

Thursday, June 13, 2024

1 John 5:1-5 || Ep. 916 Which Christian Authors Should be Avoided?

Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

Summary

- **How to let God's Word dwell in us richly through Bible study and fellowship with other believers.** [0:23](#)
 - discusses the importance of discernment when choosing Christian authors and content creators.
 - encourages listeners to approach God's Word with integrity, respect, and love.
 - John emphasizes belief in Jesus as Christ and Son of God as key to overcoming the world.
 - importance of letting word of Christ dwell in us richly, and engaging with fellow believers in local church.
 - read Acts, Ephesians, and Hebrews to understand church structure and engage with each other spiritually.
- **Choosing reliable Christian leaders and teachers, with examples of fallen leaders.** [7:26](#)
 - the importance of aligning with God's word in listening to spiritual leaders.
 - Pastor Tony Evans steps down due to unconfessed sin, while AW Tozer's book on pursuing God remains an inspiration.
 - reflects on the personal lives of influential Christians, including CS Lewis and Beth Moore, and their perceived shortcomings.
- **How to evaluate Christian authors and leaders based on their belief in Jesus as the Christ and their obedience to God's commandments.** [13:09](#)
 - discern which Christian authors to listen to and which to avoid based on their belief in Jesus as Christ and their obedience to God's commands.
 - the importance of community and scriptural comparison in determining what is sinful and what is not, citing the Southern Baptist Convention's stance on in vitro fertilization as an example.
 - importance of knowing Scripture, not relying on famous people's opinions.

Transcript

0:22

....Well, I always just record these live and don't do really much edits. Just want to share from my heart. So with that in mind, I'll pray that as we continue, you'll hear my heart and we'll talk about something that might hit home, might hit a little close to home. I know for me, it has, and it's come up in my last couple of weeks. I thought, "You know what? This is why I'm doing this podcast—to engage well in God's word, to learn and dwell in God's word, and to not just check off Bible study or do Bible study, but to really let the word dwell in me richly."

We have been going through First John. We're rounding the corner on that as we open up Chapter Five today. We've been going through First John as a way to have God's word in front of us and then talk about ways to effectively approach our personal time and work, to do that with integrity, to respect God's word, to love it, and to truly dwell in it. I say that a lot.

What we're going to talk about today is going to address some of the challenges that we have as we try to be faithful in reading God's word. Next week, I'm going to talk about another issue that has to do with dealing with things emotionally and how we handle our emotions. But today, we're going to talk about going into God's word and being careful about the authors that we read and invite into our life, the way we listen to other content

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creators, pastors, and basically, which Christian authors should be avoided and which ones should be listened to.

So, I had some time to pray, getting ready for this podcast today. Let's get into the Word, and then we're going to talk about that idea as we, again, approach God's Word with the body of other great speakers, teachers, and leaders that are out there, and how we have discernment in the whole field.

Alright, let's go do that right now. We are reading from First John, Chapter Five. If you don't already have your Bible handy, go ahead and grab that. I'm going to read today from the New International Version, and we're going to go from verses one through five, just one through five today.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep His commands, and His commands are not burdensome. For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

What a beautiful, powerful, simple, and at the same time, complex and deep passage. Just five beautiful verses. I want you to see, as we look at this passage, the sandwich that John uses in these verses. He opens up by saying, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and then he closes this passage in verse five with, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." What do we need to believe? Jesus is the Christ and born of God. If we pull that sandwich together, the top piece there, only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God—that means that Jesus is the Christ born of God and Jesus is the Son of God. If things connect to each other, if you're taking notes in your Bible, that would be a good thing you do right now: connect verse five with verse one and make that loop inside that passage. This is the anchoring truth for us.

As a quick reminder, the point of this particular series is not Bible study, although I will tiptoe to that, and we'll offer some insights and study the Bible to give my thoughts and ways to approach. The point of this series is to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, and learn how to do that. How then do we return the favor? How do we go back into the Word and dwell?

