

## WHERE DOES MY HELP COME FROM? INTERVIEW WITH KEITH GILES

*Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [Flyingfreenow.com](http://Flyingfreenow.com), and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.*

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 205 of the Flying Free Podcast. I have a special surprise guest this week, meaning that we decided to do this interview at the last minute, and I think it's a God thing. The stars just lined right up, and here we are.

So before I let him say anything, though, I want to give you all a little bit of background. At the time of this recording, I just finished dropping Episode 195, where I answer the question, "Am I being unbiblical if I choose not to reconcile with my abuser?" And in that episode, I talk about how modern Christianity has gotten away from a Christ-centered approach to living, which is what the early Christians were known for and what I personally believe is our main objective as Christians — hence the name "Christian," you know. Kind of makes sense when you think about it. But instead of focusing on Jesus Christ as our God and living as He lived, we are currently mired in a Bible-centered religion or a book-centered religion, much like other world religions and much like the religion of the Pharisees. And as a result, we are seeing all kinds of spiritual gaslighting and abuse. And if that doesn't make any sense to you, just go back and listen to Episode 195 for more insight.

Here's the thing, though: Every time I drop a new podcast episode, I usually get a handful of folks who will unsubscribe. I talk about controversial things, so it's natural that the conversations I'm having are not going to resonate with everyone and people are going to drop off. But after that episode, it was fascinating, because we got three times the normal drop off that we usually get. And I realized that when we touch someone else's god, there's going to be some reaction.

And then I realized further that the Bible really is the modern Christian's god. We have exchanged the Word of God, Jesus Christ, for a holy book. Now, I want to clarify that I am not against the Bible. The Bible has been an integral part of my life for almost fifty years. I would not be who I am or where I am without it. I love the Bible, and there is more to learn and uncover. I think it's a multilayered, multifaceted gem, and we can find so many things about God in its pages. But I am beginning to believe that it is a form of idol worship that we have fallen into today. And I think the fruit that I'm seeing is horrific, because honestly, I don't think anything should stand in the way of our worship of Jesus Christ if we call ourselves Christians.

So that brings me to our guest. This summer I came across a brand new book called "Sola Mysterium," and it was written by this guy who is part of the Heretic Happy Hour podcast, which is a podcast that I've been following for quite a while. The people on this podcast are super smart, way smarter than I am. It's kind of edgy. And so it might scare some of you off, but it's a lot of fun too. We're going to talk about it with our guest in just a minute.

So I bought this book because this book seemed more serious and more Christian. And I read it in about a week, and I absolutely loved it. It resonated so much with what God's been showing me personally about who He is and who I am in relation to Him. And I loved it so much that I wanted to see what else this guy writes. So I found another one of his books called "Jesus Unbound: Liberating the Word of God from the Bible," and the title just was like, "What?! This is exactly what I've been thinking about lately." So again, I could not put it down. It confirmed everything that I've been kind of suspecting and mulling over for the past couple of years, and it brought a lot of threads together for me in a cohesive train of thought that aligned with my core values, it aligned with and strengthened my faith in Jesus Christ in a really profound way, and it gave me a ton of comfort and hope.

So I started following this guy a little more closely on Facebook, and I saw that he was opening up this class called Square One. Now, anything with numbers makes me break out in hives. So my brain was not super excited about this class at first, but as I read more about it, I decided to join and keep my fingers crossed that we wouldn't have to do any math or geometry. Well, I'm finishing up this class now, and I am honored to introduce you to this author and this teacher.

And you guys, this guy is the real deal. I recently found out he's an INFJ, which is what I am, which is quite possibly why I feel so safe and comfortable with who he is and what he teaches. This is a man who loves Jesus and would also be considered a heretic like me in many of today's Christian circles, which, honestly, in today's Christian culture, I think it's a sign that you're a true Christ lover if you're called a heretic. Today, if you love Jesus and try to be like Him too much, you are considered a heretic, kind of like when Jesus was on earth and got murdered by the religious elites of his day. They called him the son of Beelzebub, but that was kind of like their way of calling them a heretic. So are you itching to meet our guest? I want to warmly welcome Keith Giles to the Flying Free Podcast. Thank you so much for being here with us today.

KEITH: Oh, Natalie, thank you so much. That was very gracious and generous. I appreciate that so much and to be your guest on this podcast and have this conversation.

NATALIE: Okay, so since people probably don't know you, and I want them to get to know you a little bit, I feel like they're going to want to know why they can trust you, I think. You're a guy. This is kind of a female podcast. And most of them don't have really nice men in their lives. So they're going to want to know, "Why can I trust this guy, and why should I open up my mind and my heart to learning new things in this discussion?" So tell us a little bit about yourself.

KEITH: Well, thank you. Well, what can I say? Wow. It's like, how do I begin? Well, I love Jesus, like you said — I do. And so even though yes, some people have called me a heretic and we play on that with my podcast, Heretic Happy Hour, we're not calling ourselves heretics. We're just laughing at the fact that... What we always say is, "Everybody is somebody's heretic," you know what I mean? It just means you disagree with something that somebody else believes. So from my background, I'm married. My wife Wendy and I have been married... Last month it was thirty-three years.

NATALIE: Wow. Congratulations.

KEITH: Thank you. She's an amazing gift to me. I mean, she's just amazing. You've got to meet her one day.

NATALIE: I would love to.

