

**THE USE AND ABUSE OF JOHN 3:16:  
A REVIEW OF  
MAX LUCADO'S BOOK  
3:16—THE NUMBERS OF HOPE**

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I. INTRODUCTION

It was Sir Francis Bacon who said: “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.”

Well, the moment I saw the title of pastor and best-selling author Max Lucado’s newest book, *3:16—The Numbers of Hope*,<sup>1</sup> as a person who is passionate about the Free Grace message, I was interested in chewing on what his take would be on the most important subject in the world—eternal life—and the meaning of John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,  
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal  
life.

At the outset, allow me to say that you only have to read a few paragraphs before you are reminded about just how gifted a writer Max Lucado is. Whether you are reading about Nicodemus’s twilight encounter with Christ two millennia ago or an incident from only this past year, Lucado’s ability to paint a picture of what has transpired via interesting and relevant storytelling is nearly without parallel.

With great skill, what he does in the first twelve chapters is to take John 3:16 apart nearly word-by-word. For example, after introducing

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<sup>1</sup> Max Lucado, *3:16—The Numbers of Hope* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

Nicodemus in chapter 1 (and the fact that people “must be born again”), in chapter 2 he focuses simply on *God* and His desire for the salvation of mankind (“For *God* so loved the world...”). Each chapter follows this pattern through chapter 12.

In chapter 3, Lucado concentrates on the phrase *the world* and helps people see their true spiritual condition—where they stand in relation to a holy God. In chapter 4, he centers his attention on the word *loved* and shares numerous examples of God’s love for sinful humanity. This is the pattern of the majority of the book (pp. 2-130)—a word or phrase from John 3:16 is highlighted and then multiple stories, Scripture texts, quotations, and illustrations are given for the purpose of illumination.

Chapter 13 is the concluding chapter containing an invitation to the unsaved. After his conclusion, the author includes forty pithy devotional chapters concerning the life of Christ that he encourages people to read once a day for forty days (pp. 131-214). The final section of the book contains sixty endnotes as well as a bibliography connected with the devotional section (pp. 215-19).

## II. SALVATION APART FROM WORKS

From the get go, Lucado comes across as believing in eternal salvation apart from good works. For instance, after quoting John 3:16 verbatim, Lucado writes:

A twenty-six word parade of hope: beginning with God, ending with life, and urging us to do the same. Brief enough to write on a napkin or memorize in a moment, yet solid enough to weather two thousand years of storms and questions. If you know nothing of the Bible, start here. If you know everything in the Bible, return here. We all need the reminder. The heart of the human problem is the heart of the human. And God’s treatment is prescribed in John 3:16.

He loves.

He gave.

We believe.

We live.<sup>2</sup>

Lucado is emphatic that good works and human effort—even our best efforts—are not part of the new birth:

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Unless one is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (v. 3, NKJV)

Behold the Continental Divide of Scripture, the international date line of faith. Nicodemus stands on one side, Jesus on the other, and Christ pulls no punches about their differences.

Nicodemus inhabits a land of good efforts, sincere gestures, and hard work. Give God your best, his philosophy says, and God does the rest.

Jesus’s [sic] response? Your best won’t do. You’re works don’t work. You’re finest efforts don’t mean squat. Unless you are born again, you can’t even see what God is up to.<sup>3</sup>

In reference to the encounter of Nicodemus and Jesus, Lucado contends that new birth is God’s work from “start to finish”:

Newborn hearts are born of heaven. You can’t wish, earn, or create one. New birth? Inconceivable. God handles the task, start to finish.

Nicodemus looks around the room at the followers. Their blank expressions betray equal bewilderment.

Old Nick has no hook upon which to hang such thoughts. He speaks self-fix. But Jesus speaks—indeed introduces—a different language. Not works born of men and women, but a work done by God.”<sup>4</sup>

Just a few pages later, the author underscores that it is belief in Christ and not good works that brings eternal life: “In the end, some perish and some live. And what determines the difference? Not works or talents, pedigrees or possessions. Nicodemus had these in hoards. The difference is determined by our belief. ‘Whoever *believes* in him shall not perish but have eternal life.’”<sup>5</sup>

In chapter 8, Lucado considers the word *believes* (“whoever *believes* in him shall not perish...”). After telling a story about a rock-climbing trip in which the guide asks Lucado to trust that she can hold the ropes he will be attached to, he writes:

Can I really trust that “whoever *believes* in him shall not perish”?