What I want to talk about today is actually something that could potentially stop your ability to just let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. I'm deeply, firmly committed, if you haven't already noticed, to this idea of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, to protect that, and to let that be our primary way of engaging in the Scripture.

Now, the Bible is also very clear that we need to be in fellowship with one another. The Bible is clear that we need to not only just be in casual fellowship, shoulder to shoulder with other believers, but we also need to be participating in the local church. We need to attend. We need to be involved. As we read, especially the New Testament, we see that there are structures inside the church. We have elders, we have pastors, we have deacons—leadership in the church that helps give structure to that and gets the job done. Go back and read Acts. Read Acts, Chapters One through about Chapter Nine, and you'll see the birth of how the structure looks and how we can do that. Read Ephesians, read Hebrews. Get those into you so you can see that God is calling us as a church to engage with each other, so we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, and then shoulder to shoulder, we should be engaging with one another. As that scripture says, Ephesians—I mean Colossians

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3:16—says, "Teach each other the Word of God dwelling as rich, teaching each other hymn, song, spiritual songs, and talking to each other spiritually," is the point. Colossians 3:16: So I go to a passage. I read it. I let the word of God dwell in me richly. I dwell in the Word intentionally. Where is the place then? What does it look like to have other people speak into my life, my pastors, my elders, my deacons, my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? Where is the place for letting them speak into my life? Well, it's possible. Are they in alignment with the Word? So there can become the problem, because I'm sure they wouldn't be speaking a word into your life if they didn't think they were in alignment with the Word. But we all know that people can speak things that aren't in alignment. I could speak something that isn't really tightly oriented to God's Word. Do we need that? So how do we know which authors, which teachers, which pastors to listen to, which ones to avoid?

Let me share something that's personal that happened in my life just recently. As I was thinking about this, I find it very discouraging to listen to achieve inspiration and helpful insights from someone, and then find out later they have a massive moral failing that really has disqualified them from being in ministry, and they should have repented, should have not been in ministry. They had sin interrupt their marriage or their personal, private life; they should have repented from that; they should not have been in ministry. A few years ago, we learned that Ravi Zacharias, one of my absolute favorite apologetics writers and teachers, was living in continual, unrepentant, vehemently opposed to any confrontation about his sin. Recently, a few days before this podcast came out, one of our favorite pastors, Tony Evans, came forward and said that he needed to step down from his ministry because of unconfessed sin from his past. He did not reveal what it was, but he said it wasn't breaking the law, but he needed to step down. I love that respect for that.

I was revisiting a beautiful book that I love, written by an author I loved. His name is A.W. Tozer, and he wrote a great book that has been a long-time inspiration for me, called "The Pursuit of God." I still love that book. Some of the things that he said in that book have held on and given me great insight. He said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Isn't that great? He said faith is "an organ of knowledge, an organ of experience." I love that. He said it's "the gaze of a soul upon a saving God." He said, "Justice is not something that God has; justice is something that God is." Beautiful, Pastor, teacher. But he died, his wife remarried, and her comment when asked about being remarried and her new husband was, "I have never been happier in my life. Aiden, her husband, A.W. Tozer, loved Jesus Christ, but Leonard, her current husband, now loves me." How sad, right? So someone who gave himself so fully to the gospel and his ministry didn't give himself fully enough to his wife and his family. You see later, his own children say basically the same thing. They felt abandoned by their father to his ministry. That made me really sad.

C.S. Lewis, one of my absolute favorite, very quotable, solid authors, disagrees with some pretty conservative evangelicals. He drank, he smoked. Conservative evangelicals would say that's a sin. He also had some theological differences from mainstream Christianity. In many ways, he said that someone could reason themselves into Christianity, but most conservative evangelicals would hold that God is the one that draws us into Christianity. We cannot reason; we have to have our hearts softened by God. Also, he didn't believe in the substitutionary atonement—the idea that Jesus took my place on the cross. That's getting into some theology. I don't want to get too distracted by that.

