," dozens of times. What is he driving at?

**CK:** For Paul, what other theologians have called "union with Christ" was at the center of his theology. Some people suggest it's not justification by faith that is the center of Paul's theology, but union with Christ.

James Stewart was a Scottish scholar of a previous generation who wrote a wonderful book about Paul simply entitled *A Man in Christ*. A man in Christ. That means it's a location. It's a place. Paul saw himself not in Rome, not in Jerusalem, not in the needless suffering and in the sin and evil of the Roman Empire, but located in Christ. So then he could go out into that Empire and bear witness to Christ. Through that reality, salvation came to people in the midst of a world that often appears to be so lost.

**JMF:** When we say Christ became human for us, we don't mean he just did something that then we take to ourselves if we choose to...

**CK:** Right...

**JMF:** What he did transformed us. The passage in John, "If I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself." That's reality.

**CK:** Right. There's a union with Christ that has already happened. That is part of the gift of grace. That's what grace is about. Grace isn't just an infusion of some spiritual power. It's the reality of the person of Jesus Christ himself taking our place – taking our place in all our attempts to be good, religious, and moral people. We can't be religious enough, we can't be moral enough, and we do not have the answers. It's only abiding in Christ, and that's why Christ talks about "abide in me," "remain in me." That's all part of being "located in Christ" motif all throughout the New Testament.

**JMF:** So union with Christ is a reality. Like you say in the title of the book, *The Vicarious*

*Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation*, we're not talking about what we often get (at least I did) growing up at church. You get a sense of, "You need to get in step with Christ so you can be on the road to salvation." You're talking about a union with Christ that Paul and John are writing about that is already true.

**CK:** Already true. Already a reality.

**JMF:** We're participating with what *is*, not trying to bring about something.

**CK:** Yeah. We think in terms of potential, not actuality. The gospel is about actuality, not just about a potential, a possibility. But we always think in terms of possibility and potential, and the potential to be a good Christian, a potential for salvation. But the actuality is already there in Christ. We need to *respond* to the reality, through the actuality, and not try to bring it in ourselves.

**JMF:** Isn't that why the gospel is good news, as opposed to hopeful, possibly, if-you-do-well-enough news?

**CK:** Right. That just becomes a curse on people. It's a burden that's unbearable.

**JMF:** You're director of the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry program at Friends University in Wichita. What are some of the newer challenges your students are facing in their work in Christian ministry?

**CK:** There are many challenges in a postmodern context, in which much change is taking place in the church and in the world. In terms of spiritual formation, for example, the church is awakened to the need to be intentional about the Christian life without being legalistic. Our students want to become those who can equip others in spiritual formation.

One of the most popular tracks in our program is the track in spiritual formation, in which we have courses in spiritual direction and biblical and historical and theological foundations of spirituality, the relationship of spirituality in ministry, and to be able to equip people for that in the everyday work-a-day world and not just equip them to become monks, as was the case for centuries. (If you're really going to be a spiritual person in those days, you become a monk or a nun or something like that.) Today's movement in spiritual formation realizes that that's the privilege of all Christians.

But it's a new kind of language, and it's easy to go into a new kind of legalism. The old legalism was "don't smoke or chew or go with girls who do" or go to movies or something like that. The new legalism could become "make sure you do all the spiritual disciplines, prayer,

Bible-reading, fasting.” But the best teachers of spiritual disciplines are those who say they are not to be a burden of legalism but an opportunity to increase your experience of this union with Christ, to develop this love relationship with God. As Ray Anderson says, spiritual disciplines shouldn’t be seen as just body-building, but as preparing for ministry and for Christian life. It’s not to be seen as an end in itself, as often has been the case. But that’s a challenge.

There are challenges along the lines of just being a Christian in the world and equipping people to do that. In our program we’re fortunate to have a format that has a great number of lay-people in it. We meet one night a week, and it’s a two-year program. They take one course at a time, so they can integrate the theology and biblical studies, and whatever else they’re learning in the classroom, with what they’re doing in the world, in their job, in their family, and in the church throughout the rest of the week. There’s a great hunger for that, but not many good models out there in how to do that.

Often, traditional seminary and theological education is just to train someone to be a pastor, and that’s it. That has changed. In our multi-tasking culture, we realize the terror and the burden of being a multi-tasking pastor, a pastor who’s expected to have *all* the gifts of the body of Christ. Fortunately, the church has awakened to the importance of different spiritual gifts and seen increasing that should be true for leadership. There will be some who have gifts for counseling, but maybe not gifts for preaching.

There needs to be a new model of staff of ministry. In a way, our little program has responded to that in providing different tracks – spiritual formation, biblical studies, family ministry, contemporary worship in the arts – that meet particular gifts, realizing that no Christian leader is able to have all the gifts that we used to expect a typical pastor to have. Hopefully that will free pastors to use the gifts that God has given them and not try to be the entire body of Christ themselves.

**JMF:** Just as an aside, Friends University is not a Friends denominational university.

**CK:** Right. It’s not controlled by the Quakers. It was started by the Friends in 1890, but it hasn’t been officially Quaker since the ’30s. It’s an interdenominational Christian university. I’m Presbyterian; we have Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, you name it, it’s on our faculty and certainly among our students, who represent every denomination, race, gender, clergy, lay. We have quite a diversity within a common Christian commitment.

**JMF:** Getting back to what you were saying before, about one of the courses and living out



your Christianity in everyday life, let's talk about that. You work in an office, you go to your office every day. What are some of the ways that you live out your Christianity in the office?

**CK:** It's got to begin with my colleagues and my students. For all of us, we can talk about how much we should love the world, but it's first of all that "love your neighbor" means literally "your neighbor," the person you're in proximity with. Karl Barth has a wonderful section in his *Church Dogmatics* on neighbors near and far in his ethics. He takes very seriously that love needs proximity. He uses those words: "love needs proximity."

Therefore, my first responsibility is to that faculty colleague, that maybe we don't get along on every issue. Maybe we're violently opposed to each other on some big faculty issue which is not big to anyone except us. He's the person I'm called to love. Or that student – the student who seems to be cantankerous over every great idea I have and who is difficult to relate to.

We transfer this to all of us, whether it be in the workplace or the family, the importance of love needing proximity. The church needs to see ourselves increasingly to equip people for that. There's no use in making broad generalizations about the world and social concern and evangelism if we can't equip people to love those we're near to. Then we can begin to take this one step beyond. That is a practical Christianity that we need to cultivate and develop. It's what we see in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus.

**JMF:** St. Francis said, "Always preach the gospel. If necessary, use words." A lot of times, Christians make themselves odious on the job or on the softball team or whatever by constantly wanting to evangelize everybody without living out.... Don't we sometimes have a line we draw? Up here is spiritual life, and down here is day-to-day mundane life. We think if we're going to be Christian anywhere, we have to do "spiritual" things like ask people if they love Jesus and bring out a pamphlet or tract or something and try to go over it with them during the lunch hour, forgetting that Christ is all of life. Everything. Loving a person isn't confronting them over things they're not prepared for, but loving them like friends love friends, and being a regular human being like Christ was everywhere he went.

