



[Watch beautiful Things by Gungor \(2:08-3:22\)](#)

If you were here last Sunday, you already know where I am going with this, don't you? When Gungor released Beautiful Things eight years ago, I thought it was one of the prettiest songs I had ever heard. He is an extremely talented musician. Watch him play Doxology on Youtube. But like Derek Webb from last week, Michael Gungor—and his wife—have lost their faith.

Four years ago they were where Andy Stanley is now—denying the Old Testament. “Even if Jesus knew that Noah and Adam were mythical, but knew He was talking to people who thought they were real, that’s another possibility.”<sup>1</sup>

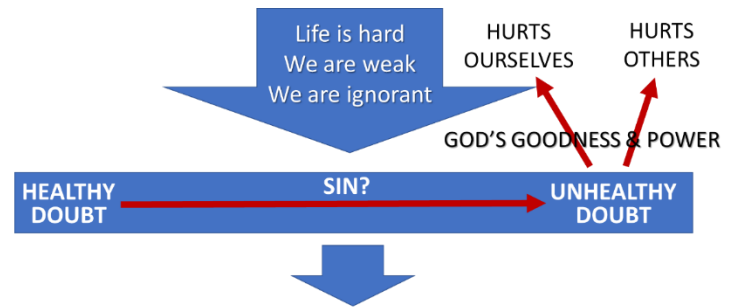
Speaking of beautiful things, he doesn't think the blood atonement of Christ is beautiful at all. “that God needed to be appeased with blood is not beautiful. It's horrific.” He tweeted, “I would rather hear more artists who sing to God and fewer who include a Father murdering a son...”<sup>2</sup>



If you can't think of anything to sing to God other than gratitude for taking your shame away through bloodshed, stop singing and look around

And now he's left with no faith at all when he tweeted, “I have finally formulated my systematic doctrinal and theological stance on all issues. luckily, it fits in a tweet – Love.”<sup>3</sup>

Let me repeat what I have been saying. Having doubts and hard questions is fine. It's not only fine, it can be a means to escaping lies, finding the truth and strengthening your faith. It can very much be a righteous pursuit or it can become a sinful pursuit.



But when I thought how to understand this,  
it seemed to me a wearisome task,  
**until I went into the sanctuary of God.**

Last week we covered the first of three very common doubts and this week we'll cover the last two. We're also examining how 1 Thessalonians helps to answer these doubts.

1. Doubting the reliability of the Bible.
2. Doubting God's goodness or God's power.
3. Doubting God's holiness and the Bible's moral standards.

## 2. Doubting God's goodness or God's power.

This is related to the problem of evil. Since there is evil in the world, it must mean that either God is not powerful enough to eliminate evil or else he doesn't want to eliminate evil. Therefore, the problem of evil is a doubting of God's goodness or his power—or both.

One false belief that will mess you up in this area is prosperity theology. There is some evidence that the Gungors may have been caught up in a type of prosperity theology. Lisa Gungor said that she used to believe "if I'm good enough or if I pray enough or if I believe enough then I get blessings and I get a baby or a good life."<sup>4</sup> If you believe that God will only give you good things and then life doesn't go according to your plan, most people don't change their belief and say they were wrong—they just get angry at God. Then the anger and the doubts chip away at their faith until there is nothing left. I can't say for sure that was the case with the Gungors, but if you read his Twitter feed for five minutes you will see him railing against his former evangelical beliefs and those who still hold to them. He hasn't just left the faith, but he wants to bring others with him. Unfortunately, this kind of reactions is fairly common.

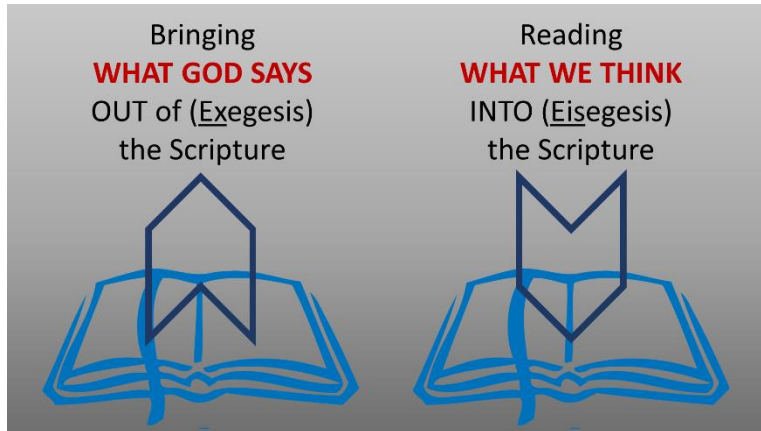
I guarantee you that the young church in Thessalonica was not caught up in such a thing. Paul wrote that they "received the word in much affliction." In chapter two, he addressed this affliction in more detail.

