

Greg Laurie

General Teachings/Activities

<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/laurie/general.htm>

Noot: wie behoefte heeft aan een Nederlandse vertaling van dit artikel, kan dat aanvragen

- Greg Laurie (circa.1953) is an author, crusade evangelist, and charismatic pastor of the eighth largest church in America, the Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California. (The church also has three administrative pastors and eleven assistant pastors, and averages a weekly attendance of 15,000.) The church was started in 1972 as Calvary Chapel Riverside -- a Bible study of about 30 people. Laurie was just 19 years of age at the time. The name was changed to Harvest Christian Fellowship in 1982. Laurie's ministry began at Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, the largest church in the state of California, under the tutelage of charismatic, psychologizer Chuck Smith. Laurie is a product of the "Jesus People Movement" [see Note] of the 1960s and 1970s pioneered by Smith, a counter-cultural, hippie movement which focused heavily on subjective religious experience. In 1989, Chuck Smith asked Greg Laurie to resume teaching a Monday night Bible study at Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa. Soon, some 2,500 people were attending this weekly gathering.

Laurie is also the featured speaker on a nationally syndicated one-half hour daily radio program (approx. 250 stations) entitled "A New Beginning," and on a daily one-minute audio titled "A Time For Harvest." He also has a daily half-hour television program airing in a limited number of markets (primarily on the West Coast). He is also a regular speaker at The Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove, in Asheville, North Carolina, and at the Billy Graham School of Evangelism; he serves on the board of directors of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse, among others. He holds two honorary doctorates from Biola University and Azusa Pacific University. Laurie has authored several books, including *Life, Any Questions?*, *The Great Compromise*, *Every Day With Jesus*, *On Fire*, *The Invisible World*, *Five Minutes with Jesus*, *Discipleship: Giving God Your Best*, *The New Believer's Growth Book*, *The God of the Second Chance: Experiencing Forgiveness*, and his latest, *The Upside-Down Church*.

- Laurie is probably best known for his Harvest Crusades, which are frequently broadcast on the blasphemous Trinity Broadcasting Network. Laurie conducts 5-6 evangelistic, three-day crusades every year that draw on average about 50,000 people each. Since the first Harvest Crusade at Costa Mesa's Pacific Amphitheater in 1990, where more than 90,000 people attended, 2.56 million people have heard Laurie speak at crusades across the country (through October 2000). (Each crusade event is typically 1-1/2 hours of entertainment and announcements, and 1/2 hour of preaching.) Always keeping score, Laurie claims that through these crusades, nearly 210,000 people have indicated that they have "made a decision to commit their lives to Jesus Christ." Laurie's ministry has been endorsed by such notables as Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, John MacArthur, and hyper-charismatic Jack Hayford.

Laurie's events feature "Christian" pop music and a sermon laced with quotes from Sting to John Lennon to Oscar Wilde. Laurie describes his ministry as "old gospel in new packaging." His church sells cappuccino between Sunday morning services. His favorite movie is "Ben Hur" (he cried during the crucifixion scene) and he collects Disney memorabilia (11/10/94, *The Charlotte Observer*). Asked what he would do if his children turn from Jesus when they grow older, Laurie said he would respect their individuality (7/30/94, *Houston Chronicle*).

- Laurie's gospel is a man-centered psychological gospel -- his message is one of finding a "deeper meaning in life," with Jesus as the One who came to "fill the void" (see below). Despite this Arminian, man-centered gospel, Laurie claims that the "results" of his crusades prove that his ministry has "undeniably been blessed and used by God in a unique way." Read in Laurie's own words what he has to say about his "success":

“The trademark of a Greg Laurie program, whether it be a Sunday morning church service or a stadium crusade, is the contemporary, yet straightforward, style and format. All programs feature contemporary music, concise messages from the Bible, and an informal atmosphere. All of this contributes to an entertaining and non-threatening environment that attracts people of all ages, but particularly young people” (Harvest Church Internet Web Site:10/00 posting).

Translation: Laurie-led church services (a) are primarily attended by young people dressed in shorts and T-shirts, (b) are heavy in entertaining “Christian” rock music, and (c) are light in Biblical message. Should we be surprised, then, that a “non-threatening environment,” with entertainment and a 15-30 minute sermon, would attract a large crowd?