**CK:** That was the first moment of the incarnation, of solidarity with sinners and publicans – Jesus sitting at table with sinners and publicans. It's that first moment of presence rather than simply bowling them over with words. The words came later, but the first movement of the gospel is solidarity. The second movement is being conformed to the image of his Son. That is what I call the double movement of the incarnation, of a "God to human beings" movement, and

“from human beings to God.”

It's very theological and it's very much the incarnation, but it's related to the presence of Christians in the world, who first have that movement of solidarity, friendship, relationship, and to be able to earn the right to speak the word, or else the words become just chattering. They become what Thomas Torrance calls the devastating effect of dualistic thinking in our society: of separating the words, the actual speech, from **the Word**, Jesus Christ. We think when we just have the language going on, it's okay. No. Christ may not be with that language unless we bring them together at the right time, led by the Spirit.

**JMF:** *Being* always contains the gospel, whereas words don't always, even though they may mouth the right tone.

**CK:** Exactly. They could just be chattering speech rather than the reflection of God's presence. That's always the temptation of religion, and unfortunately Christianity can get into that as well, and be dehumanizing. It's the opposite of the incarnation, which is the ultimate humanizing action, in which God takes upon himself our humanity, humanizing us. But often we treat people in a dehumanizing religious way, and we forget that Jesus came, and his greatest critics were the religious people of his time.

Religion has insidious temptation for Christians that we have to constantly check ourselves against, because the world will give us that religious niche. The religious people will be over here in the corner, and we can do our own little thing and have our own little barriers and contexts in which we can accept people. But it's when we say that the Word became flesh, that embraces culture, that does not simply destroy culture, that can be threatening to the world, but they're also threatened by genuine love, presence and acceptance. That's when the gospel becomes the most revolutionary to people. All of us who experience Christ have experienced something like that. It's sad that often the church presents another face.

**JMF:** The gospel is bound up in friendship, isn't it? When you see a true friendship, there is Christ at work, even though the words may not be used. After all, there is no good thing that doesn't come from God. People can respond to you as a Christian once you're already their friend. A lot of Christians are afraid to make friends. They'll be friends with people at church, but they're afraid to have real friendships for the sake of the friendship.

**CK:** That's the dualism between the religious and the secular world, which is tragic, in that the Incarnation says something very different. Jesus sat at table with sinners and publicans. He

risks that he would not be considered to be the perfect religious person. He took the risk of love. Christians need to take that risk in associating with people, making friends, as you say, in the world, not being afraid to do that. Part of being a Christian is to take those risks.

We can do so as Jesus did because he constantly was in dependence on the Father. If we're not in dependence on the Father, we can become changed by the world. We shouldn't make any bones about it: the world will change us if we allow it. But in dependence on the Father, Jesus was able to sit at table with sinners and publicans. That's when the gospel became life-changing, because there was an integration: a word and presence in the very person of Jesus. The church, later on, was the most successful when it bore witness to that reality and didn't live that dualistic existence that religion so often tempts people to get into.

**JMF:** It seems like that dualistic approach can turn people into a project. You say, "My neighbor or this fellow at work...I want to present the gospel to him, therefore I'll (in essence) pretend to be his friend... Of course I'll try to be friends with him, but I'm not doing it because he's worth befriending or because I want to make a friend of him, it's because I want to do my gospel sales job at the end."

**CK:** That's tragic. It's phony, and people catch that. That's what's ironic about it. Most people say, "It's obvious you're not interested in me. I'm just a potential convert for you. I'm a non-Christian." What terrible language! We need to stop talking about non-Christians. No. These are men and women, boys and girls who are made in the image of God, who are loved already by Jesus Christ.

**JMF:** And if everybody is being drawn to Christ because, as he said, "If I'm lifted up, I will draw all men to myself," we're all on that journey. Some have come to the place on the journey where they have come to know Christ in a personal way, but everybody else is also on the journey, whether they've come to that point or not.

**CK:** One of my best friends is a Jewish agnostic poet of some renown. That relationship has been an interesting gift from God, as it's reminded me of our shared humanity in Jesus Christ, even though he is not aware of it yet. That's the only difference. Through that friendship, that's the best witness I can give to him. Do we have disagreements about major issues of values? You better believe it. Is it difficult at times for me? Yes. But the Lord constantly reminds me, "This is the kind of genuine evangelism that's based on accepting people for who they are, seeking to be their friend, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest." We forget about the place of the Holy Spirit in

evangelism. Jesus said very plainly that “the Spirit will testify of me.” The Spirit works with our hearts.

Evangelism isn't our project. Friendship is important. Jesus said, “I no longer call you servants, but friends.” The Quakers have it right there. We need to take that seriously. Friendship is not just among the religious people or the church or the congregation or denomination, but among the entirety of humanity. The Word became flesh to all human beings – all men and women, boys and girls.

**JMF:** Friendships, all relationships, are not static. They are up and down and messy. All we have to do is look at Jacob, and his walk with God was very messy, sometimes close, sometimes selfish, sometimes greedy. God is always faithful on his side, we're not always faithful on our side, and yet he keeps us as his friends anyway. Abraham's father of the faithful, and yet some major examples of lack of faith in Scripture are attributed to Abraham. David. You name it. All the walks are messy. A little honesty shows us that our own walk with God is a messy one.

**CK:** That is a powerful witness in itself, if I'm honest about who I am and I'm not trying to cover up my failures and weaknesses and trying to be too much of a goody-goody Christian (that just communicates phoniness). When I communicate my own weakness, my own doubts (as I talk about in the book), that makes the gospel more real to people who haven't accepted Christ yet.

That's what theology needs to do in addressing things like doubt, despair, loneliness, anxiety, those universal human issues of existential crisis, and realize the gospel, the Word becoming flesh, goes deeply into those issues whether you're a Christian or not a Christian. It speaks deeply at the problems that all of us share.

**JMF:** Issues of real life as opposed to some plastic, fake, pretend idealism that we like to put forward while we're at church.

**CK:** Yeah. The religious issue of when the tribulation will take place is obviously silly compared to questions of despair and anxiety and loneliness. Just think of a world that is so lonely and that we don't see the implications of the gospel for that loneliness, and we're talking about when the millennium might come. That's just silly, but it's been a fault of the church and the theologians. The theologians need to address the existential issues.

But the church also needs to think about these existential issues theologically, according to the gospel, and not just according to pop psychology. That's what I'm trying to do in these books

I'm working on, *The God Who Believes*, and the next one, *The God Who Rejoices*, on joy and despair, on how can we have joy in the midst of despair. What is joy? How does the gospel speak to despair in life? That's where the gospel makes a difference.

