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Bottom Line Interview (2017)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg, host of the religious radio program "Narrow Path," shares his views on spirituality and faith in a recent interview. Gregg emphasizes the importance of responding to God's call and using one's talents and opportunities to serve Him. He discusses his experiences as a Bible teacher and the writing process for his books, "Revelation Views: A Parallel Commentary" and one on the topic of hell. Gregg's approach is to present different views and critique them from a biblical perspective, without advocating for one particular position.

Transcript

Welcome to a new week of broadcast here on the Bottom Line Show. My name is Roger Marsh. We are doing what we do every weekday from this time slot for a couple hours a day.

Take a look at the world around us from the lens of Scripture, the biblical worldview as it is referred to in the Bible. Every weekday on this station that you're listening to right now, there are programs that are before or after the Bottom Line Show. One of the shows that airs before the Bottom Line Show on many of our affiliates is The Narrow Path.

The Narrow Path is a very, very interesting and unique program. It's hosted by a man by the name of Steve Gregg. Steve does something that's really remarkable, I think, in this day and age.

He's had a commitment to doing this for many, many years, and that is literally doing what he's doing right now. He's sitting in the studio right in front of me. Steve walks in, opens up a Bible, and just begins to read and discuss.

People call his program The Narrow Path, and they ask him Bible questions, and Steve very patiently answers those questions. Looking at the lens of Scripture from decades of Bible study, it's a very, very encouraging program. It's a very, very refreshing program.

Sometimes it might be a rather frustrating program. But then again, is the name of the

game here our happiness or our holiness? I've asked Steve to join me in studio here for our number one of the Bottom Line Show today because we realize that we cross a lot of paths, narrow and wide, but we don't always get a chance to sit across from each other in the studio. So, Steve Gregg, welcome to the Bottom Line Show today.

It's good to have you here. Thank you. Is my mic on here? I think so.

I can hear you. That's good. That's good.

That's a big deal, too, because Steve does his show remotely, and then it broadcasts on many Crawford stations and other stations, too. We're just talking to the Crawford family now, too, so you can talk about how wonderful it is to be part of the Crawford broadcasting family, Steve. But I know that you really mean that.

Oh, it really is. I've really enjoyed the response from listeners on the Crawford stations, Ron. Let's take care of some of the myths and affirm some of the truths about the life and ministry of Steve Gregg.

Truth or legend, you have an earned doctorate from a major Ivy League school in terms of Bible study. The truth of the matter is I have earned a high school diploma. Okay, very good.

But you were led into pastoral ministry, Bible teaching ministry. People will call you Pastor Steve Gregg, and you're quick to say, hey, wait, I don't have a congregation. Right.

I've never pastored a congregation. I've been in eldership in churches where the elders were essentially a group of pastoral guys. But, yeah, I've never pursued a career as a pastor at all.

There's been a couple of churches where I served as elder, but I didn't even seek that role. I guess I'm too lazy to be a pastor. Well, I don't know if it's laziness.

It's a calling. There's no question about it. If you don't have the calling, then it's like Chuck Swindoll said, if there's anything else you can think to do rather than being a pastor, do it.

I feel that way about almost all forms of ministry. A lot of pastors are trying to really push people to get into ministry of various kinds, mission field or whatever, or evangelism. But I think that those who are gifted and called, you can hardly keep them from it.

And if you can keep them from it, maybe you should. That's a whole shepherd conversation. Yeah.

Steve Gregg today here in the Bottom Line Studios. I'm Roger Marsh. Steve is the host of

The Narrow Path.

I think of our affiliates in Dallas, KWAM. Narrow Path leads into where we are. I believe KLDC in Denver as well.

We get a half hour of you in Southern California on KBRT. And both of us having a California background too. If you weren't called into pastoral ministry, Steve Gregg, why do you spend so much time not only studying scripture, but also teaching other people, answering their questions? That was accidental too, actually.

I was raised in a Baptist home. I actually received Christ when I was young as a child. But I also got caught up in the Jesus movement in Orange County at Calvary Chapel Coastal Mesa when I was 16.

The big tent. 1970, so that was during the Jesus movement. And there weren't a lot of young people who were old Christians.

I'd been a Christian since my childhood. I was in high school, but the Jesus people would meet together at high school at lunchtime just to fellowship. We'd go to Calvary Chapel every night of the week, hear somebody teach, and then the next day at lunch we'd discuss what we heard there.

It never occurred to me that I knew more than others about this. You just figured you were one of the other kids. Yeah, I was just one of the kids.

But after a while some of them said, would you be willing to teach a Bible study every day at lunch? And I had not really considered being a Bible teacher. I didn't know whether I could do that or not. I had considered ministry from junior high on.

I thought I might be an evangelist or something. I didn't know. But actually I'm not that gifted as an evangelist, but I am more at home with Bible teaching.

I didn't know that until I tried it. Because they asked me, I did. Because the need was great in Southern California during the Jesus movement for people who weren't new converts to provide some kind of teaching and leadership, after I got out of high school I just went directly into— I accepted invitations with different ministries that were ministering to street people and such.

I actually lived in my VW bus for a while. Well, you had to have a VW bus if you were part of the Jesus people. Of course.

