


READY TO RETURN

*Bringing Back the Church's
Lost Generation*



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Ken Ham with Jeff Kinley
research by Britt Beemer

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Dedication

As this book is about the younger generations who will be the leaders in the culture in the future, I dedicate this book to our 14 grandchildren:

Malachi, Kathryn, Noah, Kylie, Caleb, Lacey, Madelyn, Nicole, Emma, Josiah, Lexie, Kendra, Amelia, Olivia. May God mightily use godly offspring as these to call Church and culture back to the authority of the Word of God.

— Ken Ham, President of Answers in Genesis

Parent Dedication

Having great parents is worth more than all the gold at Ft. Knox!

My parents, Elvin and Margaret Beemer gave me freedom to experience the world at a young age by allowing me to work on Capitol Hill through my high school, college and graduate school days. My father taught “he would rather see a sermon than hear one.” My mother lovingly pushed me to do mighty things such as starting ARG with little capital.

My wife’s parents, Tom and Catie Cook, represent the most perfect, loving couple who are so gentle to one another that their undying love for each other oozes out of them for all the world to see.

These two couple come from different backgrounds, but help me to better understand love.

— Britt Beemer, America’s Research Group

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Chapter 1

A Call to Reformation

On October 31, 1517, a German priest nailed a sheet of paper to a Catholic Church door in Wittenburg, Germany. Little did he know in doing so that his protest would change the world. But it wasn't so much his act of defiance that got people's attention as what was written on that particular piece of paper. Long concerned and dissatisfied with the state of Christianity in his day, Martin Luther's now immortal "95 Theses" itemized serious grievances he had against the Church he loved and served. He had originally intended his objections to be used as points of discussion, calling the corporate church institution back toward more biblical understanding beliefs and practices.

Instead, what it got him was excommunicated.

And with that, Protestantism was born.

As with many other organizations, the Church tends to drift and fade over time, losing her original simplicity, passion, and purpose. Without strong leadership and a constant calibration back to her primary calling, the Bride that Jesus courted is in danger of losing her very identity.

But it's not so much that we need another Martin Luther. No, instead we need an entire generation of Luthers! We are in desperate need of Christians who are not content to allow the church drift, disconnected

from the anchor of God's truth. Tossed back and forth by every wind and wave of doctrine, and without a clear course to guide her, she is in peril, susceptible to imminent shipwreck or sinking. And those on board are destined to drown in a sea of ignorance, impotence, uncertainty, and ineffectiveness.

And nothing would grieve God's heart more than this.

From a human perspective, the Western Church appears to be in big trouble. Any astute observer can see that the culture of the Church is becoming more secularized with each passing day. And in this book, we are detailing new research on the Church that will reveal distressing trends — and particularly with millennials. In many ways, even the leadership of the Church has adopted many of the world's beliefs and teachings. As a result, Jesus' Bride does not influence the culture as it once did. On the contrary, this book will demonstrate how the culture is influencing the Church in critical areas. But what often goes unnoticed is the damage that has been done in the hearts and minds of coming generations. The latest research conducted by America's Research Group reveals shocking realities concerning the state of the evangelical Church in America — a picture of what is happening through the Western world. And the looming question is, "Where will the Church be in the next generation?" The research is very eye opening, and provides a grave warning for the Church and its leaders. The results of our research should also alert every parent, as it reveals where their children and the next generation already are, spiritually speaking. This generation of millennials will fundamentally change the culture, unless they return to a truly biblical foundation. But this is also a call to action for Christians in this millennial demographic.

The Bible makes it clear that the true Church is made up of the body of believers throughout the world. Even so, we continue to struggle and drift because of our inherent bent toward sin. As Paul wrote,

... but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God

with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin (Rom. 7:23–25).

And yet, even as believers struggle, the Lord Jesus Christ nevertheless declared,

I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

Paul's words to the Philippians echo this truth for the Church:

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

These two oppositional truths — our struggle with sin and Jesus' commitment to build His Church and to bring believers to maturity — both co-exist, though admittedly with great tension at times. So while Christians contend with sin, the Church itself is still being built by Jesus, moving forward by His sovereign decree.

In the book *Already Gone*, we discussed why there's an exodus of coming generations from the church.¹ We featured photographs of church buildings in England that were no longer being used for Christians to gather in to worship and hear the teaching of the Word of God. Instead, these buildings have been transformed into music stores, nightclubs, museums, etc. But the buildings themselves are not the issue. What's even more tragic is that the exodus from the church's facilities is but a physical picture of the spiritual departure across the United Kingdom, and actually across all of Europe. Today, only a small percentage of Europeans attend any type of church, with most identifying as having no religious affiliation at all. Such a phenomenon is on the rise here in the USA as well. What is happening in Europe is a picture of where the USA will be in the future if the spiritual state of coming generations is not changed.

