

STUDENT EDITION

# Another Gospel?

*Includes  
Discussion  
Questions*

*A Lifelong Christian*

*Seeks Truth in Response to*

*Progressive Christianity*

**Alisa Childers**

FOREWORD BY LEE STROBEL

## Another Gospel? Student Edition



STUDENT EDITION

# Another Gospel?

*A Lifelong Christian*

*Seeks Truth in Response to*

*Progressive Christianity*

Alisa Childers



Visit Tyndale online at [tyndale.com](http://tyndale.com).

Visit Alisa Childers at [alisachilders.com](http://alisachilders.com).

*Tyndale*, Tyndale's quill logo, and the Tyndale Elevate logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries, registered in the United States of America. *Tyndale Elevate* is a trademark of Tyndale House Ministries. Tyndale Elevate is a nonfiction imprint of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois.

*Another Gospel? Student Edition: A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*

Copyright © 2025 by Alisa Childers. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Eva M. Winters, copyright © Tyndale House Ministries. All rights reserved.

Author photograph copyright © 2023 by Mario Sarmiento Photography. All rights reserved.

Interior illustration of notebook paper copyright © Flas100/Shutterstock. All rights reserved.

Interior illustration of coffee stain copyright © camnep/Shutterstock. All rights reserved.

Designed by Eva M. Winters

Published in association with the literary agency of William K. Jensen Literary Agency, 119 Bampton Court, Eugene, OR 97404.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® NIV.® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version,® copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com), or call 1-855-277-9400.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 979-8-4005-1101-1

Printed in the United States of America

31	30	29	28	27	26	25
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*For my parents,  
Chuck and Karen Girard.  
Thank you for giving me  
the true gospel.*



# Contents

AUTHOR'S NOTE *ix*

FOREWORD BY LEE STROBEL *xi*

- 1 Crisis of Faith *1*
- 2 The Rocks in My Shoes *15*
- 3 Creeds, Cobbler, and Walter Bauer *29*
- 4 Fixing What Isn't Broken *47*
- 5 A Different Kind of Christianity *71*
- 6 Nothing New under the Sun *95*
- 7 For the Bible Tells Me So? *115*
- 8 Was It True Only for Them? *135*
- 9 Authority Problems *155*
- 10 Hell on Earth? *183*
- 11 Cosmic Child Abuse? *209*
- 12 Rebuilding *235*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS *251*

NOTES *253*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES *265*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR *271*



## Author's Note

This book contains my recollections of conversations from a class I took part in more than fifteen years ago. Those sessions challenged my beliefs, rocked my faith, and shook me to my core. I recognize that other class members may remember some details differently, but because our discussions guided the investigation I began after those four months of study, I thought it important to reconstruct some of the dialogue to the best of my memory. It provides context to my research and the conclusions I reached regarding historic and progressive Christianity. To support the narrative flow, I also tightened the timeline in some places.



# Foreword

A friend took me and several others on a sailing trip through the beautiful British Virgin Islands. As a novice sailor, I was fascinated by the serious process of anchoring the boat at night.

We would sail into a tranquil cove and drop the anchor. In order to make doubly sure the anchor had gripped securely, someone would dive into the water and inspect it. If the anchor were at all loose, it might fail during the night when we were asleep below deck. At first, this wouldn't be a problem—the boat would basically stay where it had been left. But over the long night, the gentle current and imperceptible waves would gradually cause the boat to float away, threatening to crash it onto the nearby rocks or ground it on the sandy beach.

That imagery reminds me of the urgent purpose of this book. In Christianity, the anchor is sound biblical doctrine. What happens if it's not secure or if its line is intentionally cut? Well, says philosopher Mark Mittelberg, not much at first. For a while the faith wouldn't drift too far. Tradition and

habit would keep it hovering over the same spiritual vicinity, at least for a season. But the real danger is what would inevitably happen over time: The current of the culture would cause Christianity to crash on the rocks of heresy and sink into irrelevancy.