**JMF:** That's the whole point of Trinitarian theology – a theology that focuses on who God is in a relationship of love. God is love, Father, Son, and Spirit loving one another...bringing humanity and Christ into that love relationship. That is where real life is touched, as opposed to just some kind of list of religious things to do or not do, or things to believe and not believe. It's real living in Christ, as Paul said.

**CK:** Yeah. The Trinity is, as one book puts it, is concerned of "persons in communion." It's a book by Alan Torrance. *Persons in Communion* – that's a beautiful title. That's what the Trinity is about. God is in relationship himself, and therefore he's concerned about those relational issues in our lives, in our families - with spouses, with sons and daughters, in society, issues between races, issues of reconciliation.

The gospel is relational, but it's not a pop psychology just to feel nice and warm and fuzzy about each other, but really gain the bedrock of who we are. The gospel addresses this at the deepest level and the widest expanse of our humanity.

The next book I'll be working on is *The God Who Answers*, on the implications of the vicarious humanity of Christ for creation and our understanding of humanity. Who do we understand human beings to be? Do we understand them according to our self-understanding? That's pretty limited. Or, does Jesus Christ in his humanity tell us something about what it means to be human – especially at those issues of great concern and existential crisis like doubt and despair and loneliness?

**JMF:** Life seems to be made of small spaces in between doubt and despair and loneliness.

**CK:** Exactly. We often avoid them. They're too difficult to deal with. That's often another problem that theology has, that even in the church, people assume these are issues that are too difficult to deal with. Nobody has the answers, so I'm just not going to think about them. It could be God, it could be who Jesus Christ is, it could be my own loneliness, my own despair, my own anxiety, my own dealing with my death. So I'm just not going to think about that. We simply turn on the TV or the video game or the cell phone. You name it. We have technological gadgets to keep our minds off our own dilemma and also off God.

This is what Kierkegaard called unconscious despair. There's one despair being depressed

about losing your job, for example, and that definitely is an occasion despair, but there's another kind of despair, which is not knowing you're in despair. Kierkegaard, a great Danish theologian, calls this "unconscious despair." This is the most dangerous despair, Kierkegaard says, because it doesn't recognize the despair we have that is lying within, that we try to mask over with activities to stay busy.

Some of the worst culprits are people in the church keeping busy with church activities, committees, projects, you name it, so we don't have to look at ourselves and also not to look at God. That's what Kierkegaard calls unconscious despair, and I think he's very perceptive there. We need to see that the gospel addresses us at our deepest and widest point. This is where Christ taking upon the entirety of our humanity, including our fears and our anxieties and our loneliness and despair, becomes so important.

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## The Three-Fold Word of God

**JMF:** You teach potential ministers. What would you like to see pastors giving more attention to in their sermons?

**CK:** Preaching is in a state of crisis. Our postmodern culture hates the word. We like the visual. We like the video image. We're a visual culture, and we don't like the word *preaching*. The great age of wonderful pulpit giants sending forth their message with their glorious intones, and people catching onto every little word, is gone. It's a challenge for the church to continue to have preaching.

Many churches have abandoned preaching as an essential part of worship, but I don't think the church should do that. Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the speech of God, and the preaching is the word of God, part of the word of God.

Karl Barth was famous for saying that there's a three-fold word of God. Most of all, Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the living Word of God, but Scripture is also the written word of God, dependent upon Jesus Christ. Third, proclamation—preaching—is the word of God, again dependent upon Scripture and ultimately upon the living Jesus Christ, but to be taken seriously as the word of God as well. It's the way in which the message of Scripture about Jesus Christ is made real today with that congregation.

We need to re-discover a place where preaching that takes seriously the tensions with the postmodern culture, that takes seriously the importance of the visual, perhaps, as well as the audible, but moreover sees preaching as not just sharing interesting stories or trying to be relevant, but a context in which God himself, through our fallibility, the great fallibility of preachers, nonetheless speaks his word that bears witness to Jesus Christ, and have confidence in that, and have joy in that.

I've been preaching regularly as a part of a preaching time of Church of the Savior, an independent church in Wichita. That's been a great joy for me and essential for me as a theologian. Preaching was always a challenge for me.

What set me free in recent years has been to realize that first I need to realize the word of God to *me*, to Chris Kettler, that week, in the midst of all my struggles, whatever they might be. As simple as that may seem, it became very profound for me and changed my preaching, when I first addressed the text of scripture to me. I found that strangely enough, I'm not that different

from other people. I may have a PhD, but beyond that, I struggle with the same things other people struggle with, and it really changed my preaching.

We need to encourage preachers to not be afraid to allow the word to speak to them first, and to self-disclose to some appropriate extent in their sermon. I often share things of my hobbies, my love for the Los Angeles Dodgers, or collecting old comic books from the '40s, or Bob Dylan, and my congregation will say they know a lot about Bob Dylan now. But even if they're not fans of Dylan or the Dodgers or whatever, they appreciate that human contact because they have their own passions.

I allow my passions to be met by the word of God and I share that with others. That's been liberating for me, and has been a great boon to my preaching. The church as a whole has to take seriously that passion in the midst of the challenges of postmodern culture, and have the confidence that God is speaking, and see that as essential as the rest of the worship service.

**JMF:** A lot of preaching that isn't effective tends to be full of platitudes and easy solutions and "you should be's" and this sort of thing. It sounds like you're talking more of an honest, a reality kind of preaching, about what we're really like, and what God has to say to us and for us in that context.

**CK:** Exactly. One doesn't need to leave the Bible to do that. In our church we go through a book of the Bible, expository preaching. We find that the Bible speaks to those existential personal needs and passions very strongly, and often becomes a critique of the platitudes, as you've mentioned, the moralisms, ethical exhortations that often people take out of the Bible apart from the larger context of the gospel story and the reality of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

In that context, there's an exhortation, but it comes on the basis of grace, the gracious revelation of God in Christ. Preaching is to be that witness. It beats deeply into our own passions and needs, but ultimately it's the witness of Jesus Christ to those passions and needs, and therefore not just interesting stories or cute comments on the week's news events.

**JMF:** A lot of people today are finding Christianity and the church irrelevant. What do you see as some of the causes of that?

**CK:** The causes are profound. When you mentioned postmodern culture, I think in terms of the culture becoming much more skeptical of any claims of truth. That's one aspect of it. But more often, the church's desperate attempt to try to become relevant becomes phony and



superficial to the world. When we try to be the best entertainer in town, we always fail, because Hollywood can always do it better.

When we fail to realize that there is a uniqueness of the church and of its calling and its worship, and that ultimately we are to bear witness to Jesus Christ and his love and grace, that brings a relevance that the world cannot meet. If we have confidence in that, that what we are saying and preaching and doing is not just trying to be relevant in our culture, so that the culture has a place for the church, but that it's really the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ that we joyfully are involved in, *that* is something that makes itself relevant. We don't need to *make* God relevant.