Of course, God's Word does not promise that a particular local church will necessarily continue in existence. However, the Church universal *will* continue as long as the church age endures. God will preserve

1. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009).

His Church (those who are redeemed by the blood of the lamb) and its work in this world (the preaching of the gospel). This, despite the fact that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12; KJV).

Yes, God will preserve His Church. No principality or power will ever be able to stop His work, halt the preaching of the gospel, demolish His Church in general, or ruin any particular soul that is built upon the rock that is Christ.

At the same time, this does not mean there will not be great failings within the Church, just as we saw great failings with God’s people in the Old Testament and in the Middle Ages.

Uncompromising Faith

Our latest research reminds me of the ministry of two great men in the Old Testament. The first is the prophet Jeremiah, who warned people about God’s judgment because of rampant compromise. The second is King Hezekiah, who was prepared to bring very needed reforms.

Many failings of God’s people are recorded in the Old Testament, but there are three in particular I want to bring to your attention. They’re summarized through the Word of the Lord given to Jeremiah and what happened in Hezekiah’s day:

1. God’s people had not been influencing the world for the Lord God as they were instructed to do by His Word, but instead were learning the ways of the pagan world. As Jeremiah reminded the people: “Learn not the way of the nations . . .” (Jer. 10:2).

2. Having been influenced by pagan gods and the rampant idolatry of the time, Israel had not stood uncompromisingly for their Creator-God. Instead, she ignored His Word while pursuing contemporary pagan practices. Jeremiah’s words then became a scathing rebuke: “But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make the heavens

and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens' ” (Jer. 10:10–11).

The third way Israel had failed was that,

3. The shepherds (the religious leaders) were leading people astray: “For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered” (Jer. 10:21).

As I read Jeremiah 10, I couldn't help but apply this to the Western Church today as I thought about the results of this latest research. Please read it and decide for yourself:

Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD:

“Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good.”

Inasmuch as there is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might), who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; a wooden idol is a worthless doctrine. Silver is beaten into plates; it is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the metalsmith; blue and purple are their clothing; they are all the work of skillful men. But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.

Thus you shall say to them: “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.” He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens: “And He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasuries.” Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge; every metalsmith is put to shame by an image; for his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are futile, a work of errors; in the time of their punishment they shall perish. The Portion of Jacob is not like them, for He is the Maker of all things, and Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; the LORD of hosts is His name. Gather up your wares from the land, O inhabitant of the fortress!

For thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will throw out at this time the inhabitants of the land, and will distress them, that they may find it so.” Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is severe. But I say, “Truly this is an infirmity, and I must bear it.” My tent is plundered, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are no more. There is no one to pitch my tent anymore, or set up my curtains. For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, and have not sought the LORD; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the noise of the report has come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, a den of jackals. O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O LORD, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You, and on the families who do not call on Your name; for they have eaten up Jacob, devoured him and consumed him, and made his dwelling place desolate (Jer. 10:1–25; NKJV).

As you look at the culture we're in, can you see how we too have forgotten God and replaced Him with our own idols? Jeremiah laments the desolation of his people while at the same time warning them of God's impending judgment. In her brief history, America was once a nation heavily influenced by the Church and biblical principles. However, the latest research on the Church we are detailing in this book shows that, across the denominations, the modern Church,

1. Is not influencing the culture as it once did, because many aspects of secular culture have infiltrated the Church.
2. So much of the Church has adopted the pagan religion of the day and compromised God's Word.
3. The majority of Church leaders have been leading the people astray by not teaching God's Word as they should, and by not preparing the Church to be equipped to defend the faith.

At the same time, it's important to understand that there is a remnant among God's people and among Church leaders. Like Elijah, they're fully standing on God's Word against the "prophets of Baal." This remnant reminds us that God's work can never be thwarted (Job 42:2).

I pray these findings will be a wakeup call to the Church. After considering this research in detail, my heart is burdened because of the sad state of Christianity today. But I am also encouraged because I know that with God's enablement, Bible-believing Christians can turn things around. The task seems so impossibly great, and the challenges overwhelming. But our God is greater!

Being "On Mission"

As I was recently rereading our ministry's mission statement, the Lord brought something to my mind that should encourage every believer who is burdened to reach this world with the gospel.

Our ministry's official goal at Answers in Genesis is "to support the church in fulfilling its commission." To accomplish this goal, our "vision statement" reads, "Answers in Genesis is a catalyst to bring reformation by reclaiming the foundations of our faith which are found in the Bible, from the very first verse."