Oh, yeah, my hair was long and I looked like a hippie. The funny thing is I looked like a hippie because I was deliberately in disguise. I was a very straight kid.

I've never smoked marijuana. I've never been a drinker. I was a virgin until I got married.

I was definitely not in the hippie culture. And you don't have an I was and now I am story, right? There was a lot of that coming out of it. They were like, oh, I used to do drugs and this, that and the other thing.

And there was a certain prestige attached to that, too. Right? There was. If you had a good drugamony, as we called it.

Drugamony. I never wanted to lie and pretend like I did those things, but I thought if I had the right image people would just assume I had done those things. Right.

I tried to hide the fact. So you just moved into your micro bus and grew your hair long and said, yeah, see what he said. And then what happened is when all the hippies cut their hair, I had gotten used to it.

So I kept mine long. Now you are really counter cultural at that point. Yeah.

But I, you know, one thing just led to another. I never really pursued a particular ministry anywhere. Like I say, when I got out of high school, I was invited to work with Jesus people.

And then eventually I was asked to teach at a discipleship school in Santa Cruz. And then eventually I was asked to teach for youth with a mission. And I was invited to Europe to go and teach in churches and things there.

Just because of the Jesus movement, it was easy for somebody who knew something about the Bible to get invited to speak to some of these people. I'm talking with Steve Gregg, the host of The Narrow Path. The NarrowPath.com is the website.

You hear The Narrow Path on many Crawford stations. Literally, in many cases, some markets right before the bottom line show. Steve, you kept saying, I was invited, I was invited, I was invited.

And I think of young people now who are trying to get started doing anything, do a job or ministry, whatever it is. And those invitations aren't there. Did you ever have that moment where you took a step back and said, am I the only one being invited? It seems like that's a lot of opportunity for a guy in your situation.

It was. And I often look back and say, I was just so blessed to be in the right place at the right time. Because, again, I didn't go through formal education.

I was actually offered a full-ride scholarship to Biola College by my grandmother. And I would have gone. But the teaching we were under was that Jesus was coming back way too soon to even consider going to college.

Right. So I had to hit the streets and get people saved before the rapture. Armed with your Larry Norman albums and stuff like that.

Oh, yeah. I wish it had all been ready. Oh, my.

And so I was just, I just became a street Christian. But apparently God had it in mind for me to do this permanently. So he opened lots of doors.

I've never been on staff, like a paid staff of any kind of religious organization. Never been on paid staff at a church or any organization I've worked with. I've always been a volunteer.

But God has always provided for me. And I've been in the ministry for 47 years now. I'm an old man.

No, you're a wise man. We both have wisdom highlights here, my friend. That's what they call these things here.

Steve Gregg is in studio with me today here on The Bottom Line. I'm Roger Marsh. It's so great to have this conversation with him about just getting to know a little bit more about the ministry of the Narrow Path.

And we're going to wander down a couple of paths in terms of what's happening in the culture, how different interpretations of Scripture are starting to become more in vogue. And with Steve having nearly five decades under his belt, you've seen quite a bit in terms of Western Christianity and that sort of thing. And also later on we're going to talk about some of the books that he's written, too.

Because the reason I'm glad we have Steve in studio today is he's not the kind of guy who's going to pat himself on the back. He will never hurt your shoulder or neck patting yourself on the back. But he has written quite a bit.

And I want to give you a little bit of background of what the Narrow Path is all about. And we'll talk about his books on Hell and Revelation and things like that. Steve, I almost called you Pastor Steve Gregg.

Don't do that. Steve Gregg from the Narrow Path is with me right here today on The Bottom Line. Today on The Bottom Line show, I'm Roger Marsh.

Joined in studio here as we talk about current issues facing the world right now. And Steve Gregg is the host of the Narrow Path radio program. thenarrowpath.com is the website.

We'll put that link up at thebottomlineshow.com. But if you're listening to one of our affiliates that carries both programs, as a matter of fact, Steve and I kind of piggyback each other every weekday on KWAM Dallas Fort Worth and KLDC in Denver and other stations. I encourage you to listen to Steve's program because I love how even-handed, cool, easygoing you are. I'm sure that there are a lot of questions.

What's the question that you've heard the most? You know, people keep asking. That one. Seriously? I think the question I hear the most is what question do you get the most.

Yeah, but in terms of scriptural things, because I know a lot of people who have questions, they come to me, they come to you because you're on the radio, and you are exponentially smarter than everybody else because you have a radio program. I say that somewhat tongue-in-cheek. Makes you an expert just to have a microphone in front of you.

It really does. As people have been at, when you started doing this, let's talk about the birth of the radio ministry first, and then we can get into the fine-tuning points. You had mentioned in the opening segment, I was invited, I was invited, I was invited, and it sounds like that's a recurring theme in your ministry is just wake up in the morning.

I think it was Dean Jones, the actor, I met him one time, and he said his philosophy on serving God and acting was, eat whatever God puts on your plate every day. He really didn't have a plan of, you know, I'm going to try to take over things. It sounds like that was kind of what you were instilling.

I've never been a person to, you know, have a vision or make a plan and work the plan or anything like that. There's always enough to do right now that I don't have to be making plans for tomorrow, and tomorrow something else comes up. I always figured that being in the ministry, at least not as a pastor, is just me being a Christian, just being a disciple, doing what God calls me to do.