- Rock music is a main staple of Laurie-led crusades. ReligionToday.com, an Internet religious news service, reported after a 1998 crusade that 12,000 youth “registered decisions to commit their lives to following Jesus Christ,” and that Laurie “peppers his talks with illustrations from culture and current events, quoting lyrics from [secular rock groups] Smashing Pumpkins or Nine Inch Nails” in order to answer young people’s questions in a more “relevant” way. Crusade director John Collins told Religion Today, “We bring in fairly raucous music” but added that the crowd does not get out of control. Rock groups Audio Adrenaline, the Super Tones, Big Tent Revival and The Kry generated the interest of 88,000 young people during two evenings. Laurie is also a frequent speaker at other Christian Rock music festivals (one of which in 1997 [Creation ‘97] featured the group Jars of Clay, which at the time had recently recorded for a new R-rated film that had nudity and 83 obscenities).

Laurie’s Harvest Crusade is a perfect example of how New Evangelicals today are attempting to use the tools and amusements of the world to reach people for Christ. God’s Word, however, commands believers to act and live in a way that is different from that of the world. The idea that the truth of the Gospel message itself is not enough to reach people for Christ completely undermines the power of the message and of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. God never commands the church to use the world to make His Gospel message more “palatable.” No, the church is commanded to boldly sow the seed of God’s Word, whether or not it is attractive to the listener. (Source: Sept-Oct 1998, *Foundation*.)

- The Apostle Paul in Galatians takes a very serious stand against someone who perverts the gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Laurie’s gospel in a booklet entitled *Teenage Suicide: The Ultimate Wipeout!* is such a false gospel. At the very beginning (of dealing with suicide) we are told that suicide is an “epidemic.” This subtly denies the fact that suicide is sin. He then goes into the “Breakdown [of] The Home”; “Fear of the Future”; speaks of a need for loving the teenager “unconditionally”; and quotes Dr. James Dobson as someone we should listen to. The booklet is completely void of any reference to the fact that suicide is serious sin and rebellion against God.

Laurie’s gospel is totally self-centered and man-centered. Laurie goes back to his old standby to explain the suicide “epidemic” -- to wit, “Chronic Loneliness”!:

“This chronic loneliness involves a feeling of inner emptiness, sadness, discouragement, restlessness, anxiety, a sense of isolation and an intense desire to be wanted or needed by someone.”

We know this kind of “loneliness” is sin, because Galatians 5:20 says one of the works of the flesh is “selfish ambitions.” For someone to be so consumed with feelings of “emptiness, sadness, discouragement, restlessness, and anxiety” because they have “an intense desire to be wanted or needed,” is evidence that they are consumed with their own self-centered desires/selfish ambitions. Jesus’ cure for this is found in Luke 9:23 (deny yourself). Laurie’s cure, on the other hand, is “You need to know that Jesus has come to fill that lonely void in your life.”

Laurie’s gospel is a perversion! Jesus did **not** come to this sin-sick, wicked world to die in utter shame exposed on a cross and then rise up from the dead so that He could someday “fill that lonely void in your life”! Jesus came because the wrath of God was heavy upon us! The true gospel is a slap in the face to mankind. It is not God’s offer to man to fill that “void” in his life.

- Our concern with the ministry of Greg Laurie is five-fold: (1) He teaches a man-centered gospel; (2) He fails to identify false teachers in the church; (3) He is duped by psychology; (4) He is ecumenical; and (5) He obliterates the warning of discipleship:

1. A Man-Centered Gospel

Laurie's message is one of finding a "deeper meaning in life" and "filling the void"; this is clear in his tape, *What Is the Gospel?* (M634). There he says:

"Boiled down, the gospel is essentially this: that God loves humanity, but we've broken His laws; we've miserably fallen short of his glory. *Now the result of that is an emptiness and a void in our life*, and a certain judgment we will all face. Therefore, God took drastic measures, and He came to this earth, and went to the cross and died in our place ..." (Emphasis added.)

