

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 320

Conversation Series, Part 2

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**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**

**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

**Guests:** Chad Wagner (CW)

Matt Mouzakis (MM)

Tom Orzechowski (TW)

Scott MacFeat (SM)

### Episode Summary

Recently Dr. Heiser reached out to his audience asking whether pastors who follow the podcast had tried teaching the content of his book, *The Unseen Realm*, to their congregations. The response was amazing, with close to 150 responses. The interest in sharing the experience of teaching the meta-narrative of Scripture to congregations stimulated the idea to have guest pastors and teachers on the podcast to tell us their stories. Join us as we listen to these people of diverse denominations and congregations talk about the impact of teaching biblical theology in its original context to their people.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 320: Conversation Series, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

**MH:** Pretty good, under the circumstances. Trying to get lots of stuff done and just trying to do something normal or have it feel normal. I think it's an easier task for me than it is for everybody else here at the house. But we're doing well. Everybody's healthy at this point, so we're thankful for that. And just trying to behave. [laughs] Trying to do what we're supposed to do and all that sort of stuff. But otherwise adapting.

**TS:** Did you mention... Have you all shifted to pure online for the Awakening School?

**MH:** For the live classes, what I did was I went into the arena where we had been holding them (a camera person and somebody to work the soundboard and myself) and we recorded the course content. And then we uploaded each session according to the schedule that people already had blocked out. And then

we did livestream Q&A. So that's how the procedure changed for the live classes. For the people who were distance ed., nothing really changed. So for the most part, it's been very normal.

**TS:** Well, Mike, your *Demons* book is right around the corner. I saw that you posted that you got a box full of them.

**MH:** Yeah, we have a box of *Demons* in the house! It sounds like Ghostbusters. [laughter]

**TS:** Nothing's changed. [laughter]

**MH:** Right, nothing's changed. [laughs] But yep, the books are real. So we're right on the cusp of having them shipped, so it's good news.

**TS:** Yeah, I just want to clarify, I was talking about your pugs. I don't want Drenna to get mad at me. [laughter] Well, that's good. And you've given a couple away, so that's good. So be looking on social media for that. And I'm looking forward to...

**MH:** Yeah, we'll do some more of that.

**TS:** Alright, sounds good. Well, once again, we've got four more pastors to talk to who are on the front lines there of teaching your content. So looking forward to it.

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**MH:** Well, we're excited to once again have another round of pastors and church leaders on the podcast to talk about their (hopefully positive) [laughs] experience trying to integrate the content of *Unseen Realm* and *Supernatural* in what they do, in terms of their preaching—how they are able to bridge the gap between the content and their congregation, to make an effort to introduce to people to some of the ideas and get them more acclimated to what's going on in Scripture in a number of regards. Maybe some of the strange passages and whatnot. So this is our second round. And I'm going to ask each of our guests to introduce themselves briefly—who they are, where they're at, and what their role is in their churches. So Chad, we're going to start with you, because I know Chad from the past. Chad was actually a former student of mine in Bible college. And he doesn't hate me. [laughter] He's still in ministry, which is just wonderful. Chad, we'll start with you and then any one of you can just jump in after Chad's done.

**CW:** Alright. My name is Chad Wagner. I'm the pastor at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Viroqua, WI. I have one other person that works with me. But he's part-time. Just a little tiny church in the middle of Wisconsin. So we have a wonderful

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ministry and a wonderful little church that just loves the Lord. And we're glad to be able to be a part of.

**MH:** Sweet. Let's jump in with Matt. He's also in Wisconsin.

**MM:** My name's Matt Mouzakis. I'm from Lake Geneva, WI. And I'm a worship pastor at Mount Zion Christian Church. We use your content quite a bit. And I've got a bunch of people that just really like it. I'm excited to talk with you about it.

5:00

**MH:** Is Mount Zion a nondenominational or is it a denomination?

**MM:** It's nondenominational.

**MH:** Okay. And Chad, I should have asked you, too. Are you nondenominational or Baptist? I can't remember what you said.