Not everyone's called to be a Bible teacher or in full-time ministry, but for me, as long as there was something calling for my talents, for my gifts, and an opportunity to use them, I was going to go use them in that way. And I've done a lot of different things. I actually, for a while, I was a cartoonist.

I mean, I am a cartoonist, but I drew quite a few Christian comic books. Really? Oh, yeah, and a couple of them are at my website that you can read there, but there were many, many more besides those, and I did that for years. I was in a Christian rock band for several years.

What did you play? Guitar and piano. Okay. And actually, I was in more than one, but never in any recording bands.

Back in the 70s, there were a lot of makeshift Christian bands. And was this all part of the evangelism? Yes, very evangelistic bands, yes. And so, I mean, it was all outreach-oriented.

But when the band broke up, it didn't matter. When I stopped doing cartoons, it didn't matter, because there was always something else I was doing, too, and it could fill the time. And when I got out of high school, probably when I was 18 years old, I was

teaching about nine times a week.

I was teaching some afternoon Bible studies. I was teaching every night of the week. I think I saw on your Facebook, because we're Facebook friends.

I mean, that makes us super tight. But someone had resurrected a picture, or maybe you had put this up, or maybe your wife had put this up on your Facebook, and it looked like 1970, high school campus, long hair. Sitting in a circle.

Right, wallabies, earth shoes, all that stuff. That was probably 1970 or 70. Yeah, that was 1970.

That was one of the Bible studies I taught at lunchtime. While you were still in high school? Yeah, I was a student in that picture. And my back is the camera, but you can tell which one I am, because in big letters on the back, it says, One way to God, Jesus, on my back.

You weren't subtle. No. But, yeah, that was one of our actual daily Bible studies that they took for the student newspaper.

Let that sink in, brothers and sisters, especially if you have children or grandchildren in the public school system right now. Today on The Bottom Line, I'm Roger Marsh, talking with Steve Gregg from The Narrow Path. Steve became a Christian in high school, received salvation.

Well, he received salvation younger, but then became really, really was lit on fire during the Jesus People movement. And high school age, Steve Gregg is five days a week at his school, plus several times a week outside of that, evenings, weekends, things like that, leading Bible study. And there were so many opportunities.

It's not the same today. I wish I could tell every young person who's zealous for God and knows his Bible, but just step out and offer yourself, and people come to your door asking for you. And if God's calling you, they will.

But it was a lot easier back then, you know, because there were thousands and thousands of young people really hungry for the Word of God. I mean, I would teach Bible studies in homes several nights a week. And if we started a Bible study, within two weeks, it'd be full.

The house would be full. Within four weeks, we'd have to look for a bigger house. I mean, not because of me.

Anyone, anyone who could teach a Bible study could have that kind of crowd gathering because there was that much hunger. And to live in a time like this where that hunger is not visible in the younger generation is just heartbreaking. I'll bet.

Because it was such a glorious season, and that's how I was very blessed to be launched. I'm going to ask a tricky question, and this may not be the best question to ask, but was it more cultural, do you think, in terms of, you know, high school kids kind of go with the flow sometimes, and if this is what all the popular kids were doing, they would go? Or were you really sensing God's pouring out his Holy Spirit here, and he's not pouring it out the same way today? Well, I definitely had the impression that was a revival going on, and revivals are not happening at all the time. But revivals also, you know, a crowd gathers a crowd.

So there were lots of people really turning to Christ and really experiencing Christ and deliverance from drugs and all kinds of things. Wonderful testimonies. I mean, lots of great books were written of people's testimonies back then.

But also, you know, where there's a crowd and excitement, other people come and even go forward at the altar call, but they don't necessarily have a deep connection with Christ, I think. I have never seen any statistical studies, but just from my own anecdotal experience, I'd say maybe half the people that seem to have gotten saved that I knew in those days are still walking with the Lord. Which is still remarkable.

It's still a big crowd. I mean, when you think about Greg Laurie got saved that time, and Mike McIntosh, and a lot of Raul Reese. I used to do some ministry with Raul Reese on the campus.

And, you know, a lot of these guys who have big churches and big ministries, they got saved at that time, and they stayed. It's interesting how God brings people together for such a time as that, for such a time as this. In your case, with the youth ministry on campus and the men you just mentioned, and I think about my experience being a few years younger than you, in the broadcasting world, in the early to mid-80s, where that was really, there was a time for, you know, a lot of Christian radio was just exploding.

We went from the prerecorded in the studio, you know, half-hour daily program, to all sorts of different expressions. And that was also influential and instrumental in leading people to faith. And God used that mightily, too.

I'm not quite sure where we are now here in 2017. Do you see a cultural trend in terms of where God's raising up? I don't, but I wish I did. And maybe I will.

I'm praying for that. You know, I pray for revival for the millennials just about every day. I think there was something uniquely cultural that fed into the Jesus movement, and that was the hippie movement.

And I don't think we see that today, although we see people growing their hair long and kind of imitating the hippies. I don't think they have the same impetus that the hippies had. I think the hippies, many of them, again, a crowd draws a crowd.