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 10.

Jesus's [sic] invitation seems too simple. We gravitate to other verbs. *Work* has a better ring to it. "Whoever works for him will be saved." *Satisfy* fits nicely. "Whoever satisfies him will be saved." But believe? *Shouldn't I do more?*

This seems to be the struggle of Nicodemus. It was his conversation with Christ, remember, that set the stage for John 3:16. Jesus's [sic] "you must be born again" command strikes the scholar—and some of us—the way the words of the take-a-leap girl struck me. What's my part? The baby takes a passive role in the birthing process. The infant allows the parent to do the work. Salvation is equally simple. God works and we trust. Such a thought troubles Nicodemus. *There must be more.*<sup>6</sup>

So once again, Lucado sees the reception of salvation as something simple—as a matter of trust and not works. In reference to Moses and the brazen serpent, Lucado states:

Snake-bit Israelites found healing by looking at the pole. Sinners will find healing by looking to Christ. 'Everyone who believes in him will have eternal life' (John 3:15 NLT).

The simplicity troubles many people. We expect a more complicated cure...

We'll find salvation the old fashioned way: we'll earn it...

Christ, in contrast says to us... 'Your part is to trust. Trust me to do what you can't.'<sup>7</sup>

In chapter 9, entitled, *God's Gracious Grip*, Lucado references a verse from Scripture that most popular writers ignore when he says:

Our spiritual legs have no strength. Our morality has no muscle. Our good deeds cannot carry us across the finish line, but Christ can. 'To the one who does not work, but believes *in Him* who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness' (Rom 4:5 NASB).<sup>8</sup>

On the very next page, Lucado references John 10:28 and Eph 1:13, emphasizing that "a soul sealed by God is safe."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 76-77, italics his.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 84, italics his.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 85.

Apparently, the author does not believe that salvation can be lost:

When our children stumble, we do not disown them. When they fall, we do not dismiss them. We may punish or reprimand, but cast them out of the family? We cannot...

God, our Father, engenders the same relationship with us.<sup>10</sup>

In my overview thus far of the first twelve chapters, I have not enumerated all of the references that the author made to eternal life being apart from good works. But suffice it to say that in chapters 1-12, Lucado did a good job of presenting eternal life as being apart from good works. Does he specifically define what it means to believe in Jesus like the apostle John did in John 11:25-26?<sup>11</sup> No, he doesn't. And in the end, that becomes exceedingly problematic, as we shall see. But there are good illustrations of faith (pp. 75-77, 78, 83-85) and the author does an excellent job of portraying hell scripturally (pp. 93-101) as in other books he has written.<sup>12</sup> It was also nice to see a strong defense of the fact that pluralism is untrue and that all religions do not lead to heaven (pp. 86-89).

### III. CONFUSION REGARDING THE TERMS OF THE GOSPEL

As I said earlier, Lucado has a tremendous ability to share stories that do a great job of illustrating the truth he is trying to unfold in the minds of his readers. He is to be commended for that. Unfortunately, for

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>11</sup> In the "40 Days of Devotions" section (pp. 131-214), Lucado quotes John 11:25-26, calls Christ's question to Martha ("Do you believe this?") the "greatest question found in Scripture," and then makes the following comment: "There it is. The question that drives any responsible listener to *absolute obedience* to or total rejection of the Christian faith" (p. 180, emphasis mine). It is clear in 3:16 and in other books Lucado has written that he goes back and forth between a Free Grace view of salvation and a Lordship view of it.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Max Lucado, *And the Angels Were Silent* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992), 136. There he writes, "We don't like to talk about hell, do we? In intellectual circles the topic of hell is regarded as primitive and foolish. It's not logical. 'A loving God wouldn't send people to hell.' So we dismiss it.