**CW:** We're not a part of... We're just an independent church. We're not a part of any denomination or fellowship.

**MH:** Okay. Well, let's move to Tom.

**TW:** Hi, I'm Tom Orzechowski from Grand Rapids, MI. My background's going to be just a little bit different. I came from church leadership of a nondenominational church, serving (my wife and I), and I was on the board for over 20 years. I wasn't directly involved with preaching, but heavily involved with the ministry. And at some point, we had a little bit of a crazy church split and I ended up outside of the... I got the "Left Foot of Fellowship" on that. But there were several of us that congregated (a couple dozen of us). And we started meeting regularly for meals on Sundays. And we would watch YouTube videos and talk about them. And it wasn't too long before we stumbled into your content. And we would get together, have a meal, watch a video, talk about it, and move on to another one. And we were able to explore more complicated topics. And we grew a lot in the three years since we've been doing this.

**MH:** Wow. That'll be interesting to talk about in a bit. And lastly, Scott.

**SM:** My name's Scott MacFeat. I am the lead pastor at Refton Brethren in Christ Church here in Lancaster, PA.

**MH:** Lancaster.

**SM:** Yeah. We're in lockdown right now. [laughter] I actually became the lead pastor back in November of 2019. And prior to that, I was their student ministry director for several years. So I have a little bit of a unique perspective. And I've taught this to the students and I'm also currently doing this material with the adults.

**MH:** Just so you know, I'm from Lebanon, PA. That's my hometown.

**SM:** Oh, okay. What, about 45 minutes away?

**MH:** Yeah. So you're in a good place. [laughter] I'll let you know... And maybe nobody else will understand. Well, maybe from Wisconsin they'll understand this. But I found Scrapple in Florida last week. And nobody's hoarding that. They're hoarding toilet paper [SM laughs] but the Scrapple is mine. [laughter] So I grew up on that. I don't know if you're *from* the area, but that was something we grew up with that I love. But I try not to eat too much of it. It is just what it sounds like.

**SM:** I don't know if I'm different, but I stay away from Scrapple. [laughter]

**MH:** Well, most people do. [laughter] But I love it. I was just thrilled to find it, because you couldn't get that in the Northwest. So it's like, it was a sign from God. [laughter]

**SM:** There you go.

**MH:** Alright. Well, I'm glad you guys could come on and share some experience about what you've been doing. I'd kind of like to... I'm really intrigued by what Tom said about the Left Foot of Fellowship, and so you've got a few dozen people. And like you said, you weren't preaching, so I don't know if you didn't have any preaching experience at all, or... But it sounded like that would've been difficult, maybe just in terms of prep. But tell us about... What did you start with, on the videos? Because I'm kind of curious as to how you found my content specifically. Like there are things I'm *hoping* you didn't find right away on video. And then there are things that would've been just right. [laughter]

**TW:** Well, there's a lot out there.

**MH:** Oh, I know. Believe me.

**TW:** So let me just fill in a little bit more. So it was a double whammy. Not only did we have kind of a nasty church split and there were a lot of us that just sort of walked away. I was actually pushed out. [laughs] But there was another church that some friends of ours had started and they had a failure in leadership (a moral failure, actually) and that church fell apart. And my heart really went out to these people. They were going through another break-up. And that's when I took the reins. I stepped in and I paid the rent on the building. And we started to meet there. And I wasn't real interested in having a traditional church. And so I just arranged the tables. We had meals and we just started watching these videos. And that was a hard habit to break. People wanted me to teach them and lead them and do everything. But I just had to bite my tongue and show a video and we'd talk. We started with... We found a website called the Work of the People

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that had little topical videos and they would interview people like N.T. Wright or Greg Boyd. And they would have a little thing to say. And we would watch that and it just led us into it. And then we went out there into the raw Wild West of YouTube. We had definitely explored some doctrine. And we had watched a lot of things. I even would interweave things. I would take George Carlin and interweave that with N.T. Wright and just show that they were saying the same things (just one of them cussed a little more). And these were mature believers. These weren't new people. These were mature believers that hadn't ever been fed the content. So we were able to explore things. We had gotten past some of the bad, futurist theology, some of the doctrinal land mines that we had stumbled into. But there was a lot more. And I remember talking to the group and saying, "Look, I want to show you this guy, Michael Heiser. And I don't know about this. I don't know if this is heresy or not. But we're going to need to look at this together and talk about it." And that's how we got into it.

**MH:** Mm hmm. That's interesting. Did you do anything with the Bible Project? Because when the word *video* comes up, that's the first thing I think of.