I think the first hippies were people who were feeling like their lives were shallow, and they were looking for something deeper than even what their parents seemed to have in their opinion. Of course, their parents probably had something more stable than what they got into, but they were looking for something. So they tried drugs, and they tried, you know, experimental sexual moralities, and especially Eastern religions.

I mean, Eastern religion really blew up in this culture in the 60s, largely through the Beatles. But I think these people were looking for something, and it was at least a quasi-spiritual quest. I think some of it was hedonistic.

You know, drugs and sex is pretty hedonistic, but I think they were even looking for something transcendent in that. But the search through Eastern religions and philosophies, I just miss those days because when I talked to a non-Christian my age, a kid, they were very eager to be deeply involved in conversation about philosophical and religious subjects. It was very easy to have a conversation about Christ because the people who weren't Christians in very large measure, they didn't know it, but they were looking for Christ.

They were looking for something. They were looking in the wrong places. And so I think it was that movement that kind of sparked a real spiritual hunger that eventually was satisfied for many people when they turned to Christ and the Jesus movement.

Well, for you, Steve Gregg, it started on a campus and it extended from there. It eventually took its way to radio and also to print, too. But as we continue here on The Bottom Line Show, I'm talking with Steve Gregg, the host of the Narrow Path radio program.

The NarrowPath.com is the website. We'll talk about how this guy found his way into a radio studio in the first place because it wasn't like people were showing up in high school campuses and saying, Hey, that kid's doing a really great job with Bible study. We should put him on the radio.

I mean, there had to be a few gaps that were filled in, and that's what we'll talk about with Steve Gregg from The Narrow Path today here on The Bottom Line. I want to sing that song sometimes. This is The Bottom Line Show.

I'm Roger Martin. Steve Gregg in here from The Narrow Path talking about his artistry and his cartooning and the bands he played in, too. We could do Switchfoot songs, don't you think? What do you say? Roger and Steve do Switchfoot covers.

Wouldn't that be fun? A little different style than what we did in the 70s. But the same type of vibe, though. I mean, you think about what the Foreman Brothers did in terms of coming out of their North Coast cavalry and reaching people with a message that has a populist vibe to it in terms of this is what people are doing, but obviously it's rooted in

Scripture.

That's germane to who you've been for 50 years. Okay, two minutes before the short segment here, but let's set the table for the fact that The Narrow Path has been on the radio for a number of years. It's had a couple of different incarnations.

But I always am curious with how it started. Young Steve Gregg on high school campuses and working with young people, Bible teacher, becomes Steve Gregg radio Bible teacher. Well, I didn't get onto the radio until I was in my 30s.

I was already traveling as a teacher for Youth with a Mission all over the world at that time, and I also was running a Bible school of my own in Oregon, which was a nine-month school through the whole Bible, which I taught verse by verse through the Bible. How did you find, and did word of mouth people just come? Well, yeah, I was an elder at Calvary Chapel in Santa Cruz, and I was offered this property by a donor in Oregon. And so Calvary Chapel, Santa Cruz sent me off with the laying on of hands to start this school, and several families from the school went up there to be students, and then I was also teaching in Youth with a Mission, so people who'd hear me in Youth with a Mission found out I had a school, so they wanted to come.

That's how it started, and we never had a large student body, maybe 20 people a year, but it was nine months with them, and we went through the whole Bible. And I did that for 16 years. That was in the time, in the early years of that school that I began my radio ministry.

How did that come about? I was a guest, the leader of this Bible school, I was a guest on a Christian show in Albany, Oregon. A man named Ron Reed was the host, and he had me on as a guest, and he asked me before the show, what do you want to talk about? And I said, well, why don't we just let your listeners call in with Bible questions? He said, really, you want to do that? Okay, why not? So they did, and it was a two-hour show, and it went well, and so he had me do it again another time some weeks later. Eventually, he had me sitting in as his guest host when he had to be away.

He liked what I did. And then eventually, he wanted to be the substitute host one day a week for him, so for several years, several years I was his Monday host instead of him, so he got a long weekend every week. And it was after I'd been doing that with him for about seven years, I think, that he actually, he's the one who started the narrow path.

He had his own show, but he said, Steve, I think you could make it with your own show. And I said, well, I don't know anything about the radio industry. I'm just a Bible teacher.

He said, well, I'll do all the legwork. So he actually, he negotiated with the radio station. He raised money for me.

He did all kinds of things, and he produced and call screened the program for a year

without paying. Well, he was also doing his own program. He was doing his own program, and he put me on just before his so that I was, in a sense, competing with him for the same donors.

I mean, he was very selfless, very selfless, a very wonderful boon. Not your typical radio story. No, it is.

Not by any stretch of the imagination. So I started out just sitting in for him. I started out as a guest for him and then substitute host, and then he got me set up 20 years ago, 1997, doing my own daily show.

And that must have been a lot of fun for you, a lot of work. What was it just kind of like more of the same? I loved it because he was doing all the production work. I just had to show up at the microphone.

I was still teaching at my school every day, several hours a day, and I'd just take off in the afternoon for an hour and go to the microphone, and I did it remote like I do now from my home. And it's easy to do the show because there's no prep. I don't know what anyone's going to ask, so I can't prep for it.