"But to dismiss it is to dismiss a core teaching of Jesus. The doctrine of hell is not one developed by Paul, Peter, or John. It is taught by Jesus himself."

every good illustration he comes up with which promotes the freeness of eternal life, there are others that indicate that Lucado is confused about the terms of the gospel. There are several places in the book where this is evident.

#### A. PROBLEM #1: USING VERSES ADDRESSED TO BELIEVERS TO ADDRESS UNBELIEVERS

There are quite a few instances in which the author, in attempting to get an important point across to his unbelieving readers, uses verses that were originally addressed to NT believers or to the nation of Israel.<sup>13</sup> He asks unbelievers to acknowledge their sinfulness before God and then uses 1 John 1:10 for support: “If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts” (NLT).<sup>14</sup> Careful study tells us that this verse concerns a *believer’s* fellowship with God and is not referencing unbelievers.

In another place, he encourages the unsaved not to resist the love of God and then, includes a verse that is obviously written to a Christian audience:

“Take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God” (Eph 3:18-19 MSG).<sup>15</sup>

I admit that this is a beautiful verse concerning the love of Christ, but why baffle a person you are trying to win to Christ via simple faith with admonitions such as “live full lives”? This is highly confusing to a person without Christ. Another instance similar to this occurs a few chapters later. Here the author is proclaiming the wonderful truth of the inclusiveness of the gospel—that *whoever* believes in Jesus has eternal life. But notice how quickly this proclamation becomes murky due to the texts he has chosen to reference:

*Whoever* acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. (Matt. 10:32)

*Whoever* finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matt. 10:39)

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<sup>13</sup> Lucado, 3:16, 30, 40, 59, 66-67, 69, 71, 98, 99, 129.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

*Whoever* does God's will is my brother and sister and mother. (Mark 3:35)

*Whoever* believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)<sup>16</sup>

If he had just left those four verses out, he would have had a powerful follow-up since the next five he includes are John 3:36; 4:14; 6:37; 11:26; and Rev 22:17—all great salvation verses! Again, these are just a few of the many instances where the author uses verses that were originally written to motivate believers either to enter a life of discipleship, or to continue in it, as proof-texts to unbelievers.

#### B. PROBLEM #2: USING STORIES/ILLUSTRATIONS/CONCEPTS THAT CLOUD THE FREENESS OF ETERNAL LIFE

Lucado tells a story about a feeble elderly woman who takes part in a Lutheran communion service (p. 61). In attempting to illustrate that God will receive scarred and journey-hardened sinners, he employs a hazy quotation given by the priest to the woman that makes it sound as if receiving the elements is necessary to *retain* eternal life: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose body and blood you have received, preserve your soul unto everlasting life." Now I'll admit that when you get to the end of the story the author does attempt to clear things up a bit, but my question is this: why use such a confusing story to begin with? Why make it sound like communion is somehow connected with obtaining or maintaining eternal life?

Another example appears a bit later. Here we find the classic (and confusing) if-you-believe-in-the-chair-you-will-sit-in-it analogy. Just after telling his readers that Christ wants them to trust Him to do what they cannot, the author illustrates this by saying:

By the way, you take similar steps of trust daily, even hourly. You believe the chair will support you, so you set your weight on it. You believe water will hydrate you, so you swallow it. You trust the work of the light switch, so you flip it. You have faith the doorknob will work, so you turn it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 66-67, italics his.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 79.

Both Zane Hodges and Bob Wilkin have written<sup>18</sup> about why this is a poor illustration of saving faith so I won't take the time to go into the issues here. But once again, my question is this: why use an illustration about faith if it actually results in confusing your unbelieving readership?

Here's another example. After speaking of a jet pilot who forgot to buckle up his seat belt, the author writes: "No one but Jesus 'buckles you in.' You may slip—indeed you will—but you will not fall. Hence the invitation to believe 'in him.'"<sup>19</sup> What does he mean when he says "you will not fall"? Is he continuing the figure of speech about a pilot who could fall to his death? Or is he speaking of no major spiritual defection? The latter seems likely since he starts by saying, "You may slip—indeed you will." That strongly implies that the falling is moral or doctrinal defection. Most likely he is saying that believers will never fall as long as they keep on trusting Jesus.

