

Answers For Chuck Smith: A Refutation of Chuck Smith's Teachings Against The Faith Movement Part One: Positive Confession

"That first utterance was most remarkable: it was simple enough but how prophetic! It teaches us this truth, that the **confident speech of the believer is akin to the language of a prophet**. The man who accepts the promise of God unstaggeringly, and is sure that it is true, will speak like the seers of old: he will see that God sees, and will declare the fact, and the holy inference that comes of it. The believer's childlike assurance will anticipate the future, and his plain statement 'God will provide' will turn out to be literal truth. If you want to come near to prophesying, hold you hard to the promise of God and you shall ' prophesy according to the measure of faith'" (C. H. Spurgeon)¹

In these essays I am attempting to refute some of what I believe are clear misrepresentations of the Word-Faith position by Calvary Chapel and leader Chuck Smith. Calvary Chapel sometimes seems to be opposed to some aspects of my own beliefs. Therefore, in the next few threads I want to address their problems with me and others. I will target the book *Answers For Today* by Chuck Smith. The book is accessible in .pdf form on his web page.

This is NOT an attack on Chuck Smith as a person. I believe in the work that Brother Smith has done and believe that God has used him greatly. I myself have been blessed by some of his teaching. Truly I believe that Chuck should be honored for having obeyed God and being a blessing to so many. However, this does not mean that Chuck's attacks on those whom he has doctrinal disagreements with should go unanswered. Therefore in these essays I will respond to some of Chuck's incorrect assessment of faith theology as well as what I perceive to be doctrinal errors. We will start with his attacks on the "Positive Confession" teaching.

1. Chuck Smith seems to insinuate that we do not have to concern ourselves with what we're asking God:

Here is what Chuck says on page 22:

When I come to God, I can come boldly. I can ask God for my needs. I don't have to worry that He'll misunderstand me. I don't have to be afraid that He'll be rude or rough with me. I don't have to worry that I might be asking the wrong thing.²

Certainly we don't have to be "legalistic" with God when we come to Him with our requests. There are times that we may have a desire that has no clear basis/promise in God's Word, but also does not seem wrong or sinful. We can approach God with such requests knowing that He will receive us. If it's the wrong thing then certainly He will tell us with the love and nurture that we can expect from a kind and benevolent Heavenly Father.

Sometimes God will tolerate our ignorance of His Word knowing that we are

¹ Spurgeon, C.H. **Christ In The Old Testament** (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1994). This book was originally published in London in 1899.

² Smith, Chuck **Answers for Today, Volumes 1 & 2** (Costa Mesa, CA: TWFT Publishers, 1993), p. 22

progressing in knowledge. The Heavenly father has been known to mercifully "wink" at ignorance (Acts 17:30). However, God does expect His children to "come into the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:4). We are expected to be SPECIFIC in our requests (Matt. 7:7-11; Mark 11:22-24; James 1:3-7; 5:14-16). Should it not behoove the child of God to get to a place to where they already know the right thing to ask for BEFORE they approach the throne of grace?

Let us once again read the passage that Brother Smith opens this chapter with:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:14, 15)

At least two things can be seen here: First, our confidence (or boldness) comes from the fact that we are asking things ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL.

The second thing is that we can be quite confident that when we have asked according to this will, He has heard us and we have a guarantee of receiving the very petitions that we have asked for.

What is the will of God? Can it be known? Certainly. In some cases where Scripture is not clear, we can seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make His will known in situations which Scripture does not clearly speak (What college to go to, what job to take, who to marry, etc.) (Prov 3:5-8).

But in a majority of cases, God's will is revealed in His WORD. The Word of God reveals the will of God through it's thousands upon thousands of promises. These promises reveal God's heart for the believer. For example, I do not need to seek God as to whether or not it is His will to forgive me when I sin. His will has been revealed in this area (1 John 1:9). When I approach the throne with a request for forgiveness, I can "believe that I receive it" (Mark 11:24).