KEITH: And then we have two boys, Dylan and David. They both graduated college. One's in Long Beach, California, one's in Portland, Oregon. And they're amazing kids. I was licensed and ordained way back, well, the same time we got married, same year we got married, so it's thirty-three years. I was licensed and ordained Southern Baptist and I was on staff at different churches. We moved to Orange County, California, and then a few years after that, we started getting involved in vineyard churches, helped to plant some churches. And most of that was good, you know. Well, mixed, I guess, but for the most part it wasn't bad.

But then Wendy and I felt that we were called to do something a little radical, which was to start a church that gave everything away and they didn't keep any money for ourselves for salaries or flat-screen plasma screens or any of that stuff. And so we ended up just meeting in people's living rooms, and we gave away 100% of the offerings that we received and collected to help families living in poverty in Orange County, many of them living in motels or in their car and things like that. We did that for eleven years. It was a really beautiful experience.

And it was the beginning of sort of what we call deconstruction experience. The more I

stepped out of organized religion... I kind of say sometimes that I left the pulpit or I left the church to follow Jesus. And that's really what it felt like. Wendy and I both really felt like to follow Jesus the way we were feeling called to follow Jesus, that that's the step we had to take and try to move in solidarity with people that were struggling in poverty and things like that. So that was a wonderful experience. We loved being able to do that.

And I started writing and blogging about some of my experiences, and I self-published a few books. And then a little over five years ago, I published my first book with Quoir Publishing and published that "Jesus Un" series. You talked about "Jesus Unbound." But there was "Jesus Untangled," which is about faith in politics, "Jesus Undeclared," which is about hell, "Jesus Unforsaken," which is about the cross and the atonement, and "Jesus Unexpected" about the second coming and the end times and all that kind of stuff. So I just tried to write books that hopefully would help people process some of these things, and these are some of the bigger... I call them pillars of deconstruction. These are the main things people wrestle with and struggle with as they begin to question their faith.

And it's been awesome. I've been so blessed to get the feedback from people who have read those books and to know that those books have helped them take away some of the fear and toxic theology that we sometimes have grown up with. And then like you mentioned, about three and a half years ago, I started this thing called Square One, because I was tired of just helping one person at a time. I used to get on phone calls with people or Zoom calls with people or chat with people, one person at a time who had a question about this or struggle about that, and "What do I do about this or that," and I loved doing that, but then I always felt frustrated. Like, most of the time I never heard from those people again. I don't know what happened — how are they doing, you know? So I thought, well, what if I create this kind of community, and we can get a bunch of people together and we can see each other in a Zoom call and we can spend twelve weeks together and we can walk with each other through this process and help each other through the process?

And that's been amazing. I have been so blessed to be a part of this thing, this Square One — and then there's a Square Two and a Square Three — just getting to know those people, getting to kind of walk alongside them in their experiences. It's been really, really wonderful. So I don't know if that's really answering your question, but that's a bit of who I am and what I've been doing and all that.

NATALIE: That's great. I think for my audience, they are Christian women, and we were taught for our whole lives that the people who have all the answers are the people who

went to seminary, people who really studied the Word of God and really know the Bible. And we kind of looked up to those people for the answers, rather than... I mean, I would read my Bible, but if I had a question, the pastor would know the answer. So it appeals to us if we can actually talk to someone who was a pastor and who did have a seminary degree.

KEITH: Can I just... Sorry. I need to clarify. I do not have a seminary degree.

NATALIE: Oh, okay. So what do you mean by ordained?

KEITH: I'm completely self-taught, so everything I know I have studied on my own from the beginning. So yeah, that's a good thing to clarify. When I say I'm licensed and ordained, that's true. I was licensed and ordained by the Southern Baptist Convention of Texas through my church thirty-three years ago as a minister of the Gospel. But big shock, if you don't know this, and a lot of people don't know this, the Southern Baptists, to be licensed and ordained, you don't have to have a Bible degree or seminary degree. You don't have to go to Bible college or any of that.

You have to pass a sort of a panel. I had to sit through an hour and a half... All the senior pastors in El Paso at the time — that's where I was — sat around and grilled me and asked me questions about doctrine and the Bible and blah, blah, blah and the ordinances of the church and hypothetical scenarios. And then I had to leave the room, and then they debated and deliberated and they brought me back in and they asked me some more questions. So it's a process, but it's not seminary. So, no. Everything I know about the Bible and about early church history and all that stuff is just stuff that I've been studying and reading on my own.

NATALIE: Okay. Well, then, forget it. We're not even going to interview anymore.

KEITH: Never mind, everybody. Thanks. Thanks for coming.

NATALIE: Oh my goodness. No, that's very fascinating. I didn't realize that. I was part of a church that... I don't know if you've ever heard of Great Commission Ministries. It's a kind of a little, sort of a culty, sub-group.

KEITH: No, I haven't heard of them.

NATALIE: Anyway, they have a sordid history, but I was a part of a church in their little organization for a while, and they were similar. Well, although, at least you guys had to know some answers. What they would do is raise up pastors — you could be a pastor if

you were leading a small group and you knew how to grow your small group really well. Then they assumed that, "Oh, you must have good influence on people. We're going to make you a pastor," and then you could be a pastor. And then if you were married to one of those guys, then you could be in the women's ministry and you could help women. But you had to either be a pastor or married to one to basically exercise any gifts that you might have.