A page later, Lucado shares several splendid paragraphs concerning the fact that faith in Christ is sufficient for eternal life. For example, he says:

Christ came, not for the strong, but for the weak; not for the righteous, but for the sinner...he works and we trust, he dies and we live, he invites and we believe.

We believe *in him*. "The work God wants you to do is this: Believe the One he sent" (John 6:29 NCV).

Believe in yourself? No. Believe in him.

Believe in them? No. Believe in him.

And those who do, those who believe "in him shall not perish but have eternal life"<sup>20</sup> (John 3:16).

Now, if the author had stopped there, that would have been great...but he doesn't. To the tremendous words we have just read, Lucado adds: "How do we begin to believe? We turn to our Father for help." What does that mean? We aren't told. Maybe he means we should pray and ask God to show us what to believe (which is certainly a sound idea). But maybe he means we should pray and ask God to give us *faith* (as though it were some commodity). Once again, it is evident that Luca-

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<sup>18</sup>Zane C. Hodges, "How to Lead People to Christ, Part 2: Our Invitation to Respond," *JOTGES* 14:1 (Spring 2001): 11; Robert N. Wilkin, "Saving Faith in Focus," *JOTGES* 11:2 (Autumn 1998): 52.

<sup>19</sup> Lucado, 3:16, 87.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.



do is confused himself. If not, why would he make such a confusing statement immediately after such powerful words?

One of the most puzzling comments in the entire book is an illustration about someone's atheistic aunt who was near death. Speaking of her final days he says,

The woman lived her life with no fear of God or respect for his Word. She was an atheist. Even in her final days, she refused to permit anyone to speak of God or eternity. Only her Maker knows her last thoughts and eternal destiny...<sup>21</sup>

*Say what?* Only her Maker knows her eternal destiny? Don't we? If what Lucado is saying is true (that she was a lifelong atheist who died in unbelief) then why would only God know her eternal destiny? He seems too concerned about being judgmental, even about an unnamed atheist on her deathbed.

Throughout this book, Lucado affirms that faith in Christ apart from good works brings everlasting life. And yet, without missing a beat, he will interject a story, Bible verse, or a play on words that emphasizes the need for something beyond faith in Christ's promise for eternal life—and it's clear that he doesn't even notice this tension!

### C. PROBLEM #3: USING NAMES AND TITLES THAT CLOUD THE FREENESS OF THE GOSPEL

As we saw earlier under Problem #1, even though the author is writing to unbelievers, he confusingly includes verses from Scripture that call people to follow Christ as devoted disciples. He makes this same mistake in how he chooses to address believers as well.

In chapter 7 entitled *Heaven's "Whoever" Policy*, his goal is to help unsaved people understand that eternal life is offered to all: "*Whoever* unfurls 3:16 as a banner for the ages. *Whoever* unrolls the welcome mat of heaven to humanity. *Whoever* invites the world to God."<sup>22</sup> This is beautiful! What an encouragement to the lost person! Unfortunately, as is true in many places in the book, the writer immediately shoots himself in the foot by making the reception of eternal life sound as if it is a life of following Christ:

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 66, italics his.

Jesus could have easily narrowed the scope, changing *whoever* into *whatever*. “Whatever Jew believes” or “Whatever woman follows me.” But he used no qualifier. The pronoun is wonderfully indefinite.<sup>23</sup>

Isn't it clear that Lucado is equating belief in Christ with following Him? He does this again in at least two other places. Just after quoting the words of an unsaved woman on her deathbed, he writes: “Contrast her words with those of a Christ-follower.”<sup>24</sup> And if there was any doubt that the author likes to call those who have believed “Christ-followers,” the following reference should clarify the issue: “Christ-followers go public with their belief.”<sup>25</sup> Now don't get me wrong. I realize that some might take issue with me on this last one. But in context, the author is referencing a person who *has not yet gone public with his or her belief in Christ*. And yet, he still wants to call such a person a “Christ-follower.” Am I making a big deal over nothing? I don't think so. Here's why. In writing a book to an audience of unbelievers, every time an author uses a confusing word or concept, it makes it just that much harder to perceive and understand the grace of God. In Scripture, believers are believers and followers are followers. Believers are people who hear the promises of Christ concerning eternal life and believe what they hear (cf., John 3:16-18; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-27). Followers are those who respond to Jesus' command to follow Him in a life of sacrificial devotion (cf., Matt 10:38; 16:24-27; 19:27-28; Mark 1:17-18; 8:34; Luke 5:11; 9:23; John 12:26), and whenever we blur these two concepts in speaking or writing to the unsaved, we make it just that much more difficult for them to understand saving grace.