No doubt, there is truth mixed in that statement, but if there wasn't, it wouldn't be deceitful. An *L.A. Times* article of 7/10/94 states, "Laurie urges Christians to appeal to that internal void." In his book *Five Minutes With Jesus*, Laurie states under, "Things That Are True of Every Person" (pp. 96-97):

"Every man or woman, no matter how wealthy or powerful, has an emptiness inside. No matter how great things look on the outside ... there is a void and an emptiness in every person's life. ... You can assume that in addition to emptiness in a person's life, there is loneliness ... no relationship can fill that inner loneliness in your life."

In his book *Every Day with Jesus*, he says:

"But still there is a void in your life, a loneliness that just won't go away. Do you know what the hollowness is? It's a loneliness for God" (p. 291).

Laurie goes on to say that this "void" was created by God!:

"You were created with a void and an emptiness that only God can fill" (p. 292).

And, he calls Jesus the loneliest man who ever lived!:

"Next to the cross itself, I think the loneliest movement in the life of Jesus occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there Jesus experienced a depth of loneliness no man or woman could ever know. ... There has never been a man who experienced loneliness as deeply as Jesus did" (pp. 61 & 291).

But the Bible says that loneliness is the result of living a self-centered life (Gal. 5:20 -- "selfish ambitions"). The cure is to deny yourself (Luke 9:23). It is true that Jesus will cure this problem of "loneliness," because He is the answer to our problem of self-centeredness and sin. But this "loneliness," that supposedly is a driving factor towards God, is actually the result of sin in a person's life (John 10:10). No doubt there is joy in Christ, but the abundant life Christ is speaking of is not the filling some void. This is completely a fabrication by Greg Laurie, nowhere found in Scripture.

In Greg Laurie's man-centered gospel, he also appears to preach that it is *hard* to go to hell. Contrary to the teaching of Jesus, recorded in Matthew 7:13-14, Laurie says (on the tape, *God's Message To The Young* (Part 1):

"But I want to tell you something. I think it's kind of hard to go to hell. I think it's hard because you have got to resist the calling of the Spirit on your life over and over and over again. You have to really be determined, and you have to resist Him; and ignore Him; and run from Him; and disobey Him. If you get hell, pat yourself on the back, it took hard work."

Like all man-centered gospels, Laurie has made man sovereign in salvation.

2. Failure To Identify False Teachers In The Church (2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4)

In the book store at Harvest Christian Fellowship, one will find such authors as Tim LaHaye, Gary Smalley, Ed Wheat, and Dr. James Dobson. Under the sign reading, "Pastor's Recommended Reading," Laurie had Dr. James Dobson's book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. This is the book in

which Dobson actually suggests that we forgive God (pp. 238 & 242).

3. Duped By Psychology

Even though Laurie occasionally preaches against psychology and self-esteem, he himself has been taken in by it. On the tape *Key to True Happiness* (M449), Laurie says:

“... and we turn to Him and He enters into our life, *now I am of great value*. Not because of what I was before Jesus came, but because of who I am since Jesus came into my life. ... So now I recognize I have a treasure inside of me. I have something valuable inside of me, so that now, I don't walk around and say, 'I'm garbage, I'm worthless.' No. I have something to offer this world. I have a message to give to this world.”

Laurie teaches psychology and self-esteem by “Christianizing” it -- “Now that I'm saved, I'm worth something!”

He has also bought into psychological explanations for the human dilemma. In the *Southern California Christian Times* he is quoted as saying: “The majority of societal problems can be directly related to the breakdown of the family” [sounds like James Dobson]. In Laurie's booklet, *God's Blueprint For Today's Family*, he says, “... I found one common link in every major problem facing our culture: the disintegration of the family.”

4. Ecumenical

Greg Laurie came out of Chuck Smith's church. In view of this, it is no wonder he is ecumenical. In Laurie's Harvest Crusades, between 500 and 800 churches are involved in providing various forms of support. The Harvest web site states that:

“The type of support would range from financial support to providing volunteer workers to promoting attendance at the crusades. Many denominations and associations are involved, including Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical Free, Church of Christ [baptismal regeneration], Assembly of God, Calvary Chapels, and independent churches.”