This comprehensive vision includes our,

Mission

- We proclaim the absolute truth and authority of the Bible with boldness.
- We relate the relevance of a literal Genesis to the Church and the world today with creativity.
- We obey God’s call to deliver the message of the gospel, individually and collectively.

Core Values

- We resourcefully equip believers to defend their faith with excellence.
- We willingly engage society’s challenges with uncompromising integrity.
- We sacrificially serve the AiG family and others.
- We generously give Christian love.

Note that our vision involves “to bring reformation.”² When we think of the word *reformation*, Christians usually think of the great reformer Martin Luther whom I spoke of at the beginning of this chapter. However, long before Martin Luther, Scripture gives examples of other key reformers from whom we can learn many lessons. One of the most valuable examples is that of King Hezekiah. God made sure details about his life and reforms would be written down in His holy Word, so we could learn from his actions and be challenged in our own walk of faith.

Concerning the magnitude of Hezekiah’s amazing reforms, the Bible says, “So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 30:26).

2. You can read our full Vision/Mission/Core Beliefs Statement online. It tells more about what drives this ministry, but for our purpose here let me focus on the “Vision” portion.

Hezekiah reformed God's people by destroying idol worship and restoring temple worship. He reinstated the Passover, and did whatever he could and needed to do to get people back to obeying His Word.

We need a "Hezekiah-style happening" in our own culture today. As our research shows, so many believers in our generation have compromised God's Word, beginning in Genesis! We are also seeing the sad consequences (abortion on demand, gay "marriage," increasing violence, etc.) of a Western world that is becoming increasingly more anti-Christian, and attempting to remove any vestiges of Christian influence and heritage from these nations.

So what are the lessons we can learn from Hezekiah?

1. Reformation begins with us

What was different about Hezekiah compared to so many of the other kings of Israel and Judah who came before him? At the beginning of 2 Chronicles' account of Hezekiah we read: "And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done" (2 Chron. 29:2).

In addition to his reforms, Hezekiah was also a man of godly character:

Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered" (2 Chron. 31:20–21).

So what's the lesson? In order to impact the world around them, God's people first need to seek God and be obedient to His Word. Sadly, so many Christians and Christian leaders today exalt *man's* word (like swallowing the lie of evolutionary biology, geology, astronomy, anthropology, etc., which is an attempt to explain life *without* God) and by twisting God's infallible Word to fit that false narrative (theistic evolution). This is no different from the efforts by the people of Judah and Israel to adopt the pagan religion of their age and mix it with what God had instructed.

Reformation begins with a return to the authority of the Word of God and obeying God's revelation to man. By returning to God's Word, beginning in Genesis, and by repenting of the rampant compromise that has spread throughout the Church and Christian institutions, we can reform the failing Church.

2. We should expect resistance and opposition

We read about some of Hezekiah's specific initiatives in 2 Chronicles 30:1 and 30:5:

Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. . . . So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often as prescribed.

However, this return to obedience was not enthusiastically received by everyone.

So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them (2 Chron. 30:10).

As Hezekiah was calling on people to "return to the Lord" (2 Chronicles 30:9), many scoffed. The same is true today, reminding anyone who shares the Word faithfully that there will be those who oppose and ridicule such faithfulness. In fact, we should *expect* scoffers. However, we also read, "However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 30:11). God had a remnant that were committed to do what was right before the Lord. And there is a remnant today in our Western cultures. As I travel across the USA and meet people visiting the Creation Museum, I am encouraged at the remnant who are faithful to the Lord and His Word, and who are training up generations to boldly and uncompromisingly stand

on the authority of the Word. They are a remnant (and I see them as a growing remnant in the USA), amidst a world of scoffers.

Presumably, nearly everyone scoffed at Noah for preaching God's Word before the Flood came. In 2 Peter 3, we are warned that the most basic teachings of God's Word will be mocked and ridiculed, including the truth about creation, the Flood, and Christ's Second Coming and judgment by fire.

Peter, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records,

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willfully are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished (2 Pet. 3:3–6; KJV).

Clearly, many in our world today ridicule and repudiate those who stand on God's Word in Genesis and reject man's beliefs concerning the supposed big bang, billions of years, and other evolutionary ideas. As Answers in Genesis moved forward with the construction of a life-size ark, we experienced this same type of scoffing, and it has only increased with time. So if we are staying true to God's Word and we "contend for the faith" (Jude 1:3), we will be mocked, ridiculed, and even persecuted, as Jesus predicted in John 15:18–21.

3. Religious leaders often compromise

There's an interesting contrast in 2 Chronicles 29:34 between the priests (the religious leaders) and the common Levites (those who assisted them).