Now I appreciate the fact that some might argue against what I am proposing and say, “But didn't Jesus say things like ‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, *and they follow Me*. And I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish...’ (John 10:27-28a, italics added). Didn't He call believers *followers*?” Yes, He did. But a convincing argument has been made by Zane Hodges in his book *The Gospel Under Siege* that the word *follow* here is not a reference to discipleship but is one of the many descriptive illustrations for saving faith:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 66, italics his, underlining mine.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 129.

In John 10:27 the term “follow” is simply another Johannine metaphor for saving faith. Like the metaphors about receiving (1:12), drinking (4:14), coming (6:35, 37), eating bread (6:35), eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood (6:54) and others, it expresses the action in response to which eternal life is bestowed. When the Shepherd calls the sheep through His Word (and He knows who they are!), they respond to that call by following Him...

It is a mistake to construe the word “follow” in John 10:27 as though it indicates something about the nature of the believer’s experience *after* he receives eternal life. In fact it has nothing to do with that at all...<sup>26</sup>

It should be clear to all of us who believe in grace that, due to the fact that we live in a culture that is very confused about what a person must do to have eternal life, we need to be extra careful in the words, titles, and stories we employ as we evangelize and as we write.

Let’s consider one more example of how the author clouds the freeness of eternal life. In chapter 7, Lucado shares the story of leading his Uncle Billy to Christ just days before he passed away. But instead of describing his uncle as a last-minute or eleventh-hour *believer*, notice what monikers he decides to use: “A last-minute *confessor* receives the same grace as a lifetime *servant*...”<sup>27</sup> If I seem to be hypercritical, let’s remember that the author is writing this book to the unsaved. If the reader is Roman Catholic, the phrase “last-minute confessor” could easily bring to mind the idea of confessing sins to a priest just before death. On top of that, just four pages earlier (on p. 67), the author includes a verse about confessing Christ publicly in what is supposedly a list of verses referencing eternal life.

#### D. PROBLEM #4: USING THE “SINNER’S PRAYER” IN EVANGELISM

What did Lucado say to lead his Uncle Billy to Christ on his deathbed? Even if Lucado does not believe that a prayer is necessary to be saved, there is no doubt that he uses this method in his personal evangelism:

“Bill, are you ready to go to heaven?”

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<sup>26</sup> Hodges, Zane C., *The Gospel Under Siege: A Study on Faith and Works* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1982), 44-45.

<sup>27</sup> Lucado, *3:16*, 71, italics mine.

His eyes, for the first time, popped open. Saucer wide. His head lifted. Doubt laced his response: "I think I am."

"Do you want to be sure?"

"Oh yes."

Our brief talk ended with a prayer for grace.<sup>28</sup>

Lucado went on to this application: "Request grace with your dying breath, and God hears your prayer. *Whoever* means 'whenever.'"<sup>29</sup>

In his concluding chapter, Lucado again encourages the unsaved to pray for eternal life:

You need to give God your answer: "Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in" (Eph 3:17 MSG). Say yes to him. Your prayer needs no eloquence, just honesty.

*Father, I believe you love this world. You gave your one and only Son so I can live forever with you. Apart from you, I die. I choose life. I choose you.*<sup>30</sup>

Now someone might say, *What's so bad about prayer? Isn't this a picky objection?* In reality, no. In the Bible, neither the Lord Jesus, Paul, nor any of the other apostles ever shared the message of eternal life and afterwards asked: "Would you like to bow your head and ask God to save you?" They didn't because the fundamental issue is whether the person *believes* the saving message that the evangelist has just shared with him or her, not whether he prays some prayer.