This is the alarm Alisa Childers is sounding in this powerful and persuasive new book. In a style that's at once winsome and convicting, she exposes the false gospel that so many "progressive" Christian leaders are espousing. Their aberrant beliefs are cutting adrift the faith of too many people—even though these folks may not realize it yet. As a result, Christianity is floating toward disaster—a trend that can be reversed only by returning to the sound biblical doctrine that has historically anchored our faith.

Alisa has accomplished something profound in these pages. She manages to keep her writing deft and personal, and yet she meticulously documents her points with facts and evidence. She makes concessions where appropriate, but she fearlessly confronts the distortions and outright falsehoods that fuel so much of progressive theology. With clarity, passion, and unrelenting charm, Alisa exposes the often subtle deceptions that too many Christians have been uncritically accepting as gospel truth. Her discernment is razor-sharp, her compass is pointed unswervingly toward the real Jesus, and her conclusions are solidly supported.

It's an understatement to say this book is important. It's vital. It's the right book at the right time. In fact, it may be the most influential book you will read this year. Please study it, underline it, highlight it, talk about it with others, give

## FOREWORD

copies to friends and church leaders, use it in your discussion groups, quote it on social media. Take its admonitions to heart. Let it solidify your own faith so that you can confidently point others to the unchanging gospel of redemption and hope.

In sum, do your part in securing the anchor of biblical orthodoxy once more—for the sake of a church otherwise imperiled by dangerous theological drift.

Lee Strobel

Author of *The Case for Christ*  
and *In Defense of Jesus*



# 1

## Crisis of Faith

“I lost all my friends,” Adam lamented. “I shared what I believed, and now no one wants to talk to me.” A freshman in high school, Adam was one of those kids who always needed to know why. He had been struggling with big questions about Christianity, and now he was about ready to throw out his faith altogether.

His best friend of five years had recently “come out” and wanted to know what he, as a Christian, thought about it. In a text message exchange, Adam carefully communicated his Christian convictions with truth and compassion. Sadly, Adam’s friend took screenshots of their conversation and shared it with their high school friends. Soon he was being called “homophobic” and treated like a social outcast.

Miserable and wanting to fit back in, Adam discovered some TikTok videos that argue *from the Bible* that homosexual activity isn't a sin. With desperation, he told my friend Tim, "If that's true, I might get my friends back." The pressure for Adam to capitulate to culture and adjust his beliefs was overwhelming. But we all feel it, don't we? Faithfulness to God comes at a cost. It's easier to submit to societal opinions than to stand on scriptural truth. Many Christians are feeling the pull to align their views with culture or their own personal preferences. For Adam, deconstructing the biblical view of sexuality wasn't an academic exercise; it was personal. As he put it: "I might get my friends back."

## The Real Deal

Adam's story isn't unique. Perhaps you, like so many, are asking your own big questions about Christianity. Maybe you're confused or heartbroken, desperate for a lifeline and wondering if God can be trusted, or if he's even real. Or maybe you've never really questioned your faith but wonder why everyone around you seems to be doing so. You are not alone.<sup>1</sup>

This book tells the story of my own faith crisis. In the place where I least expected it, I encountered a huge storm that rocked everything I believed. It felt like I'd been plunged into a stormy ocean with waves of doubt crashing over my head. No lifeboat. No rescue in sight.

In the 2000 film *The Perfect Storm*, one of the last images (spoiler alert) is of the giant ship being capsized and pushed underwater by a wave the size of a skyscraper. The tiniest

form of a human head peeks above the water for a split second before disappearing into the depths.

That was me.

What on earth would cause a strong and devout Christian to doubt her faith? Why would a member of the popular Christian music group ZOEgirl (think Christian Spice Girls circa 1999), which toured the world giving altar calls and inspiring many young teens to proclaim their faith and “shout it from the mountain,” suddenly have doubts? We’ll get to that in a bit. But first, a little background.

I was that kid. You know the one. The one who asked Jesus into her heart when she was five. The one who began studying the Bible as soon as she learned to read. The one who got up early to walk around her school and pray for revival among her peers. The one who led worship in chapel at her Christian high school and moved to New York at twenty-one to do inner city work with underprivileged kids. The one who went on every mission trip she could and who evangelized on the streets of Los Angeles and New York during the summer.

The one you would never worry about. The one you just knew would be fine. The one who would never doubt her faith.

