

## Growing Pains: Searching for Truth



Kirk Cameron gained fame as a child actor on the 1980s television sitcom *Growing Pains*, in which he played Mike Seaver. Since then, Kirk has been an outspoken, strong supporter of Christ within the traditional Christian faith. Kirk has been widely popular among mainstream Christians for his strong advocacy of the Bible and of Salvation through Jesus Christ. During a podcast a few weeks ago, however, Cameron elicited strong, intense theological criticism after he questioned the traditional commonplace idea of the eternal suffering of sinners in hell. He openly questioned how it appeared to go against the character of a merciful God to allow eternal conscious suffering of lost souls condemned to hell. Kirk (correctly) feels this is indeed a cruel and unusual punishment, contrary to the character of a loving God. Kirk, and his son James, examined Greek and Hebrew terms, like "Sheol," "Hades," and "Gehenna." They noted that each was translated as "hell" in the English Bible.

Cameron is taking some "painful" abuse online for his (apparent) "obvious heretical" view. Mainstream Christian traditionalists on "X" and various other social media sites lambasted Kirk's questioning of such concrete traditional Christian doctrine. Theologian Owen Strachan said he was grieved to hear Cameron's stance on the issue. Samuel Say, a Christian commentator, stated that Kirk's theory was dangerously wrong. Ray Waters, founder and minister of Living Waters Ministries, a large evangelical group comprised of well over a million followers, was clear to distance himself from his friend Kirk Cameron on this topic. Waters posted a YouTube response stating ".... the Bible's clear teaching on hell is known as *eternal conscious torment*...this is the only correct biblical view..." Ray Waters sought to clarify that everyone should

know Kirk had not worked with the ministry for over ten years. Commenters on Facebook and other platforms were bewildered. Some even prayed for Cameron's lost soul. They wondered how our friend could be so **lost**.

However, contrary to the popular dominant opinion of the masses, Kirk is actually onto something here. Our website provides a link to our **Theological Beliefs**. Within this tab you will find our "*Theological Study Project*" containing a section called "The Doctrinal Statement on HELL". We advocate the following position from Scripture: "The belief in an ever-burning hell, where sinners are tormented for all eternity, is not substantiated by the Bible. Such relentless anguish and eternal sufferings are *diametrically contrary to the character of a merciful, loving God*. The punishment for rebellion against God will be a final destruction in the lake of fire, but this will produce death and nonexistence, not eternal torment." Clearly, the Bible makes the case for this view. Notice; "for the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23). Our *Statement of Beliefs* provides Scripture references on this subject, as well as many other critical doctrinal considerations.

Kirk Cameron has experienced "growing pains"; not only internally as he has begun to question beliefs he assumed were true, but also externally, as a significant majority of those he has been aligned with in the past, find his quest for clearer Truth from the Bible, borders on the fringes of heresy in their opinions. We should view this event as an instruction in our own life and faith. We must always be vigilant against errors in our beliefs and doctrine. To put forth the proposition that we are without error, perfect in our beliefs, doctrines, and observances, is unrealistic. The process of discipleship is one of continual learning, striving to mature not only in our understanding but also in our **application** of God's instructions in the Covenant. We must be open to refining our thinking to incorporate Truths revealed to us by earnest prayer, study, and meditation, with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

For example, this past year's counting of Pentecost and the Feast of First Fruits provided an opportunity for review and contemplation of our understanding of God's Word. To examine the mechanics of observation of His Holy Days in the manner pleasing to Him. Further revelations concerning God's Scriptures are indeed a blessing. As such, we need to openly embrace the opportunity to debate, discuss, and discern matters concerning our walk to the *Narrow Gate* that leads to life.

Paul reminds us; “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). This should be viewed as more than simply a *surface level* introspection of the individual seeing the errors of his sinful way. We can consider this passage an admonition to continue the search for the Truth of Scripture within the pages of the Bible.

We must always be diligent in our search to ensure we are on the right path. Our example should be like the believers in Berea, as the Church expanded in the early days of the New Testament. “Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true.” (Acts 17:11BSB).

**Proverbs 27** tells us “Iron sharpens iron”. Healthy study and debate of Scripture, in the interest of affirming we are on the right path concerning our beliefs, is beneficial to not only our Walk, but the Walk of our brethren in the Faith as well.

Although the discovery of error can be uncomfortable, even painful, it is much better to unearth inaccuracies in our understanding and correct them than to continue operating with beliefs we know are “missing the mark.” “Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days” (Pro. 19:20).