Therefore the premise that Brother Smith builds on is not an accurate one. If one reads Smith's words and are not careful, they will not take the time to search the Scriptures to ensure that they are asking God for the right thing. It is carelessness and presumption to go to God each and every time without having prepared one's heart in searching Scripture and bringing it before God.

It may sound like a really nice God who just let's His children skip along into the throne room and ask Him for things that they have not sought beforehand to find out if they are right or not, but this could at worse be wasted time. It is a form of GAMBLING (Maybe He will, maybe He won't).

If there *is* a way to know that we are asking for the right things before we pray, would it not be wise to do this? Why not find out the will of God before you pray, and then you will know for sure that you have an answer.

2. Chuck's Broad-Brushing

Chuck seems to insinuate that those who advocate "positive confession" all believe that we can make foolish and ridiculous requests. By building this strawman,

Chuck appears to present a more “balanced” view of prayer. Here are Chuck’s own words:

We have this confidence in Him, "If we ask anything according to His will. He hears us." I'm so glad that qualification is there! I'm glad that this scripture doesn't say, "Whatever we ask we receive." I'm very grateful that He inserted "according to His will." Had God answered all of my prayers, I wouldn't be here today. I would have destroyed myself a long time ago!³

Most people who advocate “Positive Confession” teach that we must first search the Scriptures before we can petition God. Once we have done that then we can seek Him with the confidence that we will receive that very request. God’s word teaches us, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7)

As long as I have sought God’s Word and allowed it to abide in me, then that Word will reveal His will. Notice further that the Scripture then says that I can ask what for what I want, and God will give me that very thing. When I am abiding in Christ and His Word is abiding in me, I can ask for what I will and it will be done.

Chuck claims that Scripture does not say, "Whatever we ask we receive." Yet, the Bible seems to give a different picture than that which Chuck presents to us.:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (1 John 3:22)

And don't forget that Matthew 7:8 which says, "*For every one that asketh receiveth*". Since Chuck does not seem to know exactly what Scripture teaches on prayer, it is no wonder that he has prayed for things that could have destroyed him and God had mercy on him by not answering such ridiculous requests.

3. Carelessness in our praying:

Chuck talks about the ridiculous things he prayed for and was happy to not have received an answer for:

I have prayed for a lot of ridiculous things that would have totally ruined me. “According to His will” keeps a proper perspective between God and me. Any other way would remove the authority of God over my life. It would then mean that I was the master of my fate, the captain of my destiny. My life wouldn't be governed by God; instead, it would be governed by me.⁴

Since Brother Smith is teaching against positive confession, I believe that we can assume from this statement and from further reading in the book that he believes that

³ Ibid, p.22

⁴ Ibid, p. 22

those who advocate positive confession believe that they can just ask God for any ridiculous thing and it will happen.

Brother Smith may be absolutely correct that some who have grasped this teaching went overboard with it, only to be disappointed when God did not fulfill some foolish or ridiculous request. What Brother Smith may not know, or else failed to acknowledge if he did know is that many advocates of positive confession have warned against such wild presumptions upon God.⁵ Frederick K. C. Price, in his book, *Faith, Foolishness, or Presumption* (a book he wrote in 1979) chastises his readers for "confessing" ridiculous things like "I won't get pregnant even though I'm not using birth control."⁶ He also rebukes parents who will not take their children to the doctor because the parents themselves want to live by faith. Furthermore, he also teaches against the belief that one should not buy life insurance.

Many other Faith Teachers have taught against "claiming" a particular individual to be your wife or husband, claiming property that is not your's, and other such foolishness. Even in 1982, Kenneth Hagin Jr. lamented the fact that some were using the faith message for selfish gain. In his book, *Itching Ears*, Hagin writes:

The faith message is not the only message in the Word of God, but some have latched onto the faith of God - what it can get them, and so forth - until they have perverted this greatest truth of God's Word.⁷

However, if some in the Faith Movement have gone to one extreme, Brother Smith seems to promote an equally erroneous understanding concerning God's will and prayer. The Bible is clear that in most cases, God's will can be known as revealed in His Word. Jesus tells us in John 15:7, *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

1 John 5:14, 15 should be read in conjunction with John 15:7. After all, both letters were authored by the same apostle (by the Holy Spirit's inspiration). As we stated earlier, there are some things that only the Holy Spirit can reveal, but most things can be known as we search God's Word.