To me, like I told you earlier, it's like being in my living room with a group of people asking questions, which is a very relaxed thing for me. It sounds wonderful. I mean, I'll paint the picture here for you.

If you're listening, just tuning in, I'm talking to Steve Gregg from The Narrow Path today here on The Bottom Line. I'm Roger Marsh. I have stacks of books.

I have 10 tabs up on my computer. I've got my phone ready to go, and Steve has a bottle of water and an open Bible. And that's his prep, and this is my prep.

I'm saying, wow, that would be a really great way to do this. But it's part and parcel with what God has called you to do all these past 50 years, and I think people have really benefited from it. The NarrowPath.com is the website.

You can listen to The Narrow Path on many of these Crawford stations, especially Dallas-Fort Worth on from 4 to 5 right before The Bottom Line, and also in Denver on KLDC, and also our KBRT listeners get to listen on KBRT KSN 2 to 2.30. Pardon me. I almost said 40 and slipped there. Maybe there's a full hour in your future.

We can't tell. As we continue, Steve has written a couple of books that I want to talk to him about, ask questions. One of them is Revelation for Reviews, commentary.

Also, Everything You Ever Want to Know About Hell. That's my version of the title. It's a very similar title.

It's a riffing to Everything You Always Want to Know About Hell, But Were Afraid to Ask,

which wouldn't have been a bad title either. We're going to open up the phone lines and give you a chance. We'll leave them open not necessarily to solicit questions, but if you do have a question for Steve Gregg, I was going to call you Dr. Steve Gregg.

We'll have to get to that part of the conversation in just a moment. Steve Gregg with The Narrow Path talking about the biblical worldview of the world that we're living in. That's our topic today in the first hour of The Bottom Line.

Thanks for tuning in to The Bottom Line show today. I'm Roger Marsh, giving you a biblical worldview on current events, but when you take a biblical worldview, of course, you have to take an internal perspective. Joined for this segment by Steve Gregg, who is the host of The Narrow Path, which is heard on many Crawford Broadcasting stations all across the country.

TheNarrowPath.com is the website where you can find out how to listen to the program. We can listen online. We were talking over lunch today about how many different options people have now and how many people find your program using an app.

It's changed a lot in the 20 years since you started this program. Well, it has. The technology is so great that, as you know, I can do the radio show from the front seat of my car, which I have done multiple times.

I know, and I have biblical jealousy over that. It's not envy, but it's kind of one of those, I want that for you, and it's nice to be able to have that opportunity. Last week, three of the shows, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, I did from the front seat of my car.

It's remarkable, though, because you think about it. You're going out. Your calling is to go and teach, and the idea that you can do that from anywhere.

If you're traveling somewhere, if you're called to a different part of the country, and so you are in a rental car, literally going from the airport to the facility where you're going to speak. This is a great opportunity. What an age we live in.

Isn't it, though? Isn't it, though? You've written a couple of commentary books. One of them on Revelation, and I realize that a lot of people are asking questions right now. They're seeing hurricanes.

They're seeing tornadoes. They're seeing earthquakes and things like that, and they're asking questions like, A, is God mad at us, or B, are we getting closer to the end times? Talk about why so many Christians are either going right there, or they're just saying, Revelation? Yeah, that's not what our church does. We will preach on the other 65 books.

We steer clear of that one. Well, there's two mentalities about Revelation that you've just mentioned. One of them is that it's a very difficult book, and the other is it's not a very difficult book.

Now, I think it's a very difficult book myself, and I think that churches that see it as a very difficult book are probably more inclined to focus on the letters of Paul or the Gospels or something like that, and I understand that. I started out in a church that thought it was a very easy book to understand. They just said, just take it for what it says.

I didn't have any concept at the time of apocalyptic literature, and it didn't seem like my teachers had that concept either, so they treated the book of Revelation like they'd treat 1 Kings or 2 Kings or some narrative passage, so they basically treated Revelation like it was just a narration of history in the future. And so, of course, that's how I taught it, too. I was taught it, and I taught it that way.

Over time, because I didn't only receive teaching from one source, I became aware that there were other views out there. I'm a very conservative person. I want to tell you this.

I'm very conservative in the sense that I don't change easily. A lot of the views I hold might strike people as not being mainstream conservative outlook on certain things, but if they're not, they were slow coming because... You get a hold of something, and you literally conserve it. Say, I'm going to hold this.

My views on Revelation changed over a period of about eight years from the time I began to chip away, in a sense, at my confidence in the view I'd been taught until I finally settled on what I think it means now. So it's a slow process. I wasn't looking to change.

I don't like the idea of change. I'm conservative by nature, but I'm forced to change by my studies sometimes. At least I feel forced to do so.

So I became aware of these different views from different teachers and commentaries and so forth, and I realized that I didn't know which view was correct, but I sure wished I could compare them side by side. And it seemed like nobody was doing that. And I thought, well, certainly somebody has written a book comparing the four different views of Revelation side by side.

That'd be a no-brainer. And so I went looking, and there was a Bible college near where I lived, and I went to their library. They had 100 commentaries on Revelation on the shelf.

None of them compared the four views side by side. I thought, come on. And I did book searches.

I did web searches when the web became available, and there just wasn't anything there. And I thought, well, I'm getting the impression I'm going to have to write this book. I had never wanted to write the book.