**TW:** Absolutely. We would watch a Bible Project video pretty much every week. That was kind of nice to do. Because we would watch about 10 videos a week, and they were anywhere from three to seven minutes, and then we'd talk for a while after it. And there were definitely some interesting things that we didn't agree with. I played a lot of things that I didn't agree with. But I was kind of the VJ. And I'm a binge-watcher of YouTube. I don't watch TV, but I'll watch on average probably four hours of YouTube a day. And it's not entertainment. So I collect these things and save the playlists. That's sort of what we did. But your name actually came to me through a friend of mine that was a pastor in Norfolk, VA. And he said, "You've got to check out this guy. He told me about Bible Project, too. And that's where we were introduced.

**MH:** I've spoken in Norfolk. My brother actually lives in Virginia Beach, and he did live in Norfolk for a while. So maybe it's somebody I know out there.

**TW:** Scott Crowder?

**MH:** Scott Crowder... Boy... You know, it does sound familiar. I might have had an internet chat with him or email or something. But that's interesting. So video was your introduction. How about anybody else? I'm not going to call on people, but how did you get started? What was the catalyst or point of entry, for both you... Let's just start with you and then we can talk about how you got your people involved. In Tom's case, it's pretty obvious. But go ahead, anybody else. What was the entry point?

**CW:** Well my entry point was you at school, Mike. I guess that's when I first got introduced to you. So my attraction to you was you were an awesome professor. And I appreciated what you did there and just how you taught there. I can't say

I'm a Mike-ophile or anything like that. But I just have appreciated so much your desire to teach the Word of God. And it's helped me in my ministry. So that's kind of been my introduction. So mine's a little bit different. And my ministry's a little bit different. I'm not using a lot of videos or anything like that. We're a little tiny church in the middle of the country. So I'm not doing any of those kinds of things. But your information gets used all the time in my ministry, whether I'm counseling or I'm preaching, it comes out. I just teach it. And I've not gotten any bad reactions from anybody up to this point, because it just makes sense. [MH laughs] You know what I'm saying?

**MH:** That is helpful. [laughs]

**CW:** If you just teach it, people are like, "Well, yeah, that's what it says." So they usually don't have a problem with it. And you'll run into the occasional people. But like I told you when you contacted me, it's usually from people that have some type of an agenda who are trying to disprove your material as opposed to just taking it for what it could be.

**MH:** Yeah, "the struggle to be right."

**CW:** [laughs] Yeah, "the struggle to be right." Exactly.

**MH:** Wow. So in terms of books, what did you read? *Supernatural*, *Unseen Realm*, or something on the blog?

15:00

**CW:** I read *Unseen Realm* and I'd read a bunch of stuff by Walton. *Unseen Realm* was awesome. I appreciated that. It put so many things into perspective for me, even the issue of tongues. It helped me out with that area. The cosmic geography. Just looking at different things. Being able to understand "what am I reading here?" as I'm going through the Psalms. What's going on here? I can tell you another place where it's helping me out right now is just in relationship to... I've got a guy who's a Flat-Earther in my church. And it's no longer this faceless idea that's out there. I'm now interacting with somebody and I'm loving them and trying to work through this with them in a godly way. So it's just... You're just an awesome resource. If there's anything I run into that's slightly crazy at all, I know Mike Heiser probably has something on that.

**MH:** [laughs] That's what I'll put on my tombstone, right? [laughter]

**CW:** I appreciate it, because, like this guy, for him, the Flat Earth stuff was how he started reading the Bible. He was not a believer. He got involved in this Flat Earth stuff, started reading the Bible, ends up getting saved, and now we're... This is something that's brought him to Christ, this whole issue. And he's very invested in it. And we're trying to work through that. Boy, that's just a huge challenge. And so I just appreciate some of the resources that you provide through your ministry.

**MH:** How about the other two? We have to hear from Matt and Scott yet. What was the entry point?

**MM:** For me... I'm in seminary right now, working on my Master's degree. And they used, in our Old Testament's Background class, a lot of John Walton stuff. And I was just kind of, I guess, drawn to that supernatural worldview and kind of went looking for more material and found your stuff and read *Unseen Realm* in a day, and then read it again a week later.