Arthur W. Pink, who was a Baptist and Calvinist, seems to have more insight on this issue than Brother Smith:

First, make sure that you are asking for something that is in accordance with God's Word: see 1 John 5:14. But right here, the devil will foil you unless you are upon your guard. He will come as an angel of light and preach a sermon to you on God's holy will. O yes, the devil is quite capable even of that! It is our privilege and duty to know what God's will

⁵ In an article by the late Kenneth E. Hagin titled, *Do God's Promises Cover What You Want?* Hagin addresses some of the foolishness done in the name of faith such as claiming someone to be your wife or husband. Hagin notes that lives have been ruined on such things. His advice to his readers is "Be sure the Scriptures cover what you are believing for. Don't get out beyond God's Word." Hagin has a strong Scriptural basis for this if we appeal to John 15:7. See The October 2004 issue of *The Word of Faith Magazine* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 2004), pp. 14, 15.

⁶ Price, Frederick K. C. **Faith, Foolishness, or Presumption** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, 1979). This excellent book addresses many extremes in the Faith Movement.

⁷ Hagin Jr., Kenneth **Itching Ears** (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1982), p. 7

is! "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). It is the revealed will of God which is in view in these passages, for with His "secret" will, we have nothing to do; that is none of our business.

God's revealed will is made known in His Word. Fix this in your mind; never allow Satan inject a thought (Eph. 4:27) to shake you thereon, that everything God has commanded you to do, every precept and exhortation addressed to you, is "God's will" for you, and is to be turned into prayer for enabling grace. It is God's will that you should be "sanctified" (1 Thess. 4:2), that you should "rejoice" (Phil. 4:4), that you should "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10), that you should "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord" (2 Peter 3:18).⁸

There is no need to ask God for "ridiculous" things if we will make an effort to know God's will before bring our requests to Him.

4. Chuck Insinuates that all advocates of Positive Confession "Demand" God's Performance

The more that I read Chuck's book, the more that I see that he has a distorted understanding of what is taught by those who advocate what has come to be known as "positive confession." Here are Chuck's words:

If I can demand that God does anything, if I can lay out demands to which God must acquiesce because I'm demanding it in Jesus' name; or if I can just make positive confessions and start laying claims to things and, by my positive confessions, create situations and things for my life, then God is no longer in control of my life. I take control by the demands that I make upon God and by the confessions I make of these things. And God becomes the magic genie! I rub the lamp and God must come out to follow my orders.⁹

Chuck again insinuates this several paragraphs later:

"If I could have things by just making a positive confession." "If God must yield to my demands." Do you see what that immediately does? It elevates me to the position of God and puts God in the subservient position. I'm no longer serving God, but God is serving me and my every whim.¹⁰

In his attempts to refute "positive confession", Chuck fails to distinguish between

⁸ Pink, Arthur W. **Prayer**, article found on the Grace Online Library, <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/full.asp?ID=52> (Last Accessed: December. 10, 2004).

⁹ *Answers*, p. 22

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 23

this and the teaching of “Authoritative Prayer”: a teaching that has been advocated for a few centuries at least. Positive confession is a confession of faith based on God's Word. It is acknowledging with my lips what God says about me, what belongs to me, and my situation. For example, I may feel defeated. My circumstances may look like proof of that. However, Scripture says that I am "more than a conqueror." (Rom. 8:37).

I am acknowledging this with my lips regardless of how I feel and what I see. I am trusting my father to honor His Word in my life. It is not making God my servant, but it is making me a servant to God's authority rather than a servant to my circumstances.