Don't you hate that? This is kind of like the guy who comes to the church council

meeting and says, I've got this great idea for ministry. Why aren't we doing this? And the first thing the council president says is, good, you're in charge. You do it, yeah.

Right, exactly. Sounds like God was doing that with you, too, Steve. Apparently so, because I really didn't want to write the book.

I mean, not that it wasn't enjoyable to write. I just didn't feel like I had the time or the inclination. And Revelation is not my favorite book, frankly.

I mean, I'd rather teach the Gospels any day. In fact, I'd almost teach almost anything ahead of Revelation. First Kings.

But I was aware. People would always ask me questions about Revelation because I was on the radio at this time, and they'd say, what about this passage or that passage? And I realized that they were presupposing a certain view of Revelation, which is what I used to presuppose, and that my answer to what I now saw wouldn't mix to them from the paradigm they were thinking. They were thinking of Revelation in a futurist way.

There's three other views that aren't futurist. There's the preterist view and the historicist view and the idealist view. Each of them placed the fulfillment in a different time frame.

The preterist places it back in the first century, fulfillment in 70 AD. The historicist view, which all the Protestants used to hold for about three centuries until dispensationalism came along. The historicist view holds that it's all of church history.

It covers all of church history. That was Luther's view. That was Calvin's view.

That was the Protestant view until Darby, really, pretty much. And then the idealist view holds it's not really about any particular time. It's just transcendent truths depicted in symbolic visions.

So one of those views could be true, but two of them probably aren't. Certainly three of them can't be. So I thought, well, instead of everyone asking me the question from one point of view and me having to explain to them, well, there's some other ways of looking at the whole book, and my answer about this one passage will differ from anything you're going to hear from your point of view.

I just thought, I guess I have to write this book. So I decided to do it. It's one of those things where I don't have a degree.

I don't have any credibility. I mean, the people who knew my mystery were relatively few. They liked it, but I had no real credibility with a publisher.

I didn't want to self-publish. I didn't have the money to do that. So I approached ten publishers that I respected and got turned down by all of them with the idea of the book.

But one of them, Baker Book House, wrote me a letter back, and they said, Have you approached Thomas Nelson? He said, What I know of their list, they might be interested in your book, which is a very nice thing of the guy to say. What he said about him is that they don't publish commentaries that aren't in sets, so they weren't interested in a standalone commentary on one book. He said, Try Thomas Nelson's.

I did, and they liked it, and they bought it. And then they actually approached me about doing other books as well, but I turned them down because they were subjects they wanted me to do that I wasn't interested in things like that. And the book is really a side-by-side parallel commentary.

There's four columns across a two-page spread. There's a passage of Revelation at the top of the page and four different commentaries that you can see side-by-side of the same passage going through. Excellent, yeah.

And no one had done that before. And you know, my book is not a big seller. I'm still not a very well-known author.

If you look on Amazon.com, I think it ranks probably about 700,000. I'm going to look right now. That's actually pretty remarkable when you consider that.

Actually, you know what? Since we've been talking about it, it's up to 94,000 now. 94,000? It's rocketing up the charts. Yes, everyone ran to their phones in order.

They did, and you should. It's called Revelation, Four Views, a Parallel Commentary, Revised and Updated Edition. Well, you know, I asked the publisher when they were working on my book, I said, I don't know much about publishing or how many books sell.

How many books are supposed to sell to be successful? And my editor told me, this was before my book was actually published, when they were working on it, he said, well, any book that doesn't sell 20,000 a year is not worth keeping in print. It took five years for my book to sell 20,000 copies. So, I mean, it's really just not a big seller.

But they've kept it in print, which I was glad because J.I. Packer told me you'll find Thomas Nelson won't keep anything in print if it doesn't make him money. But they've kept it in print, even though it doesn't make them money and doesn't make me any either. But it's unique.

There's just, you know, if they took it out of print, that's a vacuum in the literature. Well, I'm laughing because we have that in common with Thomas Nelson, except in my case, they just forgot my book's there. So that's why it's still in print.

But you can still find it on Amazon, too. I'm talking with Steve Gregg today here on The Bottom Line. I'm Roger Marsh.

He's the Bible teacher on the Narrow Path radio program, the narrowpath.com. We've got his book, Revelation, Four Views, a parallel commentary up at thebottomlineshow.com. As a matter of fact, Steve, we're going to go to break here. When we come back, is it okay if we give one of these books away? Sure. I don't know how you do that, but I'll be glad to do it.

Well, we put all of that on us on Tamra right now. 800-227-5278. Let's take caller number four right now.

You get a copy of Steve Gregg's book, Revelation, Four Views, a parallel commentary by Steve Gregg. 800-227-5278 gets you through to The Bottom Line. Special edition of The Bottom Line show today, I'm Roger Marsh.

We do focus on the biblical worldview of what's happening in the world and who better than to talk about a biblical worldview of current events than a guy who has spent the past almost 50 years studying scripture, teaching scripture, does so on the radio now. The Narrow Path is the name of the program. You'll recognize the voice of Steve Gregg.

He's in studio with me today. Steve, it's really good to have you here. It's a privilege.