**JMF:** There's something you wrote that I wanted to read and ask you to comment on. You said,

"Christocentric theology demands that we take existential issues in humanity seriously. [Which is what we've just been talking about.] Too often the concern of theology has been about the precise relationship between the deity and the humanity of Christ without delving deeply into the radical implications of the Word that became flesh for the world of despair, guilt, shame, weakness, loneliness, anxiety, and doubt, which is where most of us live a good deal of the time. Popular theology such as in the *Left Behind* novels still reflect the kind of theological mindset that obsesses over the time of the great tribulation at the end of the world and ignores our own personal tribulations of loneliness, despair, and doubt."

Could you talk about that a little bit in terms of the vicarious humanity of Christ?

**CK:** To be Christo-centric, to be centered in Christ, all Christians want that. But often the church fails at being Christo-centric, in that often it doesn't remember that the Word became flesh. That is the flesh of doubt, despair, loneliness, anxiety, those things you mentioned, the place that we live.

**JMF:** We don't think of Christ that way, though.

**CK:** No. It's because we are heretics, in a sense, that we may say, Christ is God, and he's human, but we often pay attention simply to his deity, which we should, but it's wrong. We're heretics when we don't equally pay attention to his humanity. Deity *and* humanity. Often, the humanity is not seen in terms of a humanity that takes our place and is on our behalf. It's seen only as, well, we should be like Jesus in his humanity.

**JMF:** As a role model.

**CK:** Yeah. What would Jesus do? That ultimately leads to frustration, because we're not like Jesus. We try to be like Jesus, and we're not like Jesus, rather than seeing that in the New Testament the humanity of Christ is presented as living a life vicariously, that is, in our place, on

our behalf, the life that we've been unable to live. He goes before us and invites us through the Spirit to join with him.

That is a different way of looking at the humanity of Christ and it is an invitation to look at the humanity of Christ in a vicarious sense. It has tremendous implications for issues like doubt and despair and loneliness and anxiety, in which often we feel guilty as Christians that we feel any doubt or despair or anxiety. We think we shouldn't be feeling these things as Christians.

We felt the doubt and the guilt in the first place, and we don't want to 'fess up to them. Theologically, we might end up dealing with side issues, like when the tribulation's going to take place, rather than allowing the word to address us deeply where we are at. Often, the church doesn't allow you to be honest with those feelings. You're not supposed to have those doubts, despair, anxiety, if you're a Christian, and particularly a leader.

That's because of our inadequate Christology, our view of Christ. We don't take the vicarious humanity of Christ seriously – that Christ has taken upon himself that despair, he's taken upon that doubt, he's taken upon that anxiety. That's what we hear from the cross, when Jesus says in those cryptic words, a prayer to God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

I think Jesus is praying that on our behalf. He is taking our despair and bringing it to the Father, and in doing so, healing it. We are not alone in that despair. We are not alone in our aloneness. We may still be lonely, but we're not lonely alone. Jesus is lonely with us.

That's extremely important for us to see, how close the humanity of Christ relates to our humanity. That's why this, what seems to be abstract talk about vicarious humanity, is really very personal talk. Christ's humanity is so close to us. We're in union with him. We hear him crying out for us, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" when we've gone through a loss of a loved one, or other travails in life in which we've questioned the presence or even existence of God. Jesus cries that prayer on the cross, praying from Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But he prays, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." There's despair on the cross, but there's also joy.

**JMF:** That's the way Psalm 22 ends up as well.

**CK:** Exactly. Some scholars suggest that perhaps Jesus recited the rest of Psalm 22. In effect, with "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," he's saying that.

**JMF:** Let's shift gears to the Old Testament for a minute. Sometimes it is thought that grace

gets invented in the New Testament, but then there's the idea that in order to read the Old Testament, we should reinterpret it in the light of Christ. But the Old Testament is the word that emerges out of who Christ is from the very beginning in its very roots. It isn't just a prequel or a tack-on to the New Testament.

**CK:** Karl Barth used to say that in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, you have one covenant of grace from Genesis to Revelation. It isn't that there are two covenants, the Old Testament is a covenant of works, as some people say, and then in the New Testament you finally get to grace.

No, just think of Genesis chapter 1. The very act of creation is by God's work. It's an act of grace. The very fact that you and I exist at this moment, is simply because of grace. God didn't *need* to create us; he simply did so out of love. Genesis is written by the people who experienced the exodus, the act of grace that the people of Israel experienced in being liberated from Egypt. It's that grace that happened first in Exodus chapter 3. The law, the 10 commandments, wasn't given until Exodus 20.

Grace always comes before law throughout the Bible. There is a place for law, that is, God's commands, but they're always seen in terms of the prior reality of grace and should never be separated from grace. That's when legalism comes in, when Christians say, I've been saved by grace, but now they live in a life of legalism. That's because they've left grace behind as they pursued law.

That's not true in terms of how God revealed law to be and how grace is seen throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Israel is seen as the preparation, the way in which we are prepared to interpret the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

Thomas Torrance has a wonderful book entitled *The Mediation of Christ*, and the point of that book is that Israel gives us tools to understand Christ, and God's gracious relationship with Israel is a way in which language is developed, through the sacrificial system and other ways in Israel's experience, to understand grace.

Grace is there in the Old Testament, and we cannot understand the Incarnation apart from Israel, apart from the Old Testament. Otherwise we end up interpreting Jesus according to what we want Jesus to be. We are tempted to do that all the time, and church history is filled with examples of that. We need to interpret Jesus in light of Old Testament, in light of Israel, in light of the Jews. Again, it's one covenant of grace from Genesis to Revelation, including God's grace

toward Israel.

**JMF:** In that light, I'm always struck by Jesus' conversation with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and it says he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and then it says, "This is what the Scriptures say, that on the third day..." And yet, the Scriptures don't say that. But he says that that's what they really say, that's what they're really about, is a testimony to him.

**CK:** Right. What happens then with the Incarnation, with the coming of Christ, he interprets the Old Testament. He helps us see the Old Testament. Israel is preparing us for Christ, but then Christ goes back and helps us see him in that preparation. That's what the early church, the early followers, were able to see in their reading of the Old Testament. They could never give up on the Old Testament.

There was a heresy when a man named Marcion said, "the Old Testament is the book of the angry God, but the New Testament is about the God of grace and love." The church saw the terrible error in that. Unfortunately, there have been practical Marcionites throughout the history of the church, in which we may say we believe the Old Testament is the word of God, but we really don't give it much attention. Or when we do, we end up separating it from Christ. Or just like you say, interpret it as a prequel, but not really as connected with Christ.

But when you read the New Testament, you see the early church gathering together, huddling together. What are they doing? They're reading the Old Testament and seeing Jesus Christ in there. They see how essential it is for them to go back to the Scriptures and to understand Christ. We should do that today in the church, and not be afraid of the Old Testament as this book of law and the wrath of God, but to see the grace of God, particularly the grace of God extended toward an Israel that is constantly rebelling against God throughout the Old Testament. God is continually pursuing Israel. Even when they have to go into exile in Babylon, God is still there with them. That's a story of love and grace that's there in the Old Testament and helps prepare us for the supreme act of God's love in the Incarnation.