However, authoritative praying or as some classic authors refer to it as “The Prayer of Authority” and even “The Authority of Faith” is somewhat distinct from the teaching of “positive confession” though the two can work hand in hand for accomplishing God’s purposes. The late F. E. Marsh (1858-1919) once wrote, "There are times when we may authoritatively make requests, that is, to humbly require God to do certain things, provided our authority is based on the authority of God's promise."¹¹

Sometimes when we plead a promise, God does expect us to plead them authoritatively before Him - *humbly* - but authoritatively. An example is found in a prayer that David prayed:

"Now, O LORD God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said. (1 Sam. 7:25)

This is quite an authoritative request from David's lips. However, He did have a promise from God for it. In a sense, David did make a DEMAND on the *covenant* he had with God.

Some scholars say that the Greek word AITEO normally translated as "ask" in the New Testament could also be translated as "demand" or "command". For example John 14:13 says, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" We are told that the word "ask" here could also mean "demand."¹²

Now, does that mean that we can just storm into the throne room and "demand" things of God? Not according to some of the "positive confession" proponents:

Some people in their squeamish, petrified, fearful perception of God will say, "Brother Price, you can't make any demands on God. You don't have any rights with God!" Who says so? No, I cannot arbitrarily DEMAND rights, but I am not doing that. All I am doing is demanding the rights that God said I already have, ***and I am not demanding them from God***, because it is not God who is attempting to keep them from me. I am demanding them from the evil one who I have been delivered from. (Dr. Frederick K. C. Price; *Name It And Claim It*)¹³

¹¹ Marsh, F.E. **The Spiritual Life or Helps and Hindrances** (Des Moines, Iowa: The Boone Publishing Co.), p. 21

¹² Kittel, Gerhard (Editor) **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 191

¹³ Price, Frederick K.C. **Name It And Claim It** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1992) p. 95

You have a right to "demand" in the Name of Jesus that people be healed. ***You are not demanding it of God***; He did not make them sick in the first place. You are demanding that the devil turn them loose in the Name of Jesus. (Kenneth E. Hagin Sr.; *Seven Things You Should Know About Divine Healing*)(Emphasis are mine)¹⁴

Is it presumptuous for these men to claim that we can "command" or "demand" the devil to do anything? Scripture seems to back up such an assertion (Luke 10:17-20; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 16:16-19; Acts 3:6). Jesus did it and left us with an example that He expects us to follow.

Nonetheless, we can see that these men did not make any claims that we can "demand" God to do anything that we want. None of these men make God out to be some genie in a magic bottle. Chuck's statements are a misrepresentation of those who advocate any form of "positive confession."

5. Chuck Seems to promote carelessness in how we use the words of our mouth

Once again; let us present Chuck's own words from his own writing on this issue:

What if I were in control? What if God were acquiescing to every confession that I made? People say, "Be careful not to make a negative confession! What you say is what you get." That's ridiculous!¹⁵

First, most who advocate the "positive confession" teaching do not claim that every single time you make a "negative confession" that it will come to pass. Positive confession is usually a way for one to build up their faith by verbally acknowledging to themselves and others what the Word actually says about them and their situation. It is *homologia*, to "say that same thing" and "to agree with." All of this is related to God's Word.¹⁶

While Chuck ridicules the belief that "What you say is what you get," the Bible does say that one who demonstrates authoritative faith gets exactly what they say:

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. (Mark 11:23)

While Mark 11:23 should be primarily applied to "The Prayer of Authority" principle, it still demonstrates the premium that God places on "what we say." If we keep telling ourselves things like "It won't do me any good to speak to that mountain because it won't go anywhere" then we can indeed expect God to honor this "negative confession"

¹⁴ Hagin, Kenneth E. **Seven Things You Should Know About Divine Healing** (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications), p. 38

¹⁵ *Answers*, p. 23

¹⁶ Wuest, Kenneth S. **Studies Word Studies in the Greek New Testament**, Vol. 3, p. 41

since this confession is a demonstration of *unbelief* (Matt. 17:19, 20). God can only be pleased by our faith (Heb. 11:6).