Typically, Vineyard and Roman Catholic churches also participate. With this in mind, should it be a surprise to read that Laurie said, “I find I have more in common with a committed Catholic than a liberal Protestant” (*L.A. Times*). [cf. 2 John 9-11]

5. Obliterates The Warning Of Discipleship

On His tape, *Wanted Disciples* (M726), Laurie says:

“You could say that every disciple is a believer, but you could not necessarily say that every believer is a disciple. In other words, every disciple of Jesus obviously is already a believer, but just because you're a believer doesn't mean that you become a disciple.”

In *Discipleship: Giving God Your Best*, he calls discipleship “radical Christian living,” and even talks against “easy-believism” (p. 7). How does he explain this?:

“The requirements of discipleship are different than the requirements of salvation. To be a Christian, you need to believe in Him whom God has sent, and then you will receive eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a gift. To be a disciple is to take up the cross daily and follow Him, making His will your will. It is a commitment. ... As you are learning, every disciple is a Christian, but not every Christian is a disciple” (pp. 30-31).

That is a lie! Yet, He purports that this is what Jesus teaches. On the back cover of the book it says:

“In a biblical, straightforward manner, Greg Laurie shares: Jesus' definition of discipleship ... Discipleship requires an unabashed, uncompromising commitment to Jesus Christ. Every disciple is a believer, but not every believer is a disciple. Discover the dynamic difference.”

Is this what Jesus taught (cf. Matt. 10:37-39)? Jesus is speaking of salvation! Just as he was talking about salvation (eternal life) with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-27). *If you are a Christian, you are a disciple of Christ. If you are not a disciple of Christ, you are **not** a Christian!* (cf. Mark 8:34-36). This is serious error Greg Laurie is teaching. He is obliterating the very Words of our Living Savior! This is no small matter.

- Promise Keepers is the gigantic new (1991) “men’s movement” among professing evangelical Christians. Its roots are Catholic and charismatic to the core. PK’s contradictory stand on homosexuality; its promotion of secular psychology; its unscriptural feminizing of men; its depiction of Jesus as a “phallic messiah” tempted to perform homosexual acts; and its ecumenical and unbiblical teachings should dissuade any true Christian from participating. Promise Keepers is proving to be one of the most ungodly and misleading movements in the annals of Christian history. Nevertheless, **Greg Laurie** is a promoter of this ecumenical, charismatic, psychologized men’s movement as evidenced by his speaking at its conferences.

- Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright fasted 40 days during the summer of 1994, during which he claims to have received a “prophecy from God” that a mighty revival is coming. He then issued a call for hundreds of liberals, charismatics, and new-evangelicals to gather in Orlando 12/5/94-12/7/94 to fast and pray for revival. An Invitation Committee made up of a hodgepodge of 72 liberals, new evangelicals, and charismatics was formed. Included were: Robert Schuller, Charles Colson, E.V. Hill, Jack Hayford, James Dobson, W.A. Criswell, Charles Stanley, Paul Crouch, Luis Palau, Bill Gothard, Pat Robertson, Kay Arthur, and Larry Burkett. CCC’s Bill Bright cites “a great sense of urgency to link arms and unitedly call upon God for help in the spirit of King Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20).” This ecumenical “linking” is in the “spirit of Jehoshaphat” indeed, but the Jehoshaphat of 2 Chr. 18 (instead of 2 Chr. 20) where he “linked” with wicked King Ahab and incurred the wrath of God. (Reported in the 11/15/94, *Calvary Contender*.) [Another three-day “Fasting & Prayer” conference was held in 11/95 in Los Angeles; it attracted 3,500 “evangelicals” and charismatics. The Invitation/Host Committee for this event included most of those listed above, plus Dick Eastman, Chuck Smith, Bill McCartney (Promise Keepers), Tim and Beverly LaHaye, Shirley Dobson, Paul Cedar (E-Free), Ted Engstrom (World Vision), Joseph Stowell (Moody), and Joseph Aldrich (Multnomah). A third conference was held 11/14/96-11/16/96 in St. Louis. New additions to the Host Committee included Max Lucado, Henry Blackaby, Loren Cunningham (YWAM), **Greg Laurie**, Dennis Rainey, Randy Phillips (Promise Keepers), Josh McDowell, D. James Kennedy, Howard Hendricks, and Neil Anderson. (Conferences have been held every year now, but there is an uncertain future with Bill Bright’s planned retirement (August, 2001) from Campus Crusade.)]