KEITH: Yeah. You know what? So going back to when I was ordained back in El Paso thirty-three years ago, the pastor of the church that I was attending, where I was serving — I was like a music minister and the youth pastor — I think he might have had a Master's of Divinity, he might have had an MDiv. There was only one pastor that I know of at the time who had a doctorate in theology. But everybody else was either like me — they had been licensed and ordained. One of them was a friend of mine. He was a football player at UTEP, and everyone liked him and he was charismatic and funny and interesting and he was the lead pastor of a church here in El Paso for a long time.

In Southern Baptist circles, apparently, it's not a requirement. It's nice — if you want to go to seminary, you want to get a master's or a doctorate, you can do that. You might get a better paying job. But even the pastor of... Oh, I take that back. I think maybe the pastor of the First Baptist Church, which is the biggest church, he might have had a doctorate degree. But he didn't call himself doctor, you know? Some of them did.

NATALIE: The older that I get, the more I'm realizing that in this world it's just a bunch of people doing stuff.

KEITH: Yes. So here's the thing too about not having attended seminary and stuff, because it used to bother me for a while. Like, "Oh," you know, "I don't have that degree." People have even told me, "Oh, you should go and get that degree." But in my experience, I know several people who just loved Jesus and had a beautiful heart and just had incredible connections spiritually with God and stuff. And again, I don't want to generalize and say this is true of everybody, but I do know people and I saw this happen to them, where they had these incredible connections with God and this beautiful faith in Christ, and then they went to seminary and they came out with a very strong "us and them," and "you're in and you're out," and "you're wrong and you're a heretic." And they just completely changed them because they kind of got indoctrinated into a certain way.

And so for me, I realized one of my heroes early on in the faith as a guy named A.W. Tozer, and I used to love his stuff and I found out he was like me. He was self-taught. He didn't attend seminary. And then several other people like authors and thinkers that



I really appreciated, I realized they also didn't have any degrees like that in theology. And for me, again, also my experience is just that typically when you attend those kinds of seminaries and schools — again, I don't want to over generalize — but most of them are denominational. Most of them are not going to teach you, “Hey, by the way, in church history,” for example... I'll just use an example, because this is a big, big part of one of my books on the doctrine of hell.

Growing up, I was only taught one way of thinking of the doctrine of hell, right? Eternal torment — that's it. The Bible teaches it. Period. It's over. So that's all I was taught. Well, then on my own, later on when I started studying the topic and I went into church history and I realized, oh my gosh, starting in the first century from the beginning of Christianity as a movement, as a faith system, there were always three competing, different biblical-based, scripturally-based views of the doctrine of hell. Eternal torment, yes, was one of them. So was annihilation. And the third view was universal reconciliation. And the dominant view for the first four-hundred years of church history was universal reconciliation. And the minority view for that length of time was eternal torment.

Now, no one ever taught me. And if I had gone to a denominational school, they would've not wanted me to know that, right? So for me, it's sort of like this thing of like, I feel like I got an education. If I had gone to a seminary, I would've received an indoctrination. And the difference is, an indoctrination is, “We only want to tell you the thing we want you to know.” And an education is to say, “By the way, here's the entire spectrum. I want to teach you all of it.” I don't even care if the person teaching me says, “And I prefer” or “We prefer this perspective, but just so you know, there are others.” That at least gives you the option and the choice to make up your own mind, you know?

And that's what I feel like was the benefit that I'm glad I didn't go down that route, because I know a lot of people... I mean, frankly, a lot of people in my Square One group are former pastors. So that's been part of their deconstruction, is like, “Yeah, they never told me that in seminary.”

NATALIE: Yep. That's such a good point. I'm actually reading that book right now. Actually, no, I just finished it. I just finished it on Audible, the book on hell. I can't remember — what is that one called? “Jesus Un...”

KEITH: “Undefeated.”

NATALIE: “Undefeated.” “Jesus Undefeated.” Well, that makes sense. So I'm working my way through your books. So if anyone is listening, I can hear you. I can hear you. You're

going, "What?! We're talking about hell now? There's no hell?" Just take a deep breath. Everything's going to be okay. I think that it's okay to expose yourself to other ideas of things that Christians have historically believed in the past. It's okay. Okay, so this actually is a good segue into your current book, "Sola Mysterium," which sort of, in a way, kind of, it's like you finished writing those other... Is it seven books?

KEITH: Seven, yep.

NATALIE: Good number. Seven books. And then now you wrote the final... "Sola Mysterium" is basically saying, "Yeah, you know what, it's a freaking mystery."

KEITH: That's exactly right. After I wrote the seven books, I was sort of like, "Okay, as somebody..." Because this is my own personal journey. It wasn't like, "Hey, what kind of book can I write?" It was like, "No, this is where I am. I have deconstructed and thought through all these major things, and so where am I now?" And where I landed was, yeah, when we're talking about God, we're talking about a Being beyond all comprehension, and then if that's the case, then we cannot honestly talk about God using phrases like "I know," or "I'm certain," because you're not. You're talking about a mystery. You can say "I believe" and "I hope" and "I think," but you can't say, "I know for certain." So there's a difference between faith and certainty, right? The opposite of faith isn't doubt. I would argue the opposite of faith is certainty. Because once you're certain, who needs faith? You got all the answers, right?

NATALIE: Exactly. And how many times do we hear on social media, "Well, the Bible clearly says this."

KEITH: Oh, that's my favorite.

NATALIE: And then someone else will say, "Well no, it clearly says this."

KEITH: Yes. So I guess we're going to get into the Bible, right? That's for the main thing we wanted to talk about, right?

NATALIE: In this podcast episode?

KEITH: Yes.

NATALIE: We want to talk about the Bible?