When I was about ten years old, my mom was a volunteer at the Fred Jordan Mission in Los Angeles. She would take us with her to work the soup lines on weekends, and it was there that I watched her hug prostitutes and wrap blankets around smelly homeless guys. It was there that I watched my dad, a Christian recording artist, lead worship for crowds of cold and hungry souls as they sang “Amazing Grace” at the top of their lungs.

Feeding the hungry. Clothing the naked. Loving the outcast. It's just what Christians did. They prayed, they read their Bibles, and they served. It wasn't perfect, but it was the real thing.

So I can't say I grew up with a blind faith. My faith was informed by witnessing the gospel in action. But it was intellectually weak and untested. I had no frame of reference or toolbox to draw from when every belief I had been so sure of was called into question. And it wasn't an atheist, secu-

***Feeding the hungry. Clothing the naked. Loving the outcast. It's just what Christians did.***

lar humanist, Hindu, or Buddhist who facilitated my eventual faith crisis—it was a Christian. More specifically, it was a progressive Christian pastor.

This pastor asked me to participate in an invite-only, small, and exclusive discussion group. He told me it was a ministry training course that would result in a theological education comparable to four years in seminary. “Education” was an understatement. It was more like an upheaval. The class lasted four years. I lasted four months.

We've all heard stories of Christian students who walk away from their faith after being challenged by skeptical professors in a college classroom. My faith was confronted in a similar way . . . but not at a university. It was challenged in the pews of a church. It was rocked by a pastor who had won my trust, respect, and loyalty. This wasn't some random weirdo I'd met during a street outreach on Hollywood Boulevard who spouted vitriol against God as I handed him

a gospel tract. This was an educated, intellectual, calm, and eloquent church leader—someone who expressed love for Jesus. He was a brilliant communicator, and he had a bone to pick with Christianity.

Meeting after meeting, every precious belief I held about God, Jesus, and the Bible was placed on an intellectual chopping block and hacked to pieces. Identifying himself as a “hopeful agnostic,” this pastor began examining the tenets of the faith. The Virgin Birth? Doesn’t matter. The Resurrection? Probably happened, but you don’t have to believe in it. The atonement? That would be a nope. And the Bible? God forbid you believed Scripture was inerrant. During our discussions, “fundies” (fundamentalists) were dismissed as being fearful dimwits who simply followed what they were told to believe.

Sure, I’d seen some of these claims before on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine or in a television special trying to debunk Jesus on the Discovery Channel. But that was no surprise. I expected non-Christians to disbelieve. I could just close the magazine or turn off the TV and go about my day. Yet in that small discussion group, there was no escaping. It seemed I was the only one in the room who was troubled by what I was asked to respond to. But I didn’t have answers. *I had never even thought of some of the questions.*

After four months we would part ways. The pastor and the church went on to become a “progressive Christian community.” At the same time, Christians all across the country were having the same types of conversations online, in coffee shops, and in church classrooms. They were questioning their long-held assumptions about the nature of God and

the Bible, the exclusivity of Christianity, and biblical norms regarding gender and sexuality. These disenchanted souls found each other. They wrote blogs. They penned books. Churches began identifying as progressive and removing or editing the faith statements on their websites.

Today, many of the most popular Christian authors, bloggers, and speakers are progressive. Entire denominations are now filled with those who identify as such. Yet many other Christians sit in pews every Sunday completely unaware that their church has adopted progressive theology.

Progressive Christians tend to avoid absolutes and are typically not united around creeds or belief statements. In fact, progressive blogger John Pavlovitz wrote that in progressive Christianity, there are “no sacred cows.”<sup>2</sup> Because of this, it might be more helpful to look for certain signs, moods, and attitudes toward God and the Bible when trying to spot it. For example, progressive Christians view the Bible as primarily a human book

***Progressive Christians tend to avoid absolutes and are typically not united around creeds or belief statements.***

and emphasize personal conscience and practices rather than certainty and beliefs. They also are very open to redefining, reinterpreting, or even rejecting essential doctrines of the

faith like the Virgin Birth, the deity of Jesus, and his bodily resurrection. Possibly the most obvious sign to look for is a complete rejection of the biblical teaching on sex, gender, and marriage, along with an acceptance of social justice ideology that pits people against one another as “oppressed” and “oppressor.”