**JMF:** Isn't the story of Israel my story, and your story?

**CK:** Exactly.

**JMF:** We're constantly running away from God, and he's constantly pursuing us. We're constantly rebelling in one way or another or falling fall short in one way or another of what he would like us to be, and yet he never gives up.

**CK:** He never lets us go. He never let Israel go. That's Paul's point in Romans: Israel's rebellion did not invalidate the promises of God. Paul makes that point, and we often forget that and seem to just to see the Old Testament as cute stories that teach children in Sunday school. No. They're absolutely essential for us in understanding Christ. We need to constantly go back to school with Israel, as Thomas Torrance used to say.

**JMF:** Hosea 11, "How can I give you up?"

**CK:** Hosea is a wonderful picture of God's covenant love, of love that doesn't give up. Sometimes Hosea is said to be the gospel in the Old Testament.

**JMF:** Going all the way back to Genesis 1, we have the creation, and Christ is involved right there from the very beginning. We spend our time spinning the wheels on whether there's a creation or whether there's evolution and never the twain shall meet, rather than seeing a theology of creation rooted in the vicarious humanity of Christ.

**CK:** Yeah. Again, the creation story is told by the Hebrews who experienced the Exodus, who experienced redemption and salvation. They saw the integral relationship of salvation and creation. When you get to the New Testament, Paul and John and New Testament writers see this very strongly, that the same God who created is the God who redeemed, and there's a dynamic relationship between Christ and creation. Paul in Colossians is profound on this, "Through him all things were created."

Redemption and salvation is not just an afterthought of God's. It's not just an emergency thing, because grace is in the very act of creation; creation is an act of grace. We need to see God's covenant there, as Karl Barth used to say, a covenant very much integrated with creation. The covenant is the basis of creation, and that covenant is God's pledge with us. That is in the very being of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from all eternity. There is that covenant love between the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit.

Covenant is not just a new thing God thought up one day, "we've got to do this to save these people." No. It's an essential part of his being in this relationship between the Father and the Son through the Spirit. The Son is incarnate in Jesus Christ, and it's in him that we see the restoration of creation.

Creation is not simply to be destroyed or ignored for the sake of some spiritual reality. No. Jesus Christ is the Word who became flesh. What he wants to do is have a new creation. It's new! But it's still a creation. There is that continuity between salvation and creation. Therefore,

when we consider Jesus Christ, he is not the one who simply is to rescue us from creation, as in some theologies, but he's the one who brings us into a new creation.

We are new creations in Christ, Paul says, and Jesus Christ is now the true image of God. Human beings were created in the image of God; he has taken our place. We find our true being reflecting the image of God in our participation in Christ. That very strong teaching in Genesis 1 about humans being made in the image of God is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We can't understand being made in the image of God apart from Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, some theologies say, first we put together a doctrine of creation, the image of God and so forth, that everyone shares, and then we bring in "the fall," and that's why we then need redemption. Christ just becomes the answer to our predicament. He certainly *is* that, but that's inadequate to understand the place of Christ before creation as a reflection of the eternal being of God as love, this relationship between the Father and Son and the Spirit.

This is something that Paul solved profoundly in the letter to the Colossians. The first chapter of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and through him all things were made." That integration of Christ and creation was extremely important. We need to recover that in the church for practical issues, in how we relate to nature, how we relate to the world as a whole, and not just to see the world as something that is evil. "For God so loved *the world*," John says. John is very cognizant of that world as the world that Christ embraces and doesn't discourage.

**JMF:** Christ is both Creator and Redeemer of the creation, also the judge and the advocate, the defense attorney, all at once and identified with him. He draws us into himself. So from the very beginning, it sounds like you're saying, we are wrapped up in the creation, and therefore in the love relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. That's our very purpose for being.

**CK:** Right. Christ becomes not simply an answer or a band-aid, but the fulfillment of what it means to be human. The early church fathers saw this very early in the second century and Karl Barth, in the more recent years, has seen that it's through Christ that we understand Adam. It's not that Christ is the solution to Adam's problem. That is not seeing that the covenant of grace really extends from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Christ is there.

**JMF:** In the few minutes we have left, you mentioned you are a Bob Dylan fan, and you know a lot about Bob Dylan. I've only in the last 10 years or so began to really get into Bob Dylan, but I'm a neophyte compared to what you were telling me. There's a reason that you are

drawn to him, and there are certain theological implications and gospel implications of some of Bob Dylan's lyrics and so on. Could you spend a minute or two on that?

**CK:** I've written this book called *The God Who Rejoices: Joy, Despair, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*... Looking at this basic existential issue, can we have joy. How do we have joy in the midst of despair that all of us feel? I began the book by relating the story of myself as a very lonely alienated teenager in the Wichita Southeast High School library. Almost every day when I could get away from class, I would go in the library, put on the earphones, and I had my copy of Bob Dylan's album *Blonde on Blonde*, put it on... What he was saying through his music was a music of pathos. The song, "stuck inside of Mobile with the Memphis blues again," I'd play it over and over again because that's how I felt as a teenager.

Dylan was able to be honest about the pathos, the suffering that we feel as human beings. "How does it feel to be on your own, no direction home" is a famous song, *Like a Rolling Stone*. In dealing with relationships, he would cut to the quick, and there would be no monkey business. In Dylan's gravelly voice, he would say things that I was unable to say as a lonely teenager.

Even as a much older adult, that's still the case. He's still able to say those things. To me, it's the cry for God, ultimately. Dylan realized that at one point in his life, in the early '80s, with the *Slow Train* album, and he still does, to some extent. In a recent interview, somebody asked him how he felt about all these musicians who always give praise to God on their records, and Dylan said, "Well, you've got to give credit where credit is due."

The rest of his songs are that identification with our pain, and that's the first movement of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, his solidarity with us. That's what I think I see in Dylan the most. Then through that solidarity, to that first step, there's an openness for that second step of being lifted up, to be conformed to the image of his Son. That's when you get some sense of hope and joy in Dylan.

In his latest album, *Together Through Life*, he has a wonderful song called *Feel Like a Change Is Coming On*, in which, here's the 67-year-old Bob Dylan in his gravelly coarse voice still having a wistful hope... He talks about having "the blood of the land in my voice." Some people suggested, maybe he's really saying blood of the *lamb*. That brings us back to the gospel, and the nature of the gospel is it's crying to people who need to be loved, to realize that the most basic need in life is to be loved, and to realize our problems in loving relationships. We need help in that. Dylan has always sensed that.

With all the accolades and praise he gets and hero-worship, he doesn't buy into that. There's always a sense in which, you better be careful, love can turn on you, even the closest relationships or human relationships, they can fail. He's very aware of that, and that makes him humble, a humble singer and writer in my opinion, but also an honest one. He gets to the core of being human.