KEITH: I thought so. I thought we were going to talk about the Bible.



NATALIE: Oh, that's right. We want to talk about the Bible. We're not just going to talk about your books? I'm kidding.

KEITH: So your statement, like, "The Bible clearly says" — I always laugh when people say that, because if the Bible clearly said anything, there wouldn't be thousands of denominations.

NATALIE: Exactly.

KEITH: We're all reading the same book. I mean, like I said, go back to early church history. Christians in the beginning had three different views, and they all used scripture to back up their view. So it's not like, "Oh, well one group of people, one view is backed up by scripture, and the rest are backed up by feelings and emotion and just their opinions" or whatever. No. All three of them would've said, "This is what the Bible teaches." And because the Bible is not "clear" about a lot of things, you know, that makes that possible.

So I also make a distinction between... Because you had said in the introduction, you know, the thing about the concern that you had about seeing... I've seen the same thing. It's why I wrote "Jesus Unbound." I've noticed the same thing, especially on social media, people posting things or saying things where, what I see they're doing — they don't see it — is they're replacing Christ with the Bible. So they'll make these amazing faith statements that if they had just changed it to "Christ" instead of "Bible," I would've said, "Yes, amen." But instead, they're saying those things about the Bible as if it's become Father, Son, and Holy Bible. And it's kind of scary to me, right?

In the book I say, when we do that, when we basically replace Christ with the Bible, to me, that's heresy. You want to talk about heresy? That's a scary thing, because I think what you're doing in that case is you are confusing the map with the treasure. And when you do that, like, if someone convinces you that, "Here's a map," but the map is the treasure, you don't actually go and find the treasure and you don't get the treasure. That's dangerous. If you want the treasure, the map is useful to find the treasure, and then that's the goal. You need to go and find the treasure. It's like if you go to a restaurant and you're really hungry and they give you the menu, that isn't the meal. That's the menu, right? The meal is the point. The meal is what it's pointing you to, right?

NATALIE: I just have to say this really quick. When I was thinking about what I wanted to say about the Bible and my relationship with the Bible, I was thinking, "Yeah, the Bible has been my anchor and my comfort," and all of a sudden I was like, "No, it was not the

Bible all along. It was Jesus Christ. It was the Holy Spirit. He was my anchor and my comfort. He used the Bible, but He also used other things. He used walking through the girls camp that I used to go to as a child or swimming in the lake at my grandparents and looking around me and feeling Him. He used so many other things, other books written by other people. God was always there all along. And it wasn't the Bible. I mean, yes, the Bible was there, but it was that and so many other things." To your point, that's the thing that's been dawning on me lately.

KEITH: Yeah. So I wrote a little blog post a couple years ago where I did this little Bible quiz thing. It was like, "Hey, it's only three questions. Can you pass this Bible quiz?" So here are the questions, right? It's three questions and it's really easy. Here's a hint. I'm going to give you the three questions, but the answer to every question is the same thing. So there's only one answer — it's the same answer. So if you get one of them right, you're going to get them all right. Don't answer yet. I'm just going to ask you the three questions, right?

So first question, what is a Christian's source of authority? Second question, what is the Christian's source for ultimate truth? And third question, what is the foundation of the Christian faith? Now, again, all three of them have the same answer. Now, growing up, the only answer to all three of those questions — and it seems for many Christians today, it's still the answer to all three of those questions — is, say it with me, the Bible, right? And I hear people all the time: "The Bible is the Christian's ultimate authority. The Bible is a Christian's only source for truth, and the Bible is the foundation of the Christian faith."

The problem with answering those three questions with the answer, "the Bible" is that that's not biblical. That's the crazy thing. If you are going to tell me, "I follow the Bible," and you just answered those three questions with the Bible, you just contradicted the Bible. Because in the Bible, it tells us that a Christian's ultimate source of authority is Jesus. It's Christ. Matthew 28:18, Jesus says, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Not a book that you guys are going to write about Me, like, you know, put together four-hundred years later — no." Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me."

What is a Christian's ultimate source of truth? Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Not the Bible, Christ. And then, what is the foundation of the Christian faith? Again, the answer is Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Christ," not the Bible.

NATALIE: Love it.

KEITH: And so again, I think it's a necessary thing. I hope that this podcast, and I hope things like my book and other people that are trying to... It's like I want to just grab Christians by their shoulders and shake them awake a little bit, like, "Hey, stop — wake up, wake up. See what you're doing?" It's a subtle shift. And it even feels like when you're talking this way, that it's the Bible, the Bible, the Bible, it feels like you are being a strong Christian. It feels like you're doing the right thing. Like I just showed you in that example, you're actually contradicting the Bible when you do that. You're not doing that. And so don't let yourself be sort of lulled into this thing where you let the Bible start replacing Christ. That is the danger.

So the Bible, just a quick rule of thumb, the Bible doesn't point us to the Bible. What is the Bible doing? The Bible never says, "And therefore, the answer is the Bible." No. In the scriptures, what we read is that it's Christ, right? The Old Testament scriptures are foreshadowing Christ, the New Testament scriptures are revealing Christ, and Christ is pointing us the way, right? Christ is the only who says, "Abide in Me and I will abide in you." So that's what we need to have our focus on, and anything that changes that focus, anything that subtly slips in and replaces the focus, replaces Christ as the focus so, "No, not Christ — the Bible. Well, that seems good. What could be wrong with that?" Uh, well, a lot. Because like I said, you're going to start treating the map like the treasure and you're going to miss the treasure. The treasure is Christ.