Likewise. When you talked about your radio broadcasting and the fact that God really just opened a door and your mentor was more than just... I mean, it's unheard of what he's done for you. That's true.

It really is incredible and God allowed you to walk down that path. But I appreciate the fact, too, that you walked through the doors. As God presented the openings, you felt led to walk through them.

All the doors seemed attractive to me, so I should not be commended for it. I was just lucky. You chose door number one instead of door number two.

Sometimes there are other things that look attractive in this world that aren't of God. Let's take a look at another book that you've written, and it's one that actually sounds crazy. You said, I really like my book about hell.

Okay. Well, let's talk everything you want to know about hell because there's a lot of confusion in the church and the culture about that. The reason I like my book about hell is I think it's actually more relevant than the Revelation book.

I like my book on Revelation, and it gets good reviews. But I wrote the book on hell 13 years, or actually 15 years after I wrote the Revelation book, so I don't write a lot of books. But I had been hearing different views of hell for 25 years, and I was concerned that not enough people knew that there were options about that subject.

And I'd get calls on the radio a lot of times saying, you know, talk about hell. And I'd say,

well, there's these three views. Like I said, I'm a very conservative person.

In the literal sense of being conservative, not politically conservative. Well, I'm that too. I'm that too.

But, yeah, in the sense of my temperament is conservative, and I'm a slow changer or maybe a slow learner. But I became aware that a couple of important Christian evangelical scholars I respected had changed their view on hell back around the mid-'80s. John R. W. Stott was one of them, and Clark Pinnock was another.

I respected them both, and they both took what's usually called the annihilationist view or conditional immortality view of hell. I became aware of that. I read what they wrote back in the 80s, and I just thought, well, I still respect them, but I think they're off base on this.

I was still pretty strongly without question an advocate of the traditional view. And as time went on, I read more about that, and I realized that there was some interesting more support for that than I thought, you know, in the Bible. And then I also became aware of another view, which was held by some authors that I had known and respected, but I didn't know they held this view.

Eventually, I discovered Origen's view of universal reconciliation was held by some evangelicals too, which surprised me. I'd always thought of that as sort of a Unitarian New Age kind of a thing. We're all going.

Yeah, exactly. Be nice to each other until we get there. Exactly.

But I was interested, but I was still very solidly in the traditional camp for 25 years while, you know, curious about those things. Traditional camp meaning? Eternal torment, eternal torment and fire, conscious torment forever. But I didn't realize until I studied it out that in church history, up until Augustine, there were three views of hell that were held by people of equal stature.

Tertullian, of course, took the view that we call the traditional view, eternal torment view. Irenaeus held a conditional immortality view that people in hell eventually are burned up after they're punished. And Origen, who was contemporary with them both and very important theologian, believed in the universal reconciliation view.

And until the time of Augustine, all those views were circulating in the church, and none of them were considered heretical because they all had a certain amount of biblical credibility. It was Augustine who basically made the traditional view the traditional view, and he kind of bumped Origen's view out and Irenaeus' view out of the park and out of the ring, I might say. And since then, the church has always held the traditional view.

But I was surprised how much scripture there was in favor of all of them. Same with the

Revelation book. I mean, I don't hold—I don't stand by any particular view of hell myself.

I'm undecided on this because I've found that the—I mean, there's a hell in all these views. It's a hell of torment. All these views believe in a hell of torment.

But one view, the traditional one, holds that that torment never, ever ends, and other views hold that it ends one way or the other, either with annihilation or with reconciliation to God. And some people are upset that I even consider the alternate views, but frankly, I've done more research on them in the Bible and in church history than a lot of people have, and I think, you know, they're out there. And it's sort of like the four views of Revelation.

I felt like people don't know there's four views. And in my four views of Revelation, I do not advocate a position. I just give all four views side by side.

I do the same kind of thing in my book on hell. I present chapters defending each view and critiquing each view from the biblical point of view and using the authors who take those positions. I'm talking with Steve Gregg from The Narrow Path today here on The Bottom Line.

I'm Roger Marsh. And Steve just said a mouthful in terms of his position. We were talking whether it's Revelation or whether it's hell.

It's an unpopular position to take, not the positions themselves, but the approach, the fact that you would, you know, very blatantly say, OK, here are the three views of hell. Here are the four views of Revelation. Here's the pro and the con, and lay it there and leave it for the reader to say, OK, what's God showing me as opposed to saying, and that's why I believe in this.

I mean, the fact that you could say, hey, here's three views of hell, and I can see biblical support for all three of them. Yeah. I mean, wow.

And the truth is I don't have an emotional stake in any of them, which is why it's easy to be somewhat objective. I will say, though, the reason the book of hell on hell seems more important than the book on Revelation to me is that hell is an issue that has a tremendous ramifications on the character of God because hell is whatever God made it to be. And so whatever it is reflects what he wants to do to unbelievers.

And so I think we need to really think about the character of God. I don't know that we need to think that much about eschatology. Not that we shouldn't think about it at all.

I think about everything. But I think thinking about the character of God is one of the most important things for us. And I think the different views of hell have more direct bearing on the character of God than the different views of Revelation do.

And I'm more into God than I am into eschatology. Really? Yeah, I really am. How did that happen? Well, my early teachers didn't necessarily encourage that.