Chuck then goes on to give a "biblical" example of a "negative confession" that did not come to pass:

David said, "I know one day Saul is going to kill me." Don't say that, David! That's negative confession. Now it's going to happen, because what you say is what you get! And now one day Saul is going to kill you. But Saul didn't kill David.¹⁷

Here we could actually get Chuck on a *technicality*. Chuck is quoting from 1 Samuel 27:1 which says, "*And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul ...*" Technically speaking, confession is a *verbal expression* and not a *heart* one. There is nothing indicating that David gave verbal expression to what was in his heart. I am sure that we would all feel as David felt when we have a king and his army constantly chasing us seeking to kill us. That could be quite a depressing and discouraging event. We could easily believe that one day this guy just might succeed in doing me in.

God knows that we all face times of distress and despair and sometimes we are going to make statements that are contrary to that which God has promised us. He is abundant in mercy and will not zap us for every negative thing we think or say.

Nevertheless, God does not expect us to stay in a state of negativity. However David felt in his heart, he did NOT allow himself to stay in such a despondent state of mind. Readings of David's Psalms prove this. For example David later says:

I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. (Psalm 9:2, 3)

The above was written before the deliverance from Saul. After his deliverance David wrote these words:

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. (Psalm 18:2, 3)

So David at some point did move from a place of despair to a place of believing that God will move on His behalf. The words of his lips lined up with His belief. David began making "faith confessions." Positive ones.

Chuck goes from the sublime to the truly ridiculous in his next statement:

I have a good friend who's been saying for years, "I'll be a monkey's uncle." To my knowledge he hasn't become one yet.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Answers*, p. 23

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 23

The above is an insult to the intelligence of anyone who has advocated positive confession. Of course no one is going to turn into a "monkey's uncle" just because they made such a statement and no proponent of positive confession would suggest such a thing.

However, In Numbers 13, a group of men who went in to spy out the Promised Land came back with an evil report. They claimed to be "grasshoppers" in the eyes of the giants. They believed what they claim the "giants" saw rather what God Himself said (Num. 13:33). They did not believe that they could go in and conquer as God promised (Num. 14:1-4). While God did not turn them into literal grasshoppers, He did ensure them that they will pay for the consequences of their words:

Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you (Num. 14:28)

The Bible is clear that we will bear the consequences of the words we speak if we do not repent of them (Prov. 18:21). Jesus Himself told us that we would give an account for the words we speak in the day of judgment (Matt. 12:36, 37). Finally, we are told to stay away from "foolish talking" and "jesting" (Eph. 5:4), but rather giving thanks. Constantly making references to one being a "Monkey's Uncle" could fall under such. This does not mean the Lord is against our use of humor, but it does mean that we should check to see if our "jesting" is more prominent in our speech than our giving of thanks.

Because Chuck does not mention the importance of our words, but instead ridicules and misrepresents the "positive confession" teaching, we can only assume that Chuck does not believe that God puts a premium on the words we speak, even though His Word teaches that he does.

We would strongly encourage Chuck to reconsider what he is feeding to people.

6. Chuck Smith accuses those who advocate Positive Confession as believing that we have made God into a "servant"

It's amazing the things that Chuck says to misrepresent this teaching, or at least paint a broad picture of everyone who advocates this teaching. Here is Chuck's own statement:

To put God in this kind of position, as Paul declares in Romans 1:21, is to fail to glorify God as God. It doesn't make God "God" anymore but some kind of servant who has to run around and do my will, follow my commands, and fill out my confessions. It puts me in control and God in the servant's seat. To exalt my demands, wishes, and my will above God's will is audacious, perverted, and insane.¹⁹

Anyone who has spent enough time listening to "positive confession" advocates know full well that they teach God's supremacy and man's subordination to God. The Faith Teacher emphasizes obedience. Kenneth Copeland writes, "We will never get

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 23

anywhere shaking our fists in God's face. But when we get before Him and say, I love you. You are the King of my life. I will go anywhere You tell me to go, and I will do anything You tell me to do," God will respond compassionately."²⁰

I am amazed at the different criticisms among critics of the faith teachers. Some critics will admit that the Faith Teachers do indeed teach obedience, but they claim that it is done only for the purpose of receiving blessing. Others falsely claim that Faith Teachers have made God out to be some kind of cosmic bellhop. This seems to be the very accusation that Chuck is making here.