NATALIE: Yes. I love that. I think it's because we've been brainwashed with that thinking, okay? "The B-I-B-L-E..."

KEITH: "...yes, that's the book for me!"

NATALIE: Exactly. But it was interesting to me to realize that there's really only one verse in the Bible that people actually use to make that overarching concept be the foundation of our theology, and that's, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, correction, and for training in righteousness" or something like that.

KEITH: Oh yeah, that's right. 2 Timothy 3:16. The other 3:16.

NATALIE: Yeah. Can you talk about that a little bit?

KEITH: Oh, yeah. That's my favorite one. It's one of my favorite ones, because that will always come up, Natalie. I mean, you're right. Anytime I start trying to show people these things, it's almost the programming it defaults to. But the Bible says, you know, 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is God-breathed and useful for training and instruction and righteousness." And so the problem with that is that number one, we assume wrongly

that what is meant there when it says “All scripture is God-breathed,” when it says “scripture” that it's talking about the Bible that you're holding in your hand. Because that didn't exist, again, for another three or four-hundred years until after that was written. So it wasn't talking about that. And it actually doesn't even say that. So this is the big shocker for a lot of people.

And I invite anybody... Don't take my word for it. Go and look it up. You don't even have to be a Greek scholar. You don't have to own a Greek lexicon or an Interlinear New Testament. You can go to [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org), and it's an interlinear thing. It'll show you. You can just type in the text. Type in 2 Timothy 3:16 and it'll pull up the English, and then next to it, it'll be the Greek. And then under each Greek word, you can click on it and see what that word means, okay?

So in your English translations of the Bible that we all read, that we all quote, it says, “All scripture is God-breathed.” Now the shocker is in the Greek, it doesn't say “scripture.” So right away, your Bible isn't telling you exactly... Again, this is the problem with the Bible. It's a little bit of a mess, and we can talk about that in a minute. So it doesn't say “scripture,” so the word “scripture” isn't really what is said there. If you look at it, the word there in the Greek is “graphis,” and it's simply the Greek word for “writings.” In other words, any writings — a grocery list, a note to your friend, a post-it note, a book, a whatever, any little writing — anything anyone writes for any reason, is “graphis.” It's just writing — not scripture.

And so the more accurate way, then, in the Greek, to translate 2 Timothy 3:16 would be this: “All of the God-breathed writings are useful for training and instruction and righteousness” and things like that. And so then that begs the question, “Okay, if all of the God-breathed writings are useful for these things, what are the God-breathed writings?” That's the question you should ask. And so it begs the question, “What are the God-breathed writings?” I would say any writing that, guess what, is useful for training and instruction and righteousness.

And so I guess you said that can be of anything. It can be a book, it can be a scripture, absolutely. In my life, absolutely it's been a scripture, but it's also been Richard Rohr, Brené Brown, a song by Alanis Morissette on the radio, a conversation across the table at Starbucks. A friend of mine just says something and it's like, “That's it,” you know? And so it's just recognizing in your spirit that God sometimes will speak to us through a variety of means, and then that is what it means to be God-breathed — that that is a God-breathed saying that is helpful for you in your growth in Christ.

NATALIE: Yeah. And you know what that means, Keith? That means that this actual

podcast episode, the Holy Spirit might be involved.

KEITH: It might be a God-breathed podcast.

NATALIE: Unbelievable.

KEITH: Right, exactly. And so now here's what it doesn't mean. So this is part of the challenge for us again, because we kind of have been taught and brainwashed, you know, programmed, to think a certain way about the Bible, right? So when we think about scripture being God-breathed or scripture being inspired, we think that that necessarily assumes a few other things. So to say that something is inspired — we say scripture is inspired — that what we mean is God wrote it, and what we mean is it can't be wrong about anything. It has to be inerrant and infallible. And so that's where we come up with these doctrines that, by the way, didn't show up until much later in Christian history, like the 1600s and beyond. So that's a new way of thinking about the Bible. So people didn't used to think about... When they said something was inspired, they were talking more like what you and I are talking about. They just mean that the Holy Spirit infused meaning and truth into some form of communication that communicated profound spiritual truth directly to your soul and allowed you to grow and mature and all that. So that's the way they used to think of it.

We have made this mistake of saying that, "Oh, when you say that's God-breathed, when you say that's inspired, well, that means God wrote it." And here's a big shocker. If you're still listening this far, I'm going to drop a bomb. But it's true, if you think about it: God didn't write the Bible. When I was younger, that would've rocked my world for someone to suggest that God didn't write the Bible. But it's plainly obvious in the Bible that God didn't write the Bible. Moses wrote the Bible, Jeremiah wrote the Bible, Isaiah wrote the Bible, Hosea wrote the Bible, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. Those guys wrote the Bible. So again, not to say anything bad about them, but none of those guys are God. So God didn't write the Bible.

Now again, but just like anybody else, as we said, anyone is capable of writing something that's inspired. So yes, it's still inspired, but it doesn't mean God wrote it, and it doesn't mean there's no mistakes. Because again, human beings wrote it, right? Peter Enns always says that the reason why we see so many difficulties in the Bible, one of the reasons, is that God let his children write the story.

NATALIE: I love that. Yes.

KEITH: Yeah, isn't that great?

NATALIE: Yes. Well, I remember thinking, “Well, if God wrote the Bible, then doesn't He know that the earth is round or that the earth is a sphere? Maybe He doesn't know that.”