For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins...

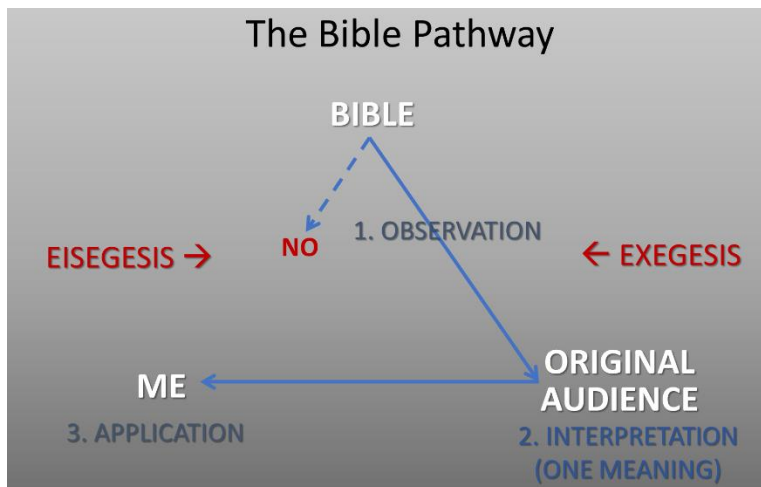
Do persecuted believers walk away from the faith? Of course some do but it has been my experience that this happens with much greater frequency to those who do not have a robust, Biblical view of suffering. Many are driven by their emotions rather than by the truth. People

don't like how God treats them, how life is hard, how they are disappointed and, therefore they conclude that it can't be true.

Andy Stanley, the Gungors, Derek Webb all walked this path. What happens is that their faith decisions are based on emotional reactions to something in life or something in the Bible. Their emotions tell them that they don't like it, so they reject it. Afterward, they go in search of theological justification for their warped conclusions. Most of the time, they don't start with an honest look at the Scriptures to determine what it actually means, but instead, they read what they want to believe into the Scriptures.



Christians need to know the difference between exegesis and eisegesis. In exegesis, the goal is to bring what God says OUT of the Scripture. The prefix “ex” means “out of.” The goal is to determine the intent of the author and the meaning that God intended. Eisegesis is reading what we think into the Scripture. The prefix “eis” means into. This is when we take our own preconceived ideas, our personal experience and our biases and read them into Scripture. This will usually result in a wrong interpretation. Understand that this will always be a strong temptation every time you open your Bible. I am not saying that the Derek Webb's and the Michael Gungor's of the world only do this. I have done this. You do this. Unless we are very careful, eisegesis will always be our default because it is the easiest option. And sometimes we have never been taught otherwise.



That is why we need to use the Bible Pathway every time we read the Bible. The temptation will always be to want to go straight to application. That would be a type of eisegesis. The first step is to understand the meaning that was intended for the original audience. Only then can you move to application. Those who begin to doubt the word of God or to doubt

his power of his goodness almost always read into the text what they want it to say.

Now compare them to a woman like Asia Bibi. Nine years ago she was arrested and charged with blasphemy after she drank a cup of water from a Muslim bucket. Last month she was acquitted and ever since she has been in hiding because most of Pakistan is calling for her death

([watch video clip of protesters](#)). The UK has been highly criticized for not granting asylum to Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi over security fears.<sup>5</sup> Countless people have called on president Trump to grant her asylum. As a Christian living in Pakistan, she was already in the highly persecuted minority but now she has a price on her head. She endures all of this simply because she believes. I don't know but we can only guess that nine years in prison brought some hard questions and doubts along the way. It would seem impossible otherwise. But it would also seem that she resolved her doubts and continues to walk with the Lord by faith.

Let me give you two examples to help if you ever doubt the Lord's goodness or his power. The first comes from the same chapter in Genesis 18. The first phrase was spoken by the Lord himself. This was in the context of God promising that Sarah would bear a son in her old age. The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:13-14)

The second comes just a few verses later when Abraham was pleading with the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. "Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:25)

These two questions are a theme throughout Scripture.