**MH:** Wow. There should be some award for that. [laughter]

**MM:** Yeah, this was about two years ago. And so how we introduced that to our church, after I read it, I gave... I'm a worship pastor, so I don't do a lot of preaching. I do the singing and music stuff. But I also teach Bible studies on Wednesday nights. We have elective-type Bible studies going on (a bunch of different ones) at our church on Wednesdays. So I gave *Unseen Realm* to our senior pastor, and he read it in, like, a week. And he absolutely loved it and then had our whole staff read it.

**MH:** Wow.

**MM:** So it was...

**MH:** Captive audience. [laughs]

**MM:** Yep. So I just lent him the book and said, "Hey, you might want to read this." And he was teaching through 1 Peter at the time, and he used your stuff on baptism and spiritual warfare in his sermons.

**MH:** Well, I'm so glad he didn't just get up in the pulpit and say, "We're just going to skip this." Like my own experience with that one church. Boy.

**MM:** Yeah. So I've taught... Galatians is where I introduced it. In Galatians 3, the transgressions, we had an episode on that. So that's kind of where I introduced it to our Sunday School-type, discipleship-type classes. And some people absolutely loved it and gravitated towards it. Some had some questions with it. But I helped walk them through it and gave them some of your material and showed them how it wasn't heresy. [laughs] And then I taught it next with my friend Ryan. He's a ThD. And he's into this stuff also and has a YouTube channel that talks about similar stuff to you. We co-taught a class on the theology of Job. So we kind of went through that cosmic geography and supernatural worldview in that class as well and tied in a lot of your material and Walton's as well. And I just finished Colossians this past Wednesday and used a ton of your stuff when you talked through it on the podcast. And the reception to that, especially in Colossians, was really good. We had a couple of brand-new Christians who

didn't understand the supernatural worldview in that class, and they said it was completely eye-opening and they now read the Bible through a whole completely different lens. Stuff that was weird just makes so much more sense now.

**MH:** Wow, that's good. Scott?

**SM:** Yeah. So I guess my story starts back in 2017. You and Trey actually interviewed my Greek professor. That was Dr. Thomas Hudgens.

20:00

**MH:** Oh, okay.

**SM:** I had never heard of the Naked Bible Podcast before, so he turned us onto that. Of course, I had to listen to it. And next thing I know, I was listening to as many as I could. Fast forward several months, I finally decided to get *The Unseen Realm*. I took way more than a day to go through that. [laughter] I took about three months to go through it, and I just combed through it. Because I'm like, "Man, this is..." A lot of this was the first time I had heard, well, all of it. [laughs] You know what I mean. So *Unseen Realm* was really kind of a branching point for me. It was kind of just the start. I went off and then read *Angels* (another one of your books). I picked up some others, like *God's Rivals* by Gerald McDermott and *The Origin of Evil Spirits* by Archie Wright, which is not an easy read. [laughs]

**MH:** No, no it's not.

**SM:** But it's good! Eventually the Bible Project started picking up on this stuff, which was really good. They helped me even further unpack this. But yeah, it took about a year before I was like, "Okay. I think I need to teach this." [laughs] So at that point, I was the student ministry director. But I was really concerned. Because I had read some blogs and concerns of people who were teaching this who were basically kicked out of their churches. [laughter] So the last thing I wanted was to teach this stuff to the students and then for them to go home, talk to their parents, and say who knows what, and they're like, "Whoa, what in the world is Scott teaching?" So what I did was I started a blog. For each lesson that I taught the students, I had a blog post specifically for the parents.

**MH:** Wow, that's a good idea. That is a really good idea.

**SM:** And I told the students, "Don't go home to your parents talking about all this kind of stuff and then just saying, 'Well, just go talk to Scott.' No, tell them to go read the blog first, and then come to me with questions." Which they did. I was surprised! I just wanted a bit of a buffer before people just misinterpret what I'm trying to teach.

**MH:** What was the age group (when you say *students*)?



**SM:** This is middle school through high school. Our kids like content. I've found that the more you challenge them, the more they step up. It's definitely not a fluffy kind of student ministry, where we just kind of talk about one verse and then how I feel about it. [laughs] You know? When I first started, the first lesson was on the word *elohim*. And when I started talking about that, I said, "Guys, I'm going to need you to all have a Bible." I was shocked. It was the first time I ever saw them jump up out of their chairs and run to the back of the room and grab Bibles. And they're opening them up. It was awesome. Kids were coming up afterward like, "Oh, thank you so much."