There are a lot of people who will pray a prayer, asking God to save them, when in reality they do not believe the saving message. Can a person pray and simultaneously believe in Christ for eternal life? Of course. But can a person pray and yet not believe in Christ for eternal life? Unfortunately, yes—and multitudes of people have done so. Maybe they prayed the sinner's prayer because they wanted to get rid of the evangelist. Or like many, maybe they prayed this prayer every night because they could never get assurance of salvation. Since this is so often the case, the bottom line is this: as people of the Word, we should look to Jesus as our example in evangelism and not to the traditions of men.

We should not cloud the issue of evangelism by importing the man-made doctrine of "praying for God to save you." Rather, we should en-

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 71, italics his.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 129, italics his.

courage unbelievers to carefully consider the claims of Christ and to believe Him—to take Him at His word: “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:26).

#### IV. CONFUSION REGARDING BELIEF AND PUBLIC CONFESSION

After reading the first twelve chapters, if you are still wondering where the author stands in relation to the gospel, the conclusion of the book makes it clear. He doesn't really believe that faith in Christ *alone* brings eternal life but that public confession is also necessary:

*Father, I believe you love this world. You gave your one and only Son so I can live forever with you. Apart from you, I die. With you, I live. I choose life. I choose you.*

If you aren't sure you've told him, you haven't. We can't get on board and not know it. Nor can we get on board and hide it. No stowaways permitted. Christ-followers go public with their belief. We turn from bad behavior to good (repentance). We stop following our passions and salute our new captain (confession). We publicly demonstrate our devotion (baptism).

We don't keep our choice a secret. Why would we? We're on our way home for Christ's sake.<sup>31</sup>

This is classic Lordship thought. Salvation is found only in Christ but you must profess your faith openly because no stowaways are permitted! All who truly believe will go public with their belief. And if that wasn't enough, the author throws repentance, confession, and baptism in the mix as well. Now someone might say, “He's not saying that those things are *necessary* for eternal life, but something that all true believers will do.” I don't think so. Lucado clearly says that a person cannot believe in Christ and hide it—that believers go public with their belief. He says that stowaways (people who profess faith in Christ and hide it publicly) are not permitted! No, it is clear that in spite of a lot of excellent writing earlier in the book about salvation apart from works, in the end, Max Lucado doesn't believe that salvation is by faith in Christ alone. It is obvious that he believes that public confession is also necessary (and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 129, italics his, underlining mine.

repentance, baptism, absolute obedience, prayer, and following Christ as well).<sup>32</sup> How sad. The truth of John 3:16—that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life—now becomes the message that whoever believes in Him and openly confesses Him is permitted on board! This is a tragic and confusing end to a book that begins with so much promise and hope. In the end, the unbelieving reader discovers that faith in Christ is not really all God requires for eternal life but that the fine print includes other stipulations.

## V. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the author is confused about what a person must do to have eternal life. In spite of the fact that this book is recommended by famous and prominent people from all walks of life (like actor Tim Conway, Pastor Rick Warren, and Texas Governor Rick Perry)<sup>33</sup> as a primer regarding salvation, Lucado can't make up his mind on what one must do to be saved. On one page, salvation is granted to those who simply believe. On another, only believers who publicly profess their faith are permitted. If he really understands the Biblical condition for eternal life, why do we see this? If he believes that Christ gives eternal life apart from good works (which he writes so eloquently about in so many places), then why does he drift into Lordship thought so often? Why do we find him calling for *absolute obedience* (p. 180)? The only answer is that the author is simply confused. If you could personally ask him if he believes that faith alone in Christ alone saves a person forever the moment they believe (apart from confession, etc.), based on what he has written in this book, his answer would have to be "no."

If you want a book that both a Lordship advocate and a Free Grace advocate might tolerate (with neither being fully satisfied), then this book is for you. But if you want a book to lead an unbeliever to faith in Christ for eternal life, then I suggest you look elsewhere.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 66, 71, 129, 180.

<sup>33</sup> At the very beginning of the book there are "*Reflections on 3:16 the verse*" as well as "*Reflections on 3:16 the book.*" This is prior to the "Contents" and no page numbers are given.