KEITH: Yeah, you're exactly right. And again, anybody that wants to say that there's no mistakes in the Bible — yeah, there are. And I don't want to get into that, because then it starts to sound like I'm trying to discredit the Bible and tear down the Bible, because I'm really not. But I do read it knowing that people made mistakes, people even changed their minds. Because that's what people do.

You know, you and I were talking before we hit “record” that we both have written books, and I've written some books that were old — five, six-years, seven-years-old. And I go back and read them now and I'm like, “Ugh, I don't believe that anymore. Uh, I would change that.” Because it's what you do when you're growing. And so a lot of Christians, we don't give, let's say the Apostle Paul, permission to have believed a certain thing when he wrote Galatians, which is probably his first epistle, and then by the time he grew and matured and learned and continued to be in relationship with Christ, maybe some letters he wrote near the end of his life, he said, “You know what? I have a new idea. I've discovered some new thing, and I'm going to change my mind about something.”

Can we give them that ability? Otherwise, we get into this dangerous territory of starting to feel like, it's almost like we're deifying the apostle Paul, like he's inerrant, he's infallible, he can't make mistakes. No. He even admits in his own epistles, right, he makes a mistake in one of them. He says, “I never baptized anybody. Thank God I've never baptized any of you,” in 1 Corinthians. And then a few verses later, “Oh wait, no, I did baptize the household of Silvanus and all these other people.” So he says something and then he contradicts himself and he has to correct it later, right? Or even he'll say something of, “So by the way, this is me. This is not the Holy Spirit,” right? He'll clarify. “I'm going to just tell you this is my opinion, but this is not the Holy Spirit.” So again, these are letters that he's writing.

NATALIE: Yes. I think people might be scared, though. They might think, “Well, if I start opening my...” By the way, I just want to say, if any of us wants to ever learn and grow, we have to be willing to be wrong about some things. I just want to put that out there. Because if you're always right... I had a mom that was always right about everything, and she believes the same things to this day that she believed fifty years ago. That just happens. But if you ever want to learn and grow, you have to be willing to be wrong. That can be scary, and I know some of you are probably thinking, “Well, wait a minute. If I think that there are problems with the Bible, then that just destroys my faith.” Only if



the Bible is your God.

KEITH: That's right. If your faith is in the Bible, then yes — if I shake your confidence in the Bible, now I've shaken your faith because it was in the wrong thing. It wasn't in Christ, it was in this book about Christ.

NATALIE: Right, and isn't that a beautiful thing? I mean, don't you want to have something that's a shaky foundation? Don't you want that to be shaken so that you can find the real foundation of your faith that can't be shaken? Wouldn't that be nice?

KEITH: Yeah. Doesn't it say that in Revelation, right? “All that can be shaken will be shaken”?

NATALIE: There you go. See — it's right in the Bible.

KEITH: That's right. Again, it's a biblical concept. But here's the other thing too, though, talking about that shift between biblical... So that was a big shift for me. I just want to say that my big “Aha!” moment in the way I approached the Bible came probably right before I wrote that “Jesus Unbound” book. So I was actually reading a book — I wasn't even intending it — I was actually reading a history book on the Reformation, and it was looking at the differences between the reformers like Luther and Calvin and their followers and another Protestant group around the same time that was the Anabaptists. And sadly, the Reformers persecuted the Anabaptists and even put them to death. So it was pretty, pretty bad.

But anyway, in the book, the author points out the major difference between those two groups of Christians. What was it that led to this to happen, right, this level of persecution that ramped up to the point where one side was killing the other? Well, he said in the book, and this was such an epiphany for me, he said, “Well, the Reformers took a flat-Bible approach, meaning, in their minds, the Bible was one book, it was written by God, and every book in the Bible and every verse in the Bible had equal weight and authority to anything else.”

And I thought, “Well, yeah, duh, that's how I was raised. What other way is there to look at the Bible, right?” And then he said, “The Anabaptists, though, took a Jesus-centric approach to scripture.” And I was like, “Huh, what's that?” Well, the Jesus-centric approach says... By the way, this is a biblical approach — the teaching that this is the way to approach scripture is in the New Testament. It comes from Jesus, it comes from Paul, it comes from the early church if we study our early church history. They took a Jesus-centric approach to the scripture. And so what is that? It means that all of the



books in the Bible are not created equal. That, as it says in the gospel of John in chapter one, no one has ever seen God at any time except for Christ.

So again, Jesus is the Word, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and Jesus says, "I came to reveal the Father to you," because we didn't clearly see who God was. That's the only reason we needed for someone to come and clarify who the Father was, because we had the wrong idea, because those Old Testament prophets, as it says in the gospel of John chapter one, never saw God at any time. Jesus came to reveal it.

So this is why we start with Jesus. This is why Paul says more than once, that he says, "To this day, when they read the old covenant scriptures," he says, "A veil covers their eyes, because only in Christ is that veil removed." So let me paraphrase that for you. What he's saying is if you try to read the Old Testament scriptures without first knowing Christ, you are guaranteed to get it wrong. You're going to misunderstand it, absolutely, because the veil remains over your eyes. And until first you know Christ and Christ abides in you, and you abide in Christ and you start with Christ, that's the only way for any of this to make sense to you. You have to read the scriptures through the lens of Christ.