- Regardless of which of the Bible versions a true Bible-believer might choose to use, all can agree that the *Living Bible* is **not** an acceptable “translation.” In July 1996, the *New Living Translation* (NLT) by Tyndale House Publishers came out as a remake of Kenneth Taylor’s the *Living Bible*, which first appeared in a complete Bible in 1971 and which has sold more than 40 million copies. The advertisements tell us that “The *New Living Translation* provides a wonderful balance of readability and authority. ... due to the careful work of 90 leading Bible scholars, it is accurate to the original Greek and Hebrew text.” The cover jacket of the NLT contains enthusiastic recommendations by Billy Graham, Bill Hybels and Josh McDowell, and was featured positively in the 10/28/96 edition of *Christianity Today* in an article, “The Living Bible Reborn.”

In truth, the NLT (also produced under a variety of titles such as *New Believer’s Bible*, *Life Application Study Bible*, *TouchPoint Bible*, and *The One Year Bible*) is a more worthless version than the *Living Bible* ever was. It is, again, a paraphrase, like the *Living Bible*, but its updating of the language and phrase additions make a mockery of the Word of God. No problem for **Greg Laurie**, though. He says:

“One tool that may help you keep that ‘one thing’ as your priority is the *New Believer’s Bible* that I mentioned in my last letter to you. It is a Bible in the *New Living Translation* that is chock full of notes that I have written with the design of taking a person from the point of initial belief to a good, basic foundation in the Word. ... I am happy to report that it is now available! I hope it will be a blessing to you and others” (Harvest Church Internet Web Site:12/96 posting).

Note on the Jesus People Movement: Chuck Smith reached out to the hippies and spiritual “seekers” looking for enlightenment in ways ranging from Buddhism to LSD. “Christianity” became an option for some as Calvary Chapel welcomed these young people with long hair, jeans, and bare feet into its worship services. By 1971, Smith was at the forefront of the Jesus People Movement, baptizing hundreds in the Pacific Ocean and erecting a giant circus tent that could hold 1,600 people for Sunday services (12/31/94, *Rapid City Journal*, p.A7). The 9/93 issue of *Charisma* magazine had a section of articles discussing the legacy of the Jesus People Movement. Some key words/phrases characterizing this movement were: Sexual revolution, acid generation, long hair, hippies, rock/folk music, rebellion, anti-war protest, peace, love, “Jesus freaks,” flower children, communes, and coffeehouse ministries. The Jesus People Movement helped fuel the wild-fire spread of the Charismatic Movement along with its so-called Contemporary Christian Music. It gave vitality to such ecumenical/neo-evangelical organizations as Campus Crusade, Youth With A Mission, The Navigators, and Jews for Jesus. *Cornerstone* magazine (Jesus People USA) and Greg **Laurie** (indirectly) are also a products of the Jesus People Movement. (Reported in the 9/15/93, *Calvary Contender*.)

A Jesus People Reunion concert was held at Anaheim’s Arrowhead Pond on 4/24/99. The 4/25/99 *Orange County Register* reported that over 10,000 people gathered to celebrate the birth of the Jesus People Movement, a movement of hippies in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s who, under the leadership of Calvary Chapel’s Chuck Smith, professed to come to Christ but continued to indulge in the music, dress, and commune-style living of the hippie generation. The article noted that scholars today “credit them with spearheading a casual style of worship that is the norm among many congregations worldwide.” One reunion attendee told the *Register*, “Jesus resembled the flower children in many ways. He probably sported long hair. He hung out with the poor and the outcasts. He shook up the establishment. And if he understands English, he’s grooving along with us right now.” Chuck Smith spoke at the reunion and reminisced about the hippie years. The *Register* article noted, “More than anything else, music defined the hippie experience at Smith’s sanctuary. Some of the top draws reunited Saturday afternoon.” Those in attendance listened to several bands perform, including Mustard Seed Faith, Parable, and Love Song. (Reported in the May-June 1999, *Foundation*.)