Chuck is guilty of what Ian B. Johnson calls *The Santa Claus Fallacy*. Here is some of how Johnson describes it:

This fallacy is divisive not because any Christian religious groups actually hold it -- this author knows of none that do ... For instance, any group which teaches that God heals the diseases of his people in this world, other than as an extremely rare "sovereign" act for his own unfathomable purpose, is automatically accused by many other groups of turning God into Santa Claus.²¹

You will find in chapter 22 of Chuck's book "Answers For Today" that he actually believes that everything that comes into the life of an individual is the result of God's sovereign will.

Chuck does not seem to realize (or just may have forgotten) that the Bible does teach a "Prayer of command" or a "Prayer of authority." These teachings have been advocated years before there was ever a faith movement. For example, Chuck have serious trouble with the way that Joshua prayed:

Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel. (Joshua 10:12-14)

The Lord "hearkened" unto the voice of a man? If that is not clear enough then look at some other translations. The TEV translates verse 14 this way: "*Never before, and never since, has there been a day like it, when the Lord obeyed a human being. The Lord fought on Israel's side!*" If you have trouble with that translation (I can already hear the cries of "heresy") then perhaps the GW might present a milder version: "*Never before or after this day was there anything like it. The LORD did what a man told him to do,*

²⁰ Copeland, Kenneth **Believer's Voice of Victory** Vol. 31 No. 4 (Fort Worth, Texas, April 2003), p. 3

²¹ Johnson, Ian B. **Substantive Errors Regarding God**, <http://www.angelfire.com/ks2/fallacies/fallgod.htm> (last accessed: December 11, 2004)

because the LORD fought for Israel." But if you want REAL heresy, Eugene Peterson's, *The Message*, really gives us some: *"There's never been a day like that before or since - God took orders from a human voice! Truly, God fought for Israel."*

Amazing that the writer of the book of Joshua would actually say that God obeyed Joshua when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. This sounds like Joshua was "bossing God around" and "making Him into a servant." Yet, many classic writers have taught for years that passages such as Isaiah 45:11 ("Command ye me") actually teaches that we can reverently "command the Lord."

I do not present this information to say that we should go bossing God around. The WoF teaches that we are God's children and servants and that he demands OUR obedience. However, God has given His children a certain amount of authority that can be exercised in prayer and He told us that what we ask, He will do it (John 14:13). Therefore, if we were advocating the "commanding prayer" in this case, we have sufficient Scripture to refute Chuck. But "positive confession" and the "prayer of command" are two separate things.

A number of Faith Teachers themselves would have difficulty teaching a doctrine that "commands God," even if it was taught in a reverent and humble respect. While some have possibly gone to this extreme, others have strongly warned against this type of abuse. One of those is the Ernest Gruen:

"In our understanding of faith and mouth confession, we have to be careful not to try to manipulate God. Our sole concept of prayer should never be give me, give me, give. We must learn God's balance between believing His Word and confessing it, or asking for many things based on our own self interest. If we do get out of balance, and God doesn't come through in answer to our "give me" prayers, we become depressed, belligerent, or worse yet, disillusioned..... We must be careful not to develop a 'Jehovah is my servant' psychology, a 'Get with it God' mentality. God is not our whim-satisfier, or fairy god mother."²²

So not all who teach positive confession make God out to be a servant who fulfills all of our whims and wishes. Brother Gruen, who does teach positive confession, also teaches against any perversion of this truth. Chuck would do better to actually find out what is being taught vice writing what he assumes is being taught.