- *Is anything too hard for the Lord?"*
- *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"*

And I love that they are questions. They are questions in the form of a challenge, really. The Lord was challenging Abraham and Sarah with his power and Abraham was leaning heavily on God's infinite goodness. These two questions are meant to gently confront us, or perhaps, not so gently. Do you believe these questions? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Will not the judge of all the earth always do the just and right thing?

If you struggle with God's goodness or his power, the ultimate answer is the cross of Christ. From Christ's perspective, the cross is the single most unjust act in human history. God's do not abandon their thrones to become less than they had always been. God's don't let their creations beat them to a pulp. God's don't let the government and religious leaders call for his death and nail that god to a tree. God's don't do that but the one, true God did. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Can a hopelessly sinful humanity actually be redeemed? Will not the judge of all the earth do what is just? The cross is the perfect combination of God's power over sin and death and the love which took him there. You cannot look at the cross and still say that life is not fair. If you do, you are completely missing the cross.

### **3. Doubting God's holiness and the Bible's moral standards.**

As I said, these three common doubts tend to stand or fall together. If you look at an awful lot of those who claim to be believers, many of them will fight against the Bible moral standards. Anyone who supports abortion would obviously be in that camp. And anything related to gender and sexuality is apparently up for grabs for many Christians. Along his journey from evangelical faith to atheism, Derek Webb affirmed homosexuality.<sup>6</sup> This topic seems to be the dividing line, the litmus test for adapting to the culture.

Sadly, Lauren Daigle weighed in on the question last weekend. If you're not familiar with Lauren Daigle, she is an extremely popular Christian singer who has now crossed over to mainstream. Her latest album that was released in September was #3 on Billboard charts. Only Paul McCartney and Eminem were ahead of her. An interviewer asked her a simple question: Do you feel that homosexuality is a sin? Here's her not so simpler answer.

You know I can't honestly answer on that, in the sense that I have too many people that I love and they are homosexuals. I don't know. I actually had a conversation with someone last night about it, and I was like, "I can't say one way or the other. I'm not God." So when people ask questions like that, that's what my go to is. Like, I just say, "Read the Bible and find out for yourself. And when you find out, let me know, cause I'm learning too."<sup>7</sup>

It's not a hard question to answer if you believe in the reliability of the Bible. And that's what makes her answer so frustrating. It's not just this topic that should concern us but the bigger question is what she believes about Scripture.

Now some might think that we should not hold musicians to such a high theological standard. So what if they have slightly different beliefs than us? Why should that bother us? I like this response to Daigle's comments.

If your pastor made the same comments as Daigle, would you stay silent? Would you ignore it and go on with life as usual? Would you argue that "we are all sinners" and that the pastor's position is a non-issue? I certainly hope not. Your pastor has the ability to influence dozens or hundreds, possibly thousands. Daigle, as a minister of the Gospel on a national and global platform, is influencing multiplied millions.<sup>8</sup>

But it's not just musicians who are doubting these core beliefs and sliding toward apostasy. Last week I mentioned Andy Stanley and his crazy views on the Old Testament. Unbeknownst to me, John MacArthur weighed in on the same topic last week in an interview with Ben Shapiro. ([show video](#)).

There is an evangelical celebrity pastor who a few years ago had multiple affairs and even though he never repented, he is already back in full-time ministry. And now he is using the Bible against anyone who thinks he should not be preaching every weekend. He said that "It is anti-Christian to remember people primarily by the scandalous things they've done."<sup>9</sup> He could be partly right. If you and I were only and forever identified by our sins, we'd be in a heap of trouble. But the degree of this man's sins and his lack of repentance 100% disqualify him from being in the pulpit. He believes in hyper-grace, that God's grace covers us whether or not we ever repent. But this is not grace at all. It is anti-Biblical and spits in the face of God's holiness. Even if you only used the standard of love, having multiple affairs and not repenting is not love.

What does 1 Thessalonians have to say about this topic? Every person in this brand new church *turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*. Their entire lives, all they knew was paganism and hedonism. All they had ever experienced was false gods and a ferocious appetite

for sin. Until they encountered Jesus and turned from idols to serve the living and true God. That's what happens when you get radically saved.

Let me say something about the phrase I keep using—losing one's faith. I want to clarify that I do *not* mean that someone can lose their salvation. The Bible is crystal clear that a true believe can never lose their salvation. John 10:28 is just one of numerous verses that teach this assurance. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." So if you can't lose your salvation, what is happening to these people? And could it happen to me?