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## The Ministry of Ray Anderson

This program is offered in tribute to the life and work of Dr. Ray S. Anderson (1925-2009), former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. To read, watch or listen to interviews with Dr. Anderson, go to <http://www.gci.org/category/people/ray-anderson>.



**JMF:** You just finished a book about Ray Anderson. I'd like to talk about that. The title is *Reading Ray S. Anderson: Theology as Ministry, Ministry as Theology*. How did you first come to know Ray?

**CK:** Ray was one of God's great gifts in my life. I was a student at Fuller Seminary. Seminary students are a weird breed. They're supposed to be training for ministry, but they're actually still in the process of wrestling through life's issues and trying to really know God's grace. You usually go to a lot of academic classrooms – you go to biblical studies, church history and so forth, and you try to translate it into your life somehow.

A friend of mine recommended that I take a course from Ray Anderson, and I quickly found out that this man wasn't just teaching about grace. He was *presenting* grace, and I quickly found out that this was a life-changing experience for me. What Ray does, what's so amazing is that, we think that it would be self-evident that theology and ministry should go hand in hand. But when you go to a typical seminary, that's not the case. You have the biblical studies department over here, you have the church history department over here, you have the ministry department here, preaching, and never the twain shall meet.

Ray was the professor who was a one-man department – professor of Theology and Ministry. He went to both faculty meetings, Theology and Ministry, but really he was himself a

one department, because he's a unique individual. He was a pastor for ten years before he went on for his PhD under Thomas Torrance in Scotland and developed an understanding of a Christo-centric Trinitarian theology in a vital dialogue with the ministry of the church. He's made a tremendous contribution that way in relating theology with ministry more than anyone I know of. He has written a succession of books throughout the years that are very profound, provocative, and controversial.

I realized that more people needed to know about Ray, and so last year I sat down and began to write this book, a kind of what I call to my friends, "Ray Lite" – it hardly catches the exuberance and excitement and creativity of his theology. It's trying to just introduce people to some of Ray's thoughts and invite them to get into Ray, reading Ray – I think they would be very much rewarded in doing so.

**JMF:** There are any number of directions you could take in introducing someone like Ray. What direction did you go?

**CK:** The subtitle of the book is *Theology as Ministry, Ministry as Theology* to communicate that. In different ways Ray sought to bring them together. Then I proceed through some traditional doctrines – doctrine of God, humanity, Christ and salvation, the church, Holy Spirit, last things... but then look at them in terms of Ray's unique take upon them, and how he reflected on them in his teaching as well as in his books. You're constantly seeing that he refuses to have a theology that does not meet the test of being in the local congregation – meeting people where they are at, with all their crazy-quilt of problems and questions and frustrations, and realizing that if theology means anything, it's going to meet people where they're at.

The only kind of theology that really does that is a Christo-centric Trinitarian theology – one that takes seriously first of all that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ – it's not just the possibility, it's not just a religious quest, but it's a reality that we thankfully and humbly receive by faith. That revelation is of the Triune God, the God who is in a relationship of love as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's seeing how that works out in terms of the ministry of the church, realizing that the ministry of the church is not our ministry. We often think that ministry is our part. God has done his part in Christ. Now it's our part, as the ministry. That's a terrible, terrible theology, and it bears terrible fruit in practice, because we end up creating our own ministries, our own agendas.

No, there is one continuing ministry, and that's the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ

continues to minister. Ray has written about that in many forms, and developed a Trinitarian theology of ministry that reflects a continuing ministry of Jesus Christ. He wrote a wonderful essay in the beginning of a book entitled *Theological Foundations for Ministry* – the introductory essay is titled “A Theology for Ministry,” in which he set out that agenda. It challenges theologians. This is not a case of a theologian saying to lay people, “You ought to read more theology.” No, it’s quite the opposite. It’s saying that the ministry is the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Ministry always precedes theology. But this is not simply to say that whatever is pragmatic, whatever is practical, then you shape your theology on that basis. No. The ministry, remember, is the ministry of Jesus Christ. That precedes the theology, and that should shape the theology. Theology should never be distant from ministry. Sadly, in theological education, distance is almost the rule instead of the exception—with separated departments, and the biblical scholars never talk to the theologians or never talk to the ministry people.



Ray is trying to break that apart. He’s been a tremendous influence on generations of students at Fuller Seminary. I just noticed at Fuller they have a plaque now that says his name: “The Ray Anderson Classroom,” for the encouragement he gave to doctor of ministry students. Ray was the theological adviser to the doctor of ministry program at Fuller for many years. He was the champion for that program. A lot of his colleagues were saying, “What’s this doctor of ministry? A doctor is supposed to be for PhD’s, not for ministry people.” And the ministry people were saying, “Why do I need another degree?”

Ray said, “We need to equip ministers, pastors, after their Master of Divinity degrees, to go on, to continue to learn at the highest level possible. He became the champion for these doctor of ministry students, and they appreciated that, even though he challenged them all the time with some very challenging theology. He did that for all of his students at Fuller, and some students

don't know what to make of it.

I have a good friend who's a black pastor in Atlanta and a musician who said to me that he took one course from Ray Anderson and he thought afterwards "Either this man is a genius or he's insane." He is that much of a creative individual in his lectures, in his presence in the classroom. As I thought back on that, on my own experience, that many of us come into that classroom desperate for the grace of God, and Ray bore witness to that grace. I'm forever thankful to that. Fortunately, we have his books that communicate that grace as well, and I want to encourage people to dig into that... knowing it's going to be challenging, but there's a great reward in reading it.

**JMF:** His relentless tenacity in not letting go of grace and the reality of our union with Christ and communion with Christ as who we are, come through so movingly in his book *The Gospel According to Judas*. You don't hear people talking about *The Gospel According to Judas* or even much focus on Judas, but in this book, Ray did take Judas as an example of who we all are. It was so moving...

**CK:** The subtitle was *Is There a Limit to God's Grace?*, which may seem strange, but unfortunately for most of us, "Yes," we'd say, "There is a limit to God's grace." But why do we say that? He questions that in terms of the person of Jesus and Judas, and presents an imaginary dialogue after Jesus' death between Jesus and Judas. What would Jesus say to Judas? What would Judas say to Jesus? In a sense, would Judas refuse, not understand that he is forgiven? Or do we have to condemn Judas to perdition?



We all need a scapegoat. Ray explores this tendency we have, whether in church or business or family, to always want to have a scapegoat. We needed to have somebody to blame things on. In a sense he suggests for the disciples it was Judas – he's the one. But Peter denied Christ, too.

We think, well, Judas demonstrates that there is a limit to God's grace. There is so far that you can go with this grace business or else you just hit license, and people would do whatever they want to. And so, Judas is a good example.