When progressive Christianity first entered the scene, its proponents raised some valid critiques of evangelical culture that the church needed to examine and reevaluate. But those progressives who reject essential teachings—like the physical resurrection of Jesus—can confuse unsuspecting Christians and kick the foundation out from under them.

After leaving that progressive church, I was thrust into a spiritual blackout—a foray into darkness like I'd never known. I knew *what* I believed; now I was

***I knew what I believed;  
now I was forced to consider  
why I believed.***

forced to consider *why* I believed. Dog-paddling to keep my head above water in that storm-tossed ocean, I begged God for rescue: “God, I know you’re there. Please send me a lifeboat.”

Over the course of the next few years, God did send a lifeboat. Then another. Then another. The first one came while I was driving down the interstate fiddling with the radio in my car. I stopped when I heard a gentle, grandfatherly voice addressing one of the very claims that had been lobbed at me by the progressive pastor. What I heard took my breath away and then poured it right back into my lungs. The man on the radio, who I discovered had been recorded at a university answering questions from skeptics, systematically took down objection after objection with no fear or anger. He was kind. He was resolute. He was far more convincing and fact-based than the progressive pastor. I had been searching for truth, and on the radio that day, I found it.

In no time I was reading every apologetics and theology book I could get my hands on, and I even began auditing seminary classes. The progressive wave that slammed me against the Rock of Ages had broken apart my deeply ingrained assumptions about Jesus, God, and the Bible. But that same Rock of Ages slowly but surely began to rearrange the pieces, discarding a few and putting the right ones back where they belonged.

## Stronger than Before

Today, my Christianity doesn't look exactly like it did before. I've adjusted my beliefs on certain theological points and have become much more careful in how I interpret the Bible. I've dropped some not-so-biblical ideas that were such a part of my Christian identity that I'd never thought to question them.

But throughout this journey, I've discovered that the core historic claims of Christianity are true. I've learned that the Bible, though attacked and maligned century after century, stands tall atop the rubble of accusations that have been piled up against it. I've come to know that the Christian worldview is the only one that can sufficiently explain reality. I've rediscovered Jesus . . . the confounding preacher from Nazareth who split history in two and who kept his word to never leave me. As you follow me on this journey, I pray your faith will be strengthened too.

I'm more convinced than ever that Christianity is not based on a mystical revelation or self-inspired philosophy. It's deeply rooted in history. In fact, it is the only religious

system I can think of that depends on a historical event (the resurrection of Jesus) being real—not fake—news.

When I have doubts about my faith, or deep nagging questions that keep me up at night, I don't have the luxury of finding "my truth" because I am committed to *the* truth. I want to know what is real. I want my worldview (the lens through which I see the world) to line up with reality. God either exists, or he doesn't. The Bible is his Word, or it's not. Jesus was raised from the dead, or he wasn't. Christianity is true, or it isn't. There is no "my truth" when it comes to God.

Unfortunately for many people today, determining what is true in all areas of life has become nothing more than a game of "he said, she said." For example, I just googled "health benefits of pork" (because bacon), and I discovered all kinds of fun "facts." I discovered that pork is high in protein, low in carbs, gluten-free, and contains a good balance of every essential amino acid. I also read an article that claimed pork gives you healthier skin, promotes heavy metal detox, and prevents "adult disease" (whatever that is).

***I don't have the luxury of finding "my truth" because I am committed to the truth.***

Obviously, what I gleaned in a five-minute Google search is a mix of facts and fantasy. How should I wade through all the information and know which sources to trust and which "facts" to believe? Should I just pile a bunch of bacon in a bowl and call it a gluten-free salad? As much as I might want to pick and choose what to believe and allow others to do the same, it's not realistic.

If “my truth” says pork is the new kale, the consequences of that idea will bear out in reality—despite how strongly I may feel about it. My feelings about bacon won’t change what it’s doing to my heart, my blood pressure, and my thighs. This is why “my truth” is a myth. There is no such thing. Bacon is either good for me or it’s not (or it’s somewhere in between, please God!). And what I believe about it can have life-or-death consequences.