7. Chuck Smith Insinuates that EVERY prayer must be prayed with "Not my will but thine be done."

The rest of the chapter deals with this supposition, which I believe is the foundation of Chuck's faulty understanding of petitionary prayer and positive confession. Chuck makes many statements to this effect. We will only quote one:

"Not my will, but Thy will be done" is the wisest prayer I can offer to God. That's the way I always want it to be. Though I don't always articulate it, that submission to His will is always the background of every

²² Gruen, Ernest J. *Freedom To Grow* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1983) pp. 53, 54

prayer I offer to God. "God, this is what I want. This is what I think I need. But, Lord, You know what I need better than I know myself. Your will be done in my life. Your will be done in this illness. Your will be done in this financial problem. Don't listen to me. I'll mess it up worse than it is. You do what is best for me, God."²³

I would encourage the reader to read his book if they want to know all that was said. It is available on his web page for downloading. At the same time, I would encourage every reader to go to my web page and read my free online book "The Goodness of God." Read especially chapters five and six.²⁴ These two chapters go much more in depth into this subject than I am able to here.

Chuck Smith is making reference to the prayer that Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39-42). Some critics of the Word-Faith Movement claim that WoFers completely ignore and ridicule this prayer. However, this is far from the truth. In his book, *Prevailing Prayer to Peace*, Kenneth E. Hagin comments on Jesus' prayer in the garden:

In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ prayed the prayer of submission, consecration, and dedication "... *if thou be willing ... nevertheless not my will ...*" He wanted to do what the Father wanted Him to do.

It was not a prayer of petition. It was not a prayer to get something or to change something. It was a prayer of consecration.

When we consecrate our lives for God's use, to go anywhere and do anything He wants us to do, we pray this kind of prayer. In a prayer of consecration and dedication we pray, "If it be thy will."

When it comes to changing things or getting something from God, however, we do not pray, "If it be thy will," because we already have God's Word concerning it. We know it is His will that our needs are met.²⁵

Andrew Murray seems to agree with Hagin. Teaching on Jesus prayer in the garden, Murray writes, "Here He prays for something in regard to which the Father's will is not yet clear to Him."²⁶ E. M. Bounds was even more to the point:

The prayer of submission must not be so used as to vitiate or substitute the higher and mightier prayer of faith. Nor must it be so stressed as to break down importunate and prevailing prayer, which would be to disarm prayer of its efficiency and disown its glorious results and would be to encourage listless, sentimental and feeble praying. (The Reality of Prayer, Chapter 12)²⁷

²³ Answers, p. 24

²⁴ Edwards, Troy J. **The Goodness of God**, online at <http://www.victoryword.100megspop2.com/godisgood/index.html> (Last accessed: 13 December 2004)

²⁵ Hagin, Kenneth E. **Prevailing Prayer to Peace** (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications), pp. 42, 43

²⁶ Murray, Andrew **With Christ in the School of Prayer** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House Publishers, 1981), p. 208

²⁷ Bounds, E. M. **The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 278

Brother Hagin distinguishes between the different ways that Jesus prayed and that He taught us to pray. Some critics, especially those who seem to advocate the "if it be thy will," model as the ONLY way to pray, find it difficult to distinguish between the different ways that Jesus prayed and taught us to pray. In spite of their objections, it would behoove us to study each of the instances of Jesus' prayers as well as His teachings, and determine the circumstances upon which He made the types of supplications that he did in the particular situations that He was in. I prefer to believe ALL of that which Jesus taught and gave an example for.