See, the great thing about this was we were able to answer bigger questions that people have been asking for years, but no one ever really answers. "What's my purpose? What's the deal with the problem of evil? Why is the world the way it is? How does my story fit into God's overall story?" And we even talked about giants. [laughs] So that was fun. But bringing it home, the book *Supernatural* was really helpful for that. At the end of each chapter, you have "Why does this even matter?" That helped me present this material in such a way that says, "Yeah, this *does* matter, and it *does* affect how I read the Bible.

So yeah, now I'm lead pastor as of November and I'm still using this stuff. I haven't been fired yet. [laughs] Instead of blogs, my youth pastor and I have been doing video blogs on our YouTube channel, just to kind of dive in deeper with content. I've learned that the material you don't share is sometimes just as important as the material you do. [laughs] So I'm trying to be very thoughtful with my approach, especially when I taught through, when I preached on Genesis 6:1-4. I was so worried about that. But I practiced it in front of one of our staff members. I just told him, "Look, pretend that you've never heard any of this stuff before, and then grill me afterwards." Because I just wanted to be super clear with what I was teaching. Because I realized this could go a whole lot of different directions. But at the end of the day, I think it's good to have (as someone else mentioned) this supernatural worldview that the Bible presents. Because we as Westerners... It's like we've been blinded. I've felt that. I grew up in the church. And I definitely had a Western worldview for sure. I'm still fighting that, too.

25:00

**MH:** I'm curious. Since the initial focus was on students, have any of your students read the little *Stranger Things* book? I'm wondering if you had and *Stranger Things* fans in your group.

**SM:** No, although one of their parents is. [laughs] But a few of the students picked up *Supernatural* and read through that.

**MH:** Wow. That's encouraging.

**SM:** Yeah.

**MH:** What would any of you say to this question? Let's just pretend you have a pastor friend who comes up to you, or somebody who's teaching an adult Sunday School. And either it's time to come up with something new or they got this dumped into their lap. And they'd really like to jump into this, but they're afraid. "How is it going to be processed? I've read that blog that Scott talked about." [laughs] What do you say to the fearful pastor or the fearful teacher? What would your advice be?

**CW:** I would take him to your example: "How do you explain it without a supernatural worldview?" Take him to some of those tougher passages, even the beginning of Genesis 6. "How do normal humans and normal humans make giants? There's going to be something supernatural." [laughs] That's how I approached it with people, even just people in class who had a hard time with it, and just I guess take them to where you start—Psalm 82—and show that this really was part of their worldview. That Yahweh is the God of gods, but they believed there were other gods out there.

**MH:** Yeah, and the way... You guys have probably listened enough or you've read enough to know that kind of the way I get into that is just to ask what seems like a simple question but a lot of believers don't even really think about it. But when the Bible says that Yahweh is the God of all gods, does it mean what it says? And you go through your substitutes for the gods and all that. And again, there are a number of reasons why those answers are unsatisfying. "Well, I'm better than a block of wood, too." You know? I mean, what... [laughs] The idol thing doesn't satisfy, if the gods are humans, well that just sounds kind of elitist or weird. So I like what you said there. Ultimately, you guys have to know your people. What is going to grab them initially. What else do you guys think, some of the rest of you? What do you say to the fearful person here?

**TW:** Well, I think that it's hardest to talk to people that are entrenched in their doctrine. It's almost like people that are outside (which are a lot of the "Nones" and the "Dones")—that group's almost easier to talk with. And I usually lead with the question, "So, where are you going to be in a billion years?" And they'd look at me, big long mouth-breathing pause, and then say, "In heaven." And I'd say, "Really? Okay. Hmm." And then we'd have a conversation about that. And that's a good point to start in. Because this resurrection thing's a big deal. And heaven and earth coming back together is a big deal. And that starts it for me. That's how I open the conversation.

**MH:** Do you think that's (for lack of a better word) a comfortable or a familiar... It's familiar enough to start the discussion?

**TW:** Well it's certainly something people think they know. And then when they investigate it a little bit, they realize, "Wait up. That isn't true." And then there are some other fun stories to hit. Like when Jesus was born. From the Scripture, we can kind of tell when those stars lined up. And women in ministry is a big one.