Ray challenges that and suggests, maybe there isn't a limit... maybe Jesus really did forgive Judas. What would that mean? What does that say about grace? It would mean that if Jesus can forgive Judas, he can forgive me. That even though I fail him over and over and over and over again, that he can forgive me. In effect, there is no limit to God's grace. We are the ones who put limits to God's grace. God doesn't. It's a very powerful message about forgiveness that's received a lot of readership from inmates in jails – many inmates convicted of murder wrote to Ray and say they read his book – “can God forgive me?” It's a challenge for all of us to really rethink our theology and practice of forgiveness. Do we really believe in forgiveness, do we really believe in grace?

**JMF:** It's an honesty question, isn't it? Often we hide ourselves from our own knowledge of ourselves as being sinners.

**CK:** Yeah, we need to pretend we're not sinners, and then we come out as phonies. Or else it just becomes a repeated wallowing in the fact that we are sinners. Not that first of all that we're objects of grace. Our failings never deny that – as was true for Israel in the Old Testament. God's grace doesn't let us go – that becomes the motivation for us to seek him, rather than try to appease him.

It's because he won't let us go that we're motivated to love him – and to serve him, and that's absolutely the difference in motivation. It's the kind of motivation you find in the New Testament. When Paul in Ephesians spends three chapters talking about our blessings in heavenly places in Jesus Christ, because we've been chosen, been given every spiritual blessing in Christ, it goes on for three chapters. Then with chapter 4, he says, “therefore, walk in a manner worthy of the calling you've received, because all this is who you are.

Ephesians 1-3 is indicative... (**JMF:** Is already so...) then, the imperative comes based upon that. It isn't that the imperative is the basis for you to be accepted. It's the opposite.

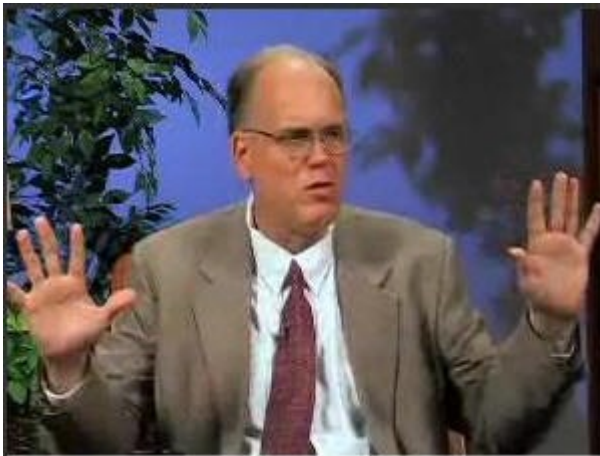
**JMF:** Like his letter to Titus – for his grace... that teaches you.

**CK:** Oh, yeah. For the grace of God has appeared ... exhorting us to renounce sin. [Titus 2:11-12]

**JMF:** The grace comes first (**CK:** Exactly.), and in the context of the grace, we're able then

to move forward ...

**CK:** That's a constant theme, which Ray got very much with Karl Barth, and Thomas Torrance, his mentor, and also from his own experience as a pastor – which he saw that many people had been wounded by the church. For most of his time as a professor at Fuller Seminary, he had a little church, meeting in a school multi-purpose building – Harbor Fellowship. It attracted about 20, 30 people a week. They didn't have any programs, so if people wanted programs, they'd leave the church. It became kind of a half-way house for people who've been burned by the church. They came to this little group – just gathering together, hearing the word of God, sharing communion, and Ray preaching a very simple yet profound sermon, and people were healed. They were able then to go back to the other churches. This little community of grace, if you will.



Ray lives that. He's lived that theology in the church, as well as writing about it. You see that in his writings much more than any other theologian I know. He never has ceased to be a pastor. There are plenty of professors in seminaries that used to be pastors and probably were failures at being a pastor. But then they went on to get their degrees and became a seminary professor. Ray Anderson never ceased to being a pastor. To the students of Fuller, his door was always open in his office – unheard of among seminary professors. You can walk in with a need. With the people at Harbor Fellowship he continued to preach the word and minister to them during the week. Particularly with the D.Min. students, mentoring them. Coming back, he used to say that they would come back anesthetized to theology by their own seminary training. Theology was irrelevant to them as a pastor. He had to help them work again at theology and ministry, and that became such a moving experience to a whole generation of D.Min. students.

**JMF:** A book you used in your classes, as well as one that I feel is very helpful and

encouraging is *Dancing with Wolves While Feeding the Sheep* (**CK:** Yeah, wonderful title) – *Musings of a Maverick Theologian...*

**CK:** The wolves are faculty colleagues who had trouble accepting Ray and his theology of ministry. But he still wanted to tend the sheep. He saw himself as a maverick theologian. This is a remarkable little book that consists of questions. Questions that people are asking, that lay people have asked – but nonetheless are profound, theological questions:

- \* Will Judas be in heaven?
- \* Is Jesus an evangelical?
- \* What do you say at the graveside of a suicide?

It's very profound, practical, important questions. One chapter is remarkable – Does Jesus think of things today? It's a question that gets to a very important point. As we read Scripture, is Jesus reading Scripture along with us? Or has he left the building and given us the Bible because he's not around anymore? What kind of theology is that? Practically, that often *is* our theology.

But it's really a strange view of Scripture that thinks that we could read Scripture without Jesus. When we think of the road to Emmaus and Jesus himself had to explain to disciples where the Scriptures spoke of him. Ray plays with that a little bit in how we use and abuse the Bible and often don't read it in a Christo-centric way – in terms of all Scripture bears witness to Christ. The chapters are very provocative (and mischievous in some ways) but very helpful in the end.

**JMF:** I hope your book will move some people toward wanting to be more familiar with some of Ray's books.

**CK:** That's the purpose. This is just to give them a taste of Anderson and some of his insights here and there, and to move them into reading his books, because I think there's such a rich reward in reading Ray.

**JMF:** Many people may not know that Ray played part of a role early on in the transformation of the Worldwide Church of God, in the early stages after the transformation, of being a support and a help to many of our pastors, and attending many of our pastors' conferences and speaking at them, encouraging our pastors.

**CK:** Ray's always been able to connect with pastors, because he never ceased to be a pastor. The same time, he's a world-class top-flight theologian who will challenge you academically and intellectually as much as you want to be challenged. He's that rare individual who does both.

**JMF:** We had the opportunity to interview him two times on this program.

**CK:** Right, those were wonderful interviews, too. I commend them to the audience. [To read, watch or listen to interviews with Dr. Anderson, [click here.](#)]

**JMF:** A couple of your books focused on some of these same themes that you were first introduced to with Ray, and one of them is this one – *The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*. And your forthcoming one – *The God Who Rejoices: Joy, Despair and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*.

**CK:** Because of Anderson's influence, I increasingly saw that theology didn't need to be restricted to an ivory tower, and deal only with abstract, arcane or irrelevant issues. But theology at its best is taking the gospel and applying it radically to our struggles in our lives – such as doubt and despair and guilt and anxiety and loneliness. Ray's Christocentric theology reminded me that the solution needs to be constantly to go back to Jesus Christ. Maybe our Christology hasn't been healthy or strong enough.