And then probably one of my favorite illustrations of this Jesus-centric way of looking at the scriptures is in the sermon on the... It's not the sermon on the mount — the mount of transfiguration. That whole sequence, that whole thing in the gospels, when Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on the mountain, He's glorified, transfigured in front of them, and standing with Him are Moses and Elijah. That's not a coincidence. Moses stands for the law, Elijah stands for the prophets. The law and the prophets are the entire scriptures for a Jewish person. So for Peter, James, and John to see Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus, Peter makes what I call the "flat-Bible mistake." He does what many flat-Bible Christians do and what I did for most of my life: "Oh, this is so awesome," he says. "Let's build three tabernacles side by side, all equal to honor all three of you. Let's honor the prophets and let's honor the law and let's honor Jesus equally." And he thinks that he is giving Jesus a compliment. "Jesus, you're about as good as the law and the prophets. Isn't that great?"

And most flat-Bible Christians, that's what we're doing. We're saying, "Yeah, you know, Jesus, you're almost as good as the Bible." And how does the Father respond to that statement? He removes Moses — the law — He removes Elijah — the prophets. He leaves only Jesus standing there, and then He says, "Only this. This is my Son. Listen to Him." It's over. That's the whole point. The entire point of that whole miracle, that whole transfiguration, is to simply say this: "Jesus, He supersedes the law and the prophets. Listen to Him." And so that whole idea of approaching scripture by starting

with Christ, that's what the Father says to do, that's what Jesus says to do, it's what the gospel of John says to do, it's what the apostle Paul did. And here's the thing I want to say. Since I've started reading the Bible through the lens of Christ, oh, Paul is right. The veil is removed — it makes so much more sense. And that's what I try to talk about in the book, is why we should do that and how to do that and how that really helps answer probably 90% of your questions about the Bible.

NATALIE: Yes. Oh, that is so, so good. When I think about the Reformation people killing the Anabaptists, too, doesn't that just sum it all up? Throughout history, it's like if you follow Christ... I mean, Christ was murdered, and then everyone after Him that follows Christ is murdered. I mean, that's why people get excommunicated. That's why there is a Heretic Happy Hour.

KEITH: That's right. That's exactly right. So yeah, that weird way of... Again, that's the danger. So when I wrote "Sola Mysterium," it's one of the things I say, because that book is all about embracing the mystery and everything. And what I point out in the book, to your point, is that throughout church history, it's the ones who are certain, who have all the answers, who end up putting to death the Christians who dare to have a different idea or ask a question, right, or embrace the mystery. And so I guess you might live a little longer if you're on the side of those who won't change their minds. But I don't want to be the ones killing people. I mean, it's no fun to get called a heretic or to get persecuted or whatever, but man, I would rather stand on the side of... Like you said, Jesus stood for something and people didn't like it. Well, that's part of what it means to follow Jesus.

NATALIE: Yes. Okay, can you tell us a little bit about Heretic Happy Hour? We'll just go there just briefly, but I want them to know about your podcast, because some of them are snarky like I am, and they would be very interested in that.

KEITH: Sure. Well, I have to always say anytime I talk about Heretic Happy Hour, it's not for everybody. I have a lot of friends who don't listen. Some of them get offended. There is some language, so I apologize up front if that offends you.

NATALIE: Well, and don't you kind of have a wide variety of people? There's people who aren't even... Isn't there an atheist on there or something? Or maybe not.

KEITH: We did for a while. It's been around for seven years, so we've had different co-hosts. We did for a time have someone who was an atheist.

NATALIE: Okay.

KEITH: But currently there's technically five of us — four only, like, mainly. So that's myself — and I've been with the podcast since the beginning — Matthew Distefano — he's also an author, co-owner of Quoir Publishing with myself, so he's also been there since the beginning. So me and Matt are the founders, I guess. We also have Katy Valentine. She is a biblical scholar. She is smarter than me.

NATALIE: She is smart.

KEITH: She's amazing. We just added two new co-hosts. Shonda Jaw — and she's also a scholar. She's really smart and has a great perspective — and December Rose, who also is a Quoir author, and she's awesome. So because of that, yes, you have this wide range. The hosts themselves, we always like to say... This is one of the beautiful things, I think, about the podcast. Even the hosts don't agree on everything, you know what I mean? So every episode of the Heritage Happy Hour, if nothing else, no matter what the topic is, no matter who we're interviewing, that really is secondary for me. The main thing is that we get to model every episode of The Heritage Hour what it looks like for Christians to disagree and still love each other and respect each other.

NATALIE: Yes. I love it.

KEITH; We don't argue. We don't yell at each other. We don't get angry at each other. Everybody loves each other, respects each other. And so if somebody throws out a question or we have a certain topic we're discussing, I can say, "Well, you know, I kind of see it this way." And Katy can say, "Well, that's interesting, but I've always seen it this other way." And December can say, "I think you're both crazy. I see it this other way." And that's fine. We just laugh, we have a good time, and what I think... Well, I know it is, because we've gotten some beautiful feedback from our listeners over the years, that that's really what they appreciate. They appreciate the fact that we celebrate all the different perspectives, that no one gets shut down, because it allows them to hear ideas that they wouldn't otherwise have heard and to think for themselves and go, "Oh wow, that's an interesting perspective. Oh, I didn't think about that." Plus we have amazing guests, so it's always fun to get people on to add to that conversation. I love it. It's been a lot of fun.

NATALIE: You guys are holding space for each other and also entering into that mystery. It's so much more beautiful to think of all of us walking on this path and this journey, and we're just all learning, and we're like children. We're just romping through the fields and learning all the different things and talking about what we're learning, and everyone's learning at a different pace or learning one aspect... I mean, you could have two people that disagree, but you could both be right in different ways because

you are looking at it from two different angles or whatever. I love it. Anyway, so check that out if you want to. If they got this far, don't you think they'd be open to checking that out? I think so.