Likewise, as I navigated through my faith crisis, I realized that it’s not enough to simply know the facts anymore . . . we have to learn how to think them through—to assess information and come to reasonable conclusions after engaging religious ideas logically and intellectually. We can’t allow truth to be sacrificed on the altar of our feelings. We can’t allow our fear of offending others to prevent us from warning them that they’re about to step in front of a bus. Truth matters for bacon eaters, and truth matters for Christians.

Today, there are many ideas being promoted as “Christian” by people who claim to represent Jesus Christ. It can be so confusing to figure out what is true and what is . . . almost true. If Christianity were simply a word that describes a social club or vague list of general mindsets, it wouldn’t really matter if we get it right. As long as it works for you, live and let live. However, Christianity doesn’t work that way. Jesus warned us that there would be false prophets who sneak in among us like wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). He predicted that these “false christs” and “false prophets” would even lead people astray by tricking them with false miracles (Matthew 24:24). It was important to Jesus that his

followers recognize the true faith and not be deceived into believing lies.

Maybe you're a Christian who feels alone in your beliefs. Maybe you're a believer who has drifted into progressive Christianity without realizing it—or who is concerned that a friend or loved one is on that path. Maybe you feel frustrated when your social media news feed is flooded with articles, blogs, and videos that send red flags flying, but you can't articulate why. Maybe there's a pebble in your shoe because you've witnessed hypocrisy in your church or been a victim of spiritual abuse. Maybe you're tempted to let the wave take you under and give up on your faith altogether.

Whoever you are, it is my prayer, dear reader, that this book will be a lifeboat *for you*.

## **Stop and Reflect**

1. What experiences have formed your faith journey? When have you felt God's presence with you? When have you faced storms of crisis or doubt?
2. Where do you receive teaching about God and the Bible? Consider the people, church, media, events, etc. that you turn to for insight and guidance.
3. What do you normally do when you have doubts or questions about your faith?
4. What do you hope to gain from reading this book?

## Progressive Christianity Inventory

You may be thinking to yourself, *This is all new to me. I'd never heard of progressive Christianity before reading this book.* But while the term *progressive Christianity* may be unfamiliar, chances are that you have encountered progressive ideas without even realizing it.

Consider how many of these statements you have heard in one form or another:

- The Bible is a book about God written by humans. It has some good teachings, but it doesn't have authority over our lives.
- The biblical account of Creation should not be taken literally. Darwinian evolution is the best explanation for the creation of the world and is supported by scientific evidence.
- Humans are born good or morally neutral.
- Sin is relative. What is wrong for one person may not be wrong for someone else. It would be arrogant to claim to know what is objectively good or evil.
- The miracles recorded in the Bible don't have to be historical to be meaningful. You can still be a Christian even if you don't believe Jesus' resurrection was physical or that he literally healed sickness and raised people from the dead.
- Jesus never claimed to be God. You can still be a Christian and believe in Jesus, even if you aren't sure he is God.
- Jesus was killed on a cross, but that doesn't mean it was God's plan. Jesus came to liberate oppressed people, and

his death on the cross was a perfect example of forgiving your enemies. To say that his death was a sacrifice that paid for sin is “cosmic child abuse.”

- As we evolve morally, we can make corrections on some elements of historic Christian beliefs. In fact, Christianity itself is progressing, and we get to participate in that holy progression.
- The God of the Old Testament is abusive and vengeful, but the nature of God is fully revealed in Jesus, who was merciful, forgiving, nonjudgmental, and inclusive.
- A God of love wouldn't send people to hell. The church just invented the idea of hell to control people with fear.
- Your sin doesn't separate you from God. If you feel separated from God, it's just your shame. Everyone has a seat at the table.
- No one person's beliefs are better or worse than someone else's.
- Jesus is the word of God, not the Bible.

All these statements are examples of ways that progressive Christianity seeks to cast doubt on historic beliefs about faith and God. Sometimes they are said by someone clearly trying to discount Christianity, but other times they pop up in surprising places like church small group discussions or social media posts by influential Christians. By recognizing them as progressive beliefs, you will be better equipped to refute them and hold confidently to the truth.