I don't have time in this message to fully answer this enormous question, so let me go straight to Judas. Judas was not saved, agreed? But the other eleven disciples never knew it. Let's look at it in the actual context.

<sup>21</sup> After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." <sup>22</sup> The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. <sup>23</sup> One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, <sup>24</sup> so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. <sup>25</sup> So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot (John 13:21-26).

How do you read this and not know that Judas is about to betray Jesus?

Jesus: Someone is going to betray me?

Disciples: Who is it Lord?

Jesus: Watch carefully. It's the guy to whom I give this piece of bread.

(Jesus hands Judas the bread and he takes off.)

Disciples: Where did Judas go? Oh right, Jesus just sent him on an errand.

Jesus called out Judas in the most painfully obvious way possible but even then the disciples were clueless. Why? Because they could not conceive of Judas actually betraying Jesus. He wasn't that guy. They had spent three wonderful years together as a band of brothers following hard after Jesus and they simply could not see that Judas was lying in wait to serve as Satan's greatest human puppet in all of human history. In other words, Judas was a fake. And if Judas can be a fake, anyone can be a fake. We probably all know people who seemed to be really solid believers who walked away from the faith. We scratch our heads and often we shed tears over it and think, "I don't understand how that could have happened." There are fake believers all around us all the time. That's what the parable of the weeds is all about. The enemy sowed seeds among the wheat but the owner of the field did not allow them to gather the weeds because in the early stages of growth, you could not distinguish the weeds from the wheat. In other words, genuine believers and fake believers can look identical.

Therefore, some people who "walk away from the faith" were never saved in the first place. They were fake believers. But certainly not everyone who walks away is a fake believer. Some are just having serious struggles and hopefully, they will repent and find their way back to the Lord.

The more important question for us is whether or not this could happen to us or not. If you can't lose your salvation, then it obviously cannot happen to you. But then you need to make sure that you are genuinely saved. If Judas can fool the other eleven disciples than it is possible for anyone to be living as a fake Christian.

Let me throw out some closing applications.

1. Take care how you interpret Scripture. Realize that your default will be eisegesis and practice exegesis. Be committed to understand what God intends from his word, not what you want to hear.
2. Submit yourself to the Lord and to His word. Sound Biblical interpretation is never enough. You can be "right" and still be wrong if you don't make a habit out of submitting to the Word of God. It is either God's word or it is a book full of fables. The degree that you are convinced that it is the Word of God is the degree to which you will submit to it and obey it. It's easy to throw stones at those who waver in their belief, like a Lauren Daigle. We say things like, "Of course we believe that homosexual behavior is a sin. We would never fall into that trap. We believe God's word." But do we? Do we really? If we believe it, we would obey it. It's quite common to have a high view of Scripture in theory but live like a practical atheist. If we don't submit ourselves to the word of God we are not submitting ourselves to God at all.
3. Steward your questions well. Don't ignore them and don't pretend they will just go away. Hard questions have a way of eating away at us slowly over time. Karen's high school pastor gave her some good advice. He said that there may be times when you just don't have time to tackle a tough question. He advised Karen to put that question in a box and place it on a shelf until you have time to take it down and handle it well. That's OK if you need to do that occasionally.

**Rich Maurer**  
**December 9, 2018**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2014/09/01/christian-singer-michael-gungor-makes-more-outrageous-claims/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.patheos.com/blogs/thoughtlife/2017/02/michael-gungor-gets-blood-atonement-wrong-loses-christs-benefits/?utm\\_campaign=shareaholic&utm\\_medium=twitter&utm\\_source=socialnetwork](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/thoughtlife/2017/02/michael-gungor-gets-blood-atonement-wrong-loses-christs-benefits/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork)

<sup>3</sup> I just heard that the co-founder of the Newsboys is now an atheist  
<https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2015/01/21/i-co-founded-one-of-the-most-popular-christian-rock-bands-ever-and-im-now-an-atheist/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/gungor-i-dont-believe-in-god-anymore-227508/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/world/uk-slammed-for-not-granting-asylum-to-pakistani-christian-asia-bibi-over-security-fears>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dennyburk.com/what-about-derek/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/DomNatiShow>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/74253-a-critical-response-to-lauren-daigle-about-homosexuality>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.tullian.net/articles/grace-for-the-disgraced-showing-forgiving-mercy-to-former-ministers>