Beth Moore, modern, still alive and teaching, has had some pretty zany, interesting, offbeat things to say, prophecies, dreams. She said she's had some loose ways of applying the Bible, misapplying the Bible. She'll take a passage and then apply it in kind of an odd way. You find yourself kind of inspired by what she says, but it doesn't really align with what the scripture really says.

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As an author and a group of authors, as a group of people, the Southern Baptist Convention just recently came out and said that they stand in opposition to in vitro fertilization. Literally just breaking news this week as I'm recording this podcast. Alright, what do we do with all of that? I'm not going to get into all those issues. That's not the point. The point is we have people who love God, love Jesus, love His Word, speaking things, or living a life that we find ourselves disagreeing with. Obviously, someone like Ravi Zacharias, sin and things like that. Tony Evans recusing himself from his ministry for whatever reason he decides to do it, which obviously I respect him for doing that. Ravi never repented.

Okay, so what do we do with that? Go back to this passage in First John 5: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him." And then verse five: "Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Reducible minimum, in a sense—the basis of what it looks like to declare that you are a Christian, right? We need to believe that Jesus is the Christ. We need to believe that He is the Son of God. Now, here's what's important: "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments. His commandments are not burdensome." In other words, we shouldn't shrug off His commandments. We should hold to His commandments, and everyone that's been born overcomes the world. In other words, the sin that's in the world, we can overcome that because we love God. We have that true love of God in us.

So how do we decide which authors to listen to, which authors to avoid? Do they live a life that number one, declares that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the Son of God? Awesome. But do they keep His commands? How are we going to know that there's going to be secret sin that might later be revealed? We might never know all of the things. Also, we need to be in community. We need to have people who are willing to admit, "Hey, I blew it on this, and I'm wrong." Thank you, Tony Evans, for stepping up and being a good example of that for him and his family during this very difficult time.

Then we need to look at things that aren't necessarily a point of obedience and sin. We need to think about what the Southern Baptist Convention has decided—that in vitro fertilization is a sin and they're not going to support it. We need to understand why. We need to compare that with scripture. That's how we come back to that. We're not in the weeds. I'm not going to have my allegiance to people. I'm not going to be a trooper and follow along with fill-in-the-blank name a famous person. I'm not going to read their books first. That's why I preach, in a sense, boy, devotionals. Avoid these types of books. Why? Because those people are going to fail. They already have failed by the time that book has gone into print. Just stick to God's word. Listen to good pastors, teachers, deacons, elders, friends, but hold it up against scripture. You cannot do that if you do not know scripture.

Please be faithful to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Please continue to be faithful to trust God's word first. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom, insight, and discernment, to protect your mind, to guard your heart and your mind according to God's word, and to not be quick to quote people but be quick to quote God's word and support God's word when you're talking with people.

Next time we get together for this podcast, I'm going to talk a little bit more about our emotions and how that impacts our faith and our living that out, and how it can propel us better, or it can stunt our growth, in a sense. So join me next time for that as well. This was helpful for you today. I'd love to hear your thoughts and feedback. Please note that I'm also not going to be podcasting live anymore because of the way Podbean has been interrupting my live podcast with commercials. So I'm going to be hosting these from my website, and you'll see that in the link below.

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Thank you again. This is a little long day for joining me. Thank you for hanging in there with a little bit longer episode and just being a part of this community. I love it. I appreciate your feedback. Leave a comment over on my podcast or the YouTube channel and let me know what you're thinking, thoughts, and ideas that you have about this. Questions? I'd love to dig into this a little bit more for you. And I appreciate again that you're here. I do know that you are loved, know that you are prayed for, and I look forward to being back here again with you real soon. Bye for now.

Action Items

- Pray for wisdom and discernment in evaluating Christian authors and pastors.
- Compare views like on in vitro fertilization with what Scripture says rather than just following organizations.
- Not be quick to quote people but quick to quote Scripture when talking to others.
- Join the next discussion on handling emotions and how it impacts faith