And Noah's kids backing into the tent. And some of these things that are interesting stories, where they think they have a solid understanding and it's something that you can open a conversation with a question that's not threatening, and let them go for it to answer it, and see how that lines up with Scripture. And that opens the door for me.

**MH:** Anybody else?

**SM:** Yeah, I just have three quick things. The first is, for me personally, I kind of had to internalize this before I'd even consider teaching it.

**MH:** Mm hmm. That's pretty common, too.

**SM:** I just needed to take the time. Because I knew the rabbit hole went deep. [laughs] The second thing, what I'm trying to do (at least now as I'm the lead pastor) is create a vocabulary. Although it's not mine. It's not my original thoughts. But when I took the church through Genesis 1-11 and we were talking about "What does it even mean to be made in the image of God?" And I used the term *imager*. That was the first time many had ever heard that before. Just how we're Yahweh God's representatives. We *image* him. It's not that maybe he has two hands and two feet. It's not that at all. So I'm trying to build a vocabulary, like *imager* or even *believing loyalty*. That kind of stuff. And I'm just kind of introducing terms slowly over time. Because they inevitably come up, no matter what you're teaching or preaching through. And I guess... I said I had three things, but I forgot the third. [laughs]

**MH:** It'll pop into your head.

**SM:** Maybe it was just laying down that foundation. Like I said, I started with Genesis 1-11, and what better foundation can you start with?

**MH:** Yeah, the vocabulary thing is actually... In my experience, just talking about to pastors, that actually comes up a lot. Because when you introduce a new term, not only do you have to explain the new term, but it gets people to think about the old term. "What was inadequate about the old term?" You know what I mean.

**SM:** Yeah.

**MH:** So that comes up a lot. It seems to be pretty useful.

**SM:** Yeah, especially *imager*. I had one person tell me that that was super helpful for them to wrap their minds around. And even *believing loyalty*, we were in... I've been throwing this term around now for months. And we were in a small group not long ago. And we were talking about just really big ideas, like our main purpose for even being here. And "What does God really want?" And finally one guy spoke up and he said, "You know what? I think it just comes down to loyalty."

[laughs] And in my heart and in my head, I'm like, "Yes! He got it!" So yeah, I think our vocabulary is important.

**MM:** In our Colossians study we just finished, there's a brand new student in there. He's one of my friends who just came out of atheism. And he said that he thought that basically Christianity was just kind of escapist religion. And the whole "image of God" thing, like was just said before, he's like, "That's the thing that turned on the light bulb for me for Christianity being taught as more of a vocation, image-bearing..." The imagers was kind of it. He's like, "That's the thing that just set it off." And believing loyalty, too, seeing that it's not just cognitive, but it's allegiance and loyalty. He said that that made Christianity make sense to him.

35:00 **MH:** Mm hmm. You know, in the last group we had, there were two... And they both hit on this, but I think one ministry was really... It seemed like a lot of their time was being devoted to... And it might have been a seasonal thing. But to... What's a good way to describe this? Not just unchurched, but really an oppressed group. You're down and out. They did a lot of mission work. They did a lot of counseling with addicts. They had a connection to social services, where they were allowed to come in and do Bible studies with people at... I don't know if it was a halfway house or it was some similar kind of situation. But have any of you... There's no real delicate way to put this. But the impression I got from these two in the other group was it was often easier to connect with people in those groups than a lot of people in church. And I think it goes beyond an unchurched and a church. Like you don't have to de-church people, even though I know there's that element of that. But for some reason, there seemed to be more ready connection points for whatever reason. Do you guys have any experience with groups like that—people like that—with the content? Has it helped anybody there? I'm just curious.

**CW:** Well I think just in general people that aren't as tied to materialistic things are a little more open to this idea of a spiritual battle going on around us. They are just more open to that idea. But when we get tied up into our materialistic world, we have a tendency to get sucked up into that. And yeah, I've never thought about it like that before, but as I think about it, there is some connection. And folks that have been open to these ideas in general.

**MH:** Do you think that's... What bucket would you put that in, or maybe none of these? 1) Life is a struggle so I'm thinking more about life as a struggle or...