But the priests were too few and could not flay all the burnt offerings, so until other priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was finished — for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we're warned of shepherds (religious leaders) who lead the people astray. This is certainly not true of all leaders — but even in our world today, we find a large number of Church leaders compromise God's Word as it relates to Genesis or other areas of morality (e.g., homosexuality). Some prefer not to preach tough topics (like sin, repentance, and hell) for fear of upsetting people, especially those who make significant financial contributions.

In 2006, Answers in Genesis contracted with America's Research Group to conduct research on the state of Christian colleges in the USA. The results were published in our book *Already Compromised*.³ One of the surprising results of that research showed that, by and large, the *science* departments at Christian colleges were more likely to believe in a young earth and reject other evolutionary ideas than the *Bible* (or theology) departments!

It confirmed one of the observations I've made over the past 30-plus years in creation apologetics: even in the more conservative Christian colleges, the professors in the science departments tend to be much more vocal and diligent than Bible departments in dealing with the issue of origins and taking a stand on a literal interpretation of Genesis!

So today, we experience the same problems with our religious leaders that Israel did thousands of years ago. It's true that the heart of the human problem is that of the human heart. It remains deceitful and diseased (Jer. 17:9).

4. Pride threatens us all

Now here is a very serious warning for all of us! The problem of pride. Even as great a man of God as Hezekiah was, his pride nevertheless got the best of him. At first, he was humble and God greatly blessed his faith. After the many reforms Hezekiah performed, God allowed the king of Assyria to come against Judah and intended on war against Jerusalem. Hezekiah fortified the city, made weapons, and prepared for the battle. But most importantly, he encouraged the people to trust in God, who was on their side:

3. Ken Ham and Greg Hall, *Already Compromised* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2011).

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah (2 Chron. 32:7–8).

When the king of Assyria sent people to taunt the Jews and mock their God, Hezekiah did what we should all do for every challenge, every day: “And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, *prayed and cried to heaven*” (2 Chron. 32:20; KJV, emphasis added).

Because of this, God gave Hezekiah great victory, and I find it thrilling every time I read it:

And the LORD sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side (2 Chron. 32:21–22).

What a great victory for the Lord!

But now comes the lesson every one of us must learn. Scripture warns us about pride. Because of our sin nature, this is a problem we all have. After the great victory God gave Hezekiah, we read these sad words:

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:24–25).

Because of the wonderful defeat of the Assyrian army, Hezekiah became proud! When we are involved in serving the Lord, no matter how great

or small, we must always remember to give God the glory and honor. We must recognize how easy it is to be lifted up in pride and thus set the wrong example for those looking at us.

This episode could have been his downfall, but then “Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah” (2 Chron. 32:26).

We can never forget that Satan’s greatest temptations often come immediately on the heels of a great victory. It is typically then that our guard is down and we are most vulnerable to attack and to the deceptive nature of human pride. Solomon reminds us,

One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit
will obtain honor (Prov. 29:23).

5. A lasting legacy requires vigilance

There is one final lesson I want to highlight in Hezekiah’s reformation story. When Hezekiah died, we read that his son Manasseh became king in his place. But then “[Manassah] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel” (2 Chron. 33:2).

It is hard to fathom how such a godly king as Hezekiah could end up with such an evil son as Manasseh to take his place. We don’t know the circumstances of why Manasseh ended up the way he did. But it underscores the fact that every generation must choose for itself to follow the Lord. It’s also a warning to us that we must always be vigilant and do the very best we can to raise up offspring who will carry on the spiritual legacy to the next generation and then the next and so on.

It’s sad to observe that as compromise has crept in, many Christian institutions (colleges, etc.) in our Western world have forsaken the biblical stand of our nation’s founders. Ironically, many such institutions, established on biblical principles, have now become leaders in indoctrinating generations *against* the authority of the Word of God. This is tragic and unacceptable.

Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher who brought revival to his native Britain, proclaimed,

We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitefields, men fit to mark eras, whose names breathe terror in our foemen's ears. We have dire need of such. Whence will they come to us? They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the Church, and will come in due time. He has power to give us back again a golden age of preachers, and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument in the hand of the Spirit for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land. . . . I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches.⁴

Yes, we need Luthers and Hezekiah-type reformers today. But we must understand and embrace the sober lessons from the life of Jeremiah (in warning the people) and Hezekiah's (in bringing needed reforms), which God put in His Word for our good. We must return to God's infallible Word, and pursue the true reform that rests in Him alone.

Want to read more? Take advantage of an introductory offer for *Ready to Return!*

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4. Charles Spurgeon, *Autobiography Vol. 1: The Early Years* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 1973).