KEITH: I think so.

NATALIE: Everyone who is like hating me right now, they're gone. They're not even here.

KEITH: They've already left. They're checked out. That's right.

NATALIE: Exactly.

KEITH: Well, real quick, can I give a plug for two more things? Because I actually do three podcasts, believe it or not.

NATALIE: Oh, I didn't know that. Well, good grief.

KEITH: Well, oh gosh — I've got to tell you. So I have another podcast that Matthew Distefano... So he and I do Heretic Happy Hour together. We started Heretic Happy Hour, but we do another one called Apostates Anonymous, and if nothing else, okay, it's so much fun, because we both will take turns recording fake ads, sponsors, for our podcast every episode. And if nothing else, you've got to listen to the fake ads, because they're hilarious. We've had a lot of fun doing that. But then we also talk about good topics as well. So Apostates Anonymous, and then I have a solo podcast that I've been doing now for a little over a year called Second Cup with Keith.

NATALIE: Second Cup with Keith?

KEITH: Yes, Second Cup with Keith. So I always have a second cup of coffee every morning. It started off, I was doing it on Facebook Live. I would just pop on the video with my cup of coffee and I would just talk about whatever random thing. And then when I got to the point where I was like, "You know what? I want to do a solo podcast where I can just talk about whatever I want to talk about." So yeah, that's what I called it. I just kept the name, Second Cup with Keith. It's on all the platforms. I think we're on like Episode 28 or something. And I've talked about all the kinds of stuff we're talking about right here. So each episode I just take one topic, and we just do a deep dive on that topic and have a lot of fun.

NATALIE: Oh my goodness. Well, awesome. I didn't even know that. And then I do want you to mention Square One, because here's the thing, you guys. We're recording this

in... What is this? It's November.

KEITH: November, yeah.

NATALIE: It's November. And you guys are already... Isn't technology weird? We are talking to people who are in January right now.

KEITH: They're in the future. We're talking to people in the future.

NATALIE: They're in the future, exactly. It's so bizarre. But anyway you guys, Square One is launching this week. In fact, you're starting on Saturday. I feel weird saying this. You're starting on Saturday, and you guys can jump on board. He's going to let you jump on board at the last second if you want to, but you have to act really fast. So this is going to come out on a Wednesday... Or this comes out on Tuesday, but I send an email on Wednesdays. If you jump on board now, he's going to give you a huge percentage off the cost. What is it again? I can't remember.

KEITH: 78% discount off the cost.

NATALIE: What is with the 78%? Why 78%?

KEITH: All right. So to be honest, I typically will do a campaign when I'm coming up on a new Square One. I'll offer 75% off. But for you and your listeners, I thought, I want to do something extra special. So I just kicked it up to 78%. I thought, well, instead of 75%, I'll offer 78%. I don't know why. I just picked that number.

NATALIE: Okay. Well, see, the number seven... This is what I'm talking about with numbers and me. My brain can't do numbers. I could have done 75%. That makes sense to my brain. But 78%, I couldn't even remember it because it was so foreign to me.

KEITH: It's pretty weird, isn't it?

NATALIE: Yeah. So weird. Okay. You guys get an extra 3% off of what all of his other favorite people get off. Okay, 78% off, but you have to go in there — and I'll put the link in the show notes — you have to go there now, okay?

KEITH: As soon as possible, yes.

NATALIE: I just finished this class, so I can speak from firsthand experience that it was

amazing, and you get to meet other people like you who are open to learning new things and are trying to figure things out. You can be so super confused in this class and they're okay with it, and they will just love you and you'll get to talk about it and they'll talk with you and they'll give you other ideas, and it's like a safe little cocoon of love for people who are trying to figure out where the heck they stand on all the spiritual things.

KEITH: Yeah, that's what we try to do and create this really, like you said, a safe space, a safe community. There's a private Facebook group. We do the Zoom calls every Saturday. Basically one little step at a time, we're going to hold your hand and walk you through it. We're going to go through it together throughout this whole deconstruction/reconstruction process. And again, it looks different for everybody. I never tell anybody how to do that. I can't, right? It's going to look different. We're all in different places. And you have permission to just be who you are and be where you are in that process. But hopefully we're going to help each other get through it. So that's what we do in Square One.

I'll also just say this too, if anybody, even at the 78% discount, if anybody is like, "Man, that sounds so great. I would love to do that, but my finances right now, I can't afford it," whatever, I have a couple of free sponsored seats. So if you want to contact me directly and let me know your situation, I'll be happy to extend one of those sponsored seats to anybody who really wants to be a part of it, but just honestly can't afford it.

NATALIE: Okay. That sounds good. You probably will get five-hundred people now.

KEITH: I know, probably. But just so you know, I only have two sponsored seats.

NATALIE: He only has two. Actually, I maybe only have two people listening right now.

KEITH: Both of you listeners.

NATALIE: Well, thank you so much. This was so much fun and this is such a powerful episode, I think. It's really kind of a turning point, so I'm glad. It's the new year now. We're turning a corner. I'm kind of coming out in what I've kind of deconstructed a little bit. But honestly, I'm also coming home. I'm coming back home to my roots, which is Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord, amen. And thank you so much for listening. All of you guys who are listening, thank you so much for hanging out to the very end. And until next time, fly free.