Jesus NEVER made His prayer of consecration and submission in the garden of Gethsemane the ONLY model for praying. For example, when a Jesus was at Lazarus tomb, He already had knowledge of the Father's will to raise Lazarus from the dead. We do not find Jesus saying, "Father, if it be thy will, raise of Lazarus. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Instead, we find Jesus saying this:

"... And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always." (John 11:41b-42a)

Such a prayer will help one understand the REAL meaning behind the "confidence" that we can have in prayer according to 1 John 5:14, 15:

*And this is the **confidence** that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Jesus was confident that He was heard because He was confident that He was asking in accordance with His Father's will. He was confident that He would receive the very thing that He was asking for. That is why I am quite *confident* that Chuck has interpreted this passage concerning prayer incorrectly.

In Chuck's statement, he is not confident about the will of God concerning illness. Yet, God has revealed His will on this matter in His Word (Ex. 15:26; 23:23-26; Ps 91; 103:1-5; Matt. 8:16-17) and expects us to pray against illness in FAITH, confident that we will get the healing (James 5:14-16).

Chuck does not seem to be confident about the will of God in his financial problem. Yet, God has revealed His will concerning our finances (Prov. 3:9, 10; Matt. 6:25-33; 2 Cor. 9:6-12; Phil. 4:19). God expects us to pray in confidence concerning His provision for these things. In some cases we may need God's guidance, direction, and wisdom and how to go about dealing with a financial problem, but God even invites us to pray in confidence for this as well (Prov. 3:5-7; James 1:5-7).

Therefore, as the late Kenneth Hagin wisely teaches, there is no need to end every prayer with a "If it be thy will" or a "Let thy will be done," especially when knowledge of God's will has been made plain and clear. However, if anyone would believe that only the "positive confessors" teach this exclusively, they have yet to read books on prayer by some of the most revered classic authors:

Oftentimes when one waxes confident in prayer, some cautious brother will come and say: "Now, don't be too confident. If it is God's will He will do it. You should put in, 'If it be Thy will.'" Doubtless there are many times when we do not know the will of God, and in all prayer submission to the excellent will of God should underlie it; but when we know God's will, there need be no "ifs"; and this passage was not put into the Bible in order that we might introduce "ifs" into all our prayers, but in order that we might throw our "ifs" to the wind, and have "CONFIDENCE" and "KNOW that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." (R. A. Torrey, *How To Pray*)²⁸

The great mistake here is that God's children do not really believe that it is possible to know God's will. Or if they believe this, they do not take the time and trouble to find it out. What we need is to see clearly in what way it is that the Father leads His waiting, teachable child to know that his petition is according to His will. It is through God's holy word, taken up and kept in the heart, the life, the will; and through God's Holy Spirit, accepted in His indwelling and leading, that we shall learn to know that our petitions are according to His will.

Through the word. There is a secret will of God, with which we often fear that our prayers may be at variance. It is not with this will of God, but His will as revealed in His word, that we have to do in prayer. (Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Chapter 29)²⁹

We are ever ready to excuse our lack of earnest and toilsome praying, by a fancied and delusive view of submission. We often end praying just where we ought to begin. We quit praying when God waits and is waiting for us to really pray. We are deterred by obstacles from praying, or we succumb to difficulties, and call it submission to God's will. A world of beggarly faith, of spiritual laziness, and of half-heartedness in prayer, are covered under the high and pious name of submission. To have no plan but to seek God's plan and carry it out, is of the essence and inspiration of Christly praying. This is far more than putting in a clause of submission. Jesus did this once in seeking to change the purpose of God, but all His other praying was the output of being perfectly at one with the plans and purposes of God. It is after this order we pray when we abide in Him and when His word abides in us. Then we ask what we will and it is done. It is then our prayers fashion and create things. (E. M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, Chapter 12).³⁰

While we do not deny the great work that God has done and continues to do through Calvary Chapel, we also must state that Brother Smith is not the best source for

²⁸ Torrey, Rueben A. **How To Pray** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House Publishers, 1983), p. 42

²⁹ Murray, *School of Prayer*, p. 217

³⁰ Bounds, *Complete Works*, pp. 278, 279

learning the truth about praying in faith and the confession of faith that verbally expresses its confidence in God's Word.