**CW:** Yeah. I just... The gospel demands you understand yourself as needy. And until you're ready... And I was going to say this, too, in relationship to the material. In some ways, people have to be ready for the material. They need to... You can't just force it on people. They're just going to dig in and reject it if they're not ready for it. And that's where, as a pastor, it becomes absolutely critical that we know when and how much to give. For my church, most of them, I don't want to say they were unchurched, but little-churched maybe... And then you've got

some of them who have never been a part of the church ever before. They're more open to these ideas. They don't have that doctrinal structure that says, "This is what you're allowed to believe about angels," or "this is what you're allowed to believe about something supernatural," or "this is what so-and-so said." We're Baptist, but I guess "little b" baptist. We don't have that structure that kind of hems us in.

**MH:** It's interesting that you put it that way: "This is what we're allowed to believe." Because just in some denominational or creedal context... And trust me, the content of *Unseen Realm* and the podcast is denominationally agnostic. I have emails and I've had conversations with people just across the board—just across the range of denominations. So there's no necessary barrier at all. But it seems like the more... I'm not trying to put this in a negative way, but I'll use this word. The more dependent people seem on creedal formulations or historical figures within their tradition, then it's tougher for them.

**CW:** Yeah, that's been my experience. For me it's been a... I bounced around a little bit from one place to another [laughs] and one group to another. And finally just forgot about groups and just helped to rebuild a church. And so we're not tied into anything. I enjoy that freedom.

**MH:** Me too.

40:00

**CW:** You know where we came from. [laughs] So it's just been very freeing. Talk about some of your teaching. Even not related to... Well, it's related to *Unseen Realm*. But the content, just your understanding of original sin. That brought me tremendous relief as I counsel people. And especially folks that have lost children and things like that. This stuff... That's what I wanted to bring out. This stuff is not just ideas. Like it is on the podcast. But when it gets processed into a pastoral ministry, it becomes very hands-on. And also these ideas become faces in front of you. And that's where I have appreciated it the most. So thank you.

**MH:** Well, you're welcome. When you're having conversations with people, either maybe during your teaching or just afterwards or whatever, do they realize that they've been sort of selectively supernatural? [laughs] Like for some, some people see that and it's not a hurdle. It's not an intellectual barrier to cross. But others it's like it's kind of jolting. So I'm just curious. Do you run into that? When they get this moment of realization that, "Oh, wow, the Bible *does* talk about this other stuff?" how do people tend to process that?

**TW:** Yeah, I think that the biggest thing that's a challenge for them is when you put the S on G-O-D. And even if they can go into Google or look at their online Bible and watch how many times it lights up with an S on the end, that's a real barrier for a lot of people. And I try to stay away from some of that and one-on-one use terms like *the powers* or *principalities* and things like that. And the other thing is the whole... There are several systems and doctrines around hell, and I

try to stay away from that, because that just unnecessarily turbocharges the conversation. So for me, there are some things to stay away from initially in the content. But if we can start with some good questions, that helps.

**MH:** I think everybody would agree that the fire hose is unnecessary [laughs] and probably counterproductive. You'll get to some of those other things down the road, and hopefully people will have a better framework for processing them when you do. Anybody else along those lines? I'll let you think a little bit about it.

45:00

A little story here. So you're talking about putting an S on G-O-D. So my Dallas Seminary article for Dallas' journal (the *BibSac* article)... This was 2001. So I had a friend on the faculty shepherding this article. It was the "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God" article, which was really an important article. So he was shepherding this thing through the editorial process. Because it was a no-brainer. He's an Old Testament prof. And he was one of the editorial staff for the journal at the time. So he was helping me navigate the waters of the editorial process. So we get to the end and he tells me, "Okay, it's going to publish in XYZ issue" and so on and so forth. And like a day later, I get a phone call one evening from Roy Zuck, who was the lead editor at the journal. And he says, "I know what you're saying. I know what you're talking about here. But it really just feels a little troublesome to have gods in the discussion here." So I said, "Well, why don't you just swap out the word *gods* with the word *elohim*?" [laughs] Like, which is what the biblical text actually has. And he goes, "Wow, that really helps. Okay, we'll do that." [laughs] It's like this guy's been... You know, he was a New Testament prof and he was very well-known. He's since passed away. But he just had to sort of have this moment where I substituted the Hebrew term for the English. And the English was rightly translated. But it's like he could look at one and he couldn't look at the other, even though there was no semantic difference. So then when they published the article and I got the article, he didn't change a thing. He just had to hear it. [laughs] You know? So that's not an uncommon experience to.. This is one of the reasons why I say, "It's just your Bible. I didn't write it. It's just your Bible. You'll be okay." But for some, they have to have this thing that helps them process that it *is* the biblical text and now we know how to think about it and how to talk about it. So that's kind of par for the course. Anybody else? Have you had similar sort of experiences there?