No, they did. They did. They definitely pressed Jesus as the main issue.

But certainly eschatology is considered to be one of the main things that they wanted to push. Talking with Pastor Steve Gregg. I've wanted to say pastor.

Neuropath is the name of the program. Steve Gregg is our host on that program. I'm Roger Marsh.

And today here on The Bottom Line I want to congratulate Mark who called in from Brea, California, one of our KBRT listeners, who is a winner now of the Revelation book. And we're going to send that out to you, Mark. So thank you so much for your call.

I want to give away one of the hell books too, but we also have a caller who would like to call in with a question. So this is great. Now, usually Steve's the one on his program who says, do you have a question or whatever it is.

You get to ask. You're calling The Bottom Line and asking a question of Steve Gregg from Neuropath, from Rancho Cucamonga, California. Let's talk to Suzette.

Suzette, welcome to The Bottom Line. Thank you, Roger. I really enjoy your program, and also I miss Steve Gregg's program.

All right. It's a different time now. But anyway, I have a question, two questions, because I heard most of the answers.

I'll get the answers after I give you the question. First of all, Steve, I really enjoy your program. You seem to be a very, very knowledgeable person, and you can explain to the audience, your callers, a very complicated topic in a very simple term, and you always give a reference in the Bible.

Okay. My question is, first, number one, is do you feel that you were called, anointed to teach, you know, in the five-fold ministry? And the second is, when did you get saved? And the third question, it all sums up, and how did you get in the position where you are now? How much time and effort did you put in studying? Those are good questions, Suzette, and we're a little short on time, so I wanted Steve to get a chance to answer. Okay.

First, I got saved as a child. My parents are Christians. They raised three children who were all saved in childhood and still serve the Lord today.

I went forward at an altar call when I was four years old, but I can't guarantee that I got saved then. I don't know. I went forward at another one at a Billy Graham crusade when I was 10 in Los Angeles, and I can't say for sure that's when I got saved.

You know, when you're raised in the faith and you never doubt it, it's kind of hard to pinpoint the moment that you've changed. But I really got, I would say, filled with the Spirit, it seemed to me, when I was 16, and that was in the Jesus movement. And you asked do I think I have an anointing to teach.

I hope so. I believe that that's what I'm called to do, and I don't believe God would call someone to do something if he didn't give them the gifts necessary for it. So I trust that that is so.

I live my life assuming that that is so, and I hope I'm not disappointing the body of Christ by assuming too much there. How do I get to where I am as far as Bible knowledge? To me, I've never cared for anything as much as I've cared for the things of God, and I've always believed from my childhood that the Bible is the Word of God. Even when I was 10, I remember trying to read through the Bible more than once and didn't make it, but I just didn't have the discipline.

But after I was 16, I started teaching. I read the Bible every spare minute. I don't always carry a Bible with me now in my hand, but I do in my head, and I meditate on it day and night, which is what the Bible says to do.

I'm always thinking of everything through the lens or the grid of what does the Bible say, how does this apply to everything in my life, and that's why people can ask me about almost anything, and I've at least thought about it. I don't necessarily always have the answers, but you can hardly ask me a question about how the Bible applies to something in life that I haven't done a lot of thinking about, and in some cases, I've found the answers, too. I think that's helpful to know and good to know.

Suzette, thanks so much for your call. Steve Gregg with The Narrow Path is with you in studio today here on The Bottom Line. I'm Roger Marsh.

We've got a few moments left, and so I want to give away a copy of Steve's book about hell, too. It's called All You Want to Know About Hell, Three Christian Views of God's Final Solution to the Problem of Sin. If you call right now, 800-227-5278, we'll do caller number four.

Once again, that'll get, well, wait, there's three views. We'll do caller number three. We did four for Revelation because there's four different views.

We'll do three. 800-227-5278, we'll send you a free copy. Steve, it's been much too fast, this time that it's gone by.

We'll have to do this again soon, but I appreciate it. It's been fun. It's been a real blast, and I know a benefit for our listeners, too.

Brag on yourself just a little bit. I understand you're receiving a doctorate soon. A

seminary in Evansville, Indiana called Trinity Seminary contacted me and wants to give me a doctorate.

So, actually, I'm going back to Evansville this month to receive it. Wow, and once again, as the recurring theme of Steve Gregg's Life in Ministry, you've been invited, and so you're going to go. I didn't know they existed until the president of the seminary contacted me.

He said he's listening to all my lectures on tape or online. I love it. I love the fact that it is so counterintuitive to what happens in the culture right now, which is you go to school, and you study this, and you meet these people, and you go to all these places.

I just get the sense that your ministry has been the complete opposite of that, and you're better off for it, and so are we. It's been less stressful. I'll bet.

I'll bet. You seem like a very relaxed guy, and you still have that micro-bus. Not that one.

I've had several. Yeah, I was going to say, that would be part and parcel of the ministry of Steve Gregg. TheNarrowPath.com, and I encourage you, if you enjoy that program and listen to it every day, make sure you're praying for Steve and his ministry team, and also the financial support to it.

Steve talks very humbly about the fact that God has just shown up in many ways, but we know that it takes the concentrated effort of listeners who will call in and make a donation, support the ministry, go see Steve when he's speaking. That's part of how all this happens. .