Through the work of Ray's mentor T.F. Torrance, I encountered this doctrine on the vicarious humanity of Christ. It says that the atonement is not just restricted to Christ paying the penalty for our sins. He did that. But it's not just his death that's vicarious in our place. *His entire humanity* takes our place. It very much came out of Ray's pastoral theology that I became intrigued with dealing with these issues – but also his profound Christocentric theology and the influence of the doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ, which has so much potential for us having a Christocentric theology of ministry. Often when people talk about theology of ministry, it's just trying to be practical, or just become more skilled at being a preacher or a counselor or a church-growth strategist or whatever. No. It's got to be a theology that drives us back to the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and to the Triune God whom Jesus Christ reveals. Because otherwise we're just trying to do our best to do some crowd management in the church — or as Dallas Willard says, just do sin management.

**JMF:** Sin management, yes, that's right.

**CK:** Rather, we do sin management if we don't have that robust Christocentric Trinitarian theology. It's so encouraging to me when I hear what you folks are doing at Grace Communion International in drawing up the implications of a Trinitarian theology for the ministry of the church. That's really the future, and it's an exciting future in doing that.





**JMF:** I appreciate that.

Henri Nouwen wrote a wonderful book called *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, about the painting. On the newer cover, there's Rembrandt's painting of the return of the prodigal son, and then Nouwen goes through every aspect of that painting as it captures the pathos of who we are in Christ and the fact that we are held by his arms after everything we are and everything we've done, he's made us new in himself and won't let us go. It's an embrace of absolute, unconditional love despite who we are, and it speaks to the vicarious humanity of Christ – who he is for us, that he's made us to be in our rest and our comfort that comes of that. Because it seems like as you wrote about joy and despair, there's so much despair. That's where we're coming from.

**CK:** We see ourselves as just in despair, yes, God help me, but [we think] God is still distant from that. Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* [volume IV.2, page 21] has a wonderful section – his exegesis of the prodigal son, do you know it? (**JMF:** No.) It's fantastic, it's called in a section, titled “the way of the Son of God into the far country.” He sees Jesus as the prodigal son. He's the one who goes into the far country of our humanity, our despair, our doubts and so forth... taking upon our humanity, then is embraced by the Father. So we're not left alone in our doubts and despairs and anxieties. The incarnation means God is taking upon our humanity – that humanity is the humanity now, as it is now, filled with doubts and despair and anxiety. It's a fascinating way of looking at the prodigal son. (**JMF:** A comforting picture.) Exactly, but very much connected with Nouwen's emphasis and the Rembrandt painting.

**JMF:** One question we'd like to ask everybody at least at some point in an interview: If there is one thing you want people to know about God, what would it be?

**CK:** God is love. Christians always say that God is love. But we know that God is love because God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's the significance of the Trinity, that God himself is in a relationship of love from all eternity, and that is made known, made manifest in the Incarnation. So when we speak of the love of God, we're not talking about something that is a feeling or sentimentality or something abstract, or even *our* ideas of love. Love is at the center of who God is in this relationship between the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. That's why the Trinity is so essential for the church.

**JMF:** And that's the heart of the Trinitarian theology, which this program is all about.

**CK:** Exactly. It means that God is love – and that means relationship in God himself that he then has shared with us in Jesus Christ.

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## **About the Publisher...**

Grace Communion International is a Christian denomination with more than 47,000 members, worshipping in about 900 congregations in almost 100 nations and territories. We began in 1934 and our main office is in southern California. In the United States, we are members of the National Association of Evangelicals and similar organizations in other nations. We welcome you to visit our website at [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org).

If you want to know more about the gospel of Jesus Christ, we offer help. First, we offer weekly worship services in hundreds of congregations worldwide. Perhaps you'd like to visit us. A typical worship service includes songs of praise, a message based on the Bible, and opportunity to meet people who have found Jesus Christ to be the answer to their spiritual quest. We try to be friendly, but without putting you on the spot. We do not expect visitors to give offerings—there's no obligation. You are a guest.

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We also offer personal counsel. If you have questions about the Bible, salvation or Christian living, we are happy to talk. If you want to discuss faith, baptism or other matters, a pastor near you can discuss these on the phone or set up an appointment for a longer discussion. We are convinced that Jesus offers what people need most, and we are happy to share the good news of what he has done for all humanity. We like to help people find new life in Christ, and to grow in that life. Come and see why we believe it's the best news there could be!

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## **You're Included...**

Dr. J. Michael Feazell talks to leading Trinitarian theologians about the good news that God loves you, wants you, and includes you in Jesus Christ. Most programs are about 28 minutes long. Our guests have included:

Ray Anderson, Fuller Theological Seminary  
Douglas A. Campbell, Duke Divinity School  
Gary Deddo, InterVarsity Press  
Gordon Fee, Regent College  
Trevor Hart, University of St. Andrews  
George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary  
C. Baxter Kruger, Perichoresis  
Jeff McSwain, Reality Ministries  
Paul Louis Metzger, Multnomah University  
Paul Molnar, St. John's University  
Cherith Fee Nordling, Antioch Leadership Network  
Andrew Root, Luther Seminary  
Alan Torrance, University of St. Andrews  
Robert T. Walker, Edinburgh University  
William P. Young, author of *The Shack*

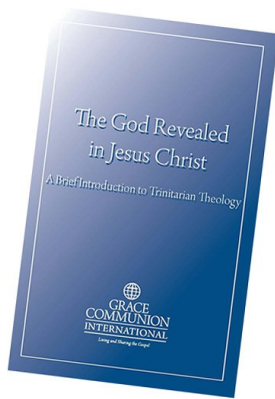
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## Speaking of Life...



Dr. Joseph Tkach, president of Grace Communion International, comments each week, giving a biblical perspective on how we live in the light of God's love. Most programs are about three minutes long – available in video, audio, and text. Go to [www.speakingoflife.org](http://www.speakingoflife.org).

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## Want to read more?

Readers in the United States are eligible to receive a free booklet, *The God Revealed in Jesus Christ: A Brief Introduction to Trinitarian Theology*. This booklet explains, in simple language, how all our most important questions are answered by a simple starting point: Who is God? We can be confident that God has planned something excellent for us. To have a hard copy mailed to you, phone 1-800-423-4444. Readers in other nations may read the booklet online at [www.gci.org/god/revealed](http://www.gci.org/god/revealed).

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## Grace Communion Seminary

Grace Communion Seminary serves the needs of pastors and others engaged in Christian service who want to grow deeper in relationship with our Triune God and to be able to more effectively serve in the Incarnational life of the church.

**Grace** is the essence of our lives. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ reveals God to us, grants us life in him, leads us in forgiving and being forgiven, and gives us salvation. Our Triune God and his grace and love revealed through Jesus Christ is the center of our theology.

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