**SM:** I was surprised that I haven't had a similar experience. If anything, it's just been... People have described it as, it's like they've been missing pieces of the puzzle and it's just kind of inserted. One of the things that this content helps to do is to really give us an overall picture of God's metanarrative in the Bible. And that's been really helpful, to just see where we fit in this story. But yeah, as of yet (I know I'm still new) I just haven't really had any significant backlash or anything. I try to acknowledge that when I was wrestling it through, it was weird for me too. [laughs] So you know...

**MH:** Yeah, ditto.

**SM:** So I just try to be super clear.

**CW:** I'm working on a DMin right now, and I use some of this stuff from... We were talking about according to nature... And I used some of the stuff from Troy Martin you'd mentioned on your podcast one time. And I thought it was a wonderful example of [laughs] how Paul understood what nature meant. And I just got about laughed out of the room.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**CW:** So that was my experience. [Laughter] Yeah, that's never a fun thing to go through. But you know... And that's where I say, I think people have their doctrinal "this is how I understand this type of material. I don't have room to understand it in a supernatural... anything that's out of the norm. I don't have the ability to understand it that way. So therefore it can't mean that." And it's like, "Well, if you just read it, that's what it means." And I don't waste too much breath on that. I just keep chugging along.

**MH:** Yeah. I want to thank you guys for being here. Again, these are... I like to hear stories. I kind of miss testimonies, just generally. [laughs] Churches don't do them anymore, it seems. But I appreciate hearing your experience and your stories and also your effort. Because as I'm sitting there writing stuff or producing stuff, this is what I hope happens to it. I'm hoping people actually (especially if they're in leadership and they are teachers of other people) pick it up and try to do exactly what you're doing. So I appreciate the effort. And Lord willing, you'll be able to continue it and you'll have more open doors and more people will get interested. Because ultimately, I think people get interested in their Bible again. And they're able to make more... They're able to read it better, maybe more intelligently. I think metanarrative is important. And that's the goal, to help them just become better readers, better understanders, of what in the world the thing's about. [laughs] That would actually be helpful. [laughs] So thanks a lot.

**All:** Thank you.

**MH:** Yeah, thanks for being here.

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**TS:** Alright, Mike, that was another great round of conversations. It's always interesting to hear people's perspectives and how they incorporate the material into teaching people. And also the reaction that people have to the material.

**MH:** Yeah. I'm always interested in how people first come across the content, whether it's the individuals we had on. And then what their entry point was and

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then how they ease into it, or what they do with it. Because you know, I do lots of interviews. The podcast has been around for a while, and there's so much on YouTube. So it's just really interesting what actually reaches different people. And there actually is a pretty wide variety. So that's kind of nice.

50:00

**TS:** Yeah, and people are spoiled now. Just like one of them mentioned, talking about the Baptists, just skip over it, like the experience you had. [MH laughs] You know, they're actually getting taught content now. I mean, think about it, all the people producing content now, especially us, there's just so much of it now that... I mean, Mike, you know, 15 years ago, before I discovered you, there was just nothing. It was the Wild West.

**MH:** Yeah, isn't that remarkable?

**TS:** People would look and look and look. Look how much, over the last 10 years, things have changed. It's crazy.

**MH:** Yeah, it's still pretty wild, but you have some outposts.

**TS:** Yeah you do, but even really it's been in the last five years... The last five years has just been, when the floodgates opened and there's just so much content now for people to absorb. They're almost overwhelmed with so much content. And having to... That's I think the job of the pastor now and the church, to absorb this content and try to teach it. It's interesting.

**MH:** Yeah, it really is interesting. And I think it'll prove Providential. I think it'll continue to get used by lots of people worldwide, that either don't have the church structures that we're used to or, here we're sitting here in the middle of this Coronavirus thing, trying to cope with that. As churches are forced to be less institutional, I think the content is going to really matter. So yeah, it's a good thing.

**TS:** Well, we want to thank Matt, Chad, Tom, and Scott for coming on. We appreciate that. And with that, Mike, I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.