

FAITH + WORKS

JAMES

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- The humble submit to God as the Lord of their life.
- In the first five verses of this chapter, James described a spiritual battle between two opposing kingdoms – the world and the kingdom of God.
- Here James told the people what kind of heart attitude – humility – it takes to join God's side.

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- James quoted Proverbs when he said God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:34).
- He wasn't talking about people who are proud of their own accomplishments or have a high sense of self-confidence.
- He meant the kind of pride that exalts self above God, that puts self on the throne of your own life instead of submitting to God as King.

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- The Greek word here is *phaino* which means “to shine” but with the prefix *huper*, which means above and beyond, like “hyper” in front of a word in English (e.g., hyperactive).
- In the ancient world, the imagery of shining was connected to glory.
- This is when someone gives himself or herself glory above and beyond what he or she truly deserves.

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- Even if we don't do that with our words, we can do it with our actions without even realizing it.
- We may say we honor and worship God as Lord, but we live as if we are the ones on the thrones of our own lives.
- We do what we want; we don't submit to His authority in the way we live.

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- We spend our lives building our own little kingdoms rather than serving in His.
- This is what James and Proverbs mean when they distinguish between the humble and the proud.
- The proud live as the kings of their own lives; the humble submit to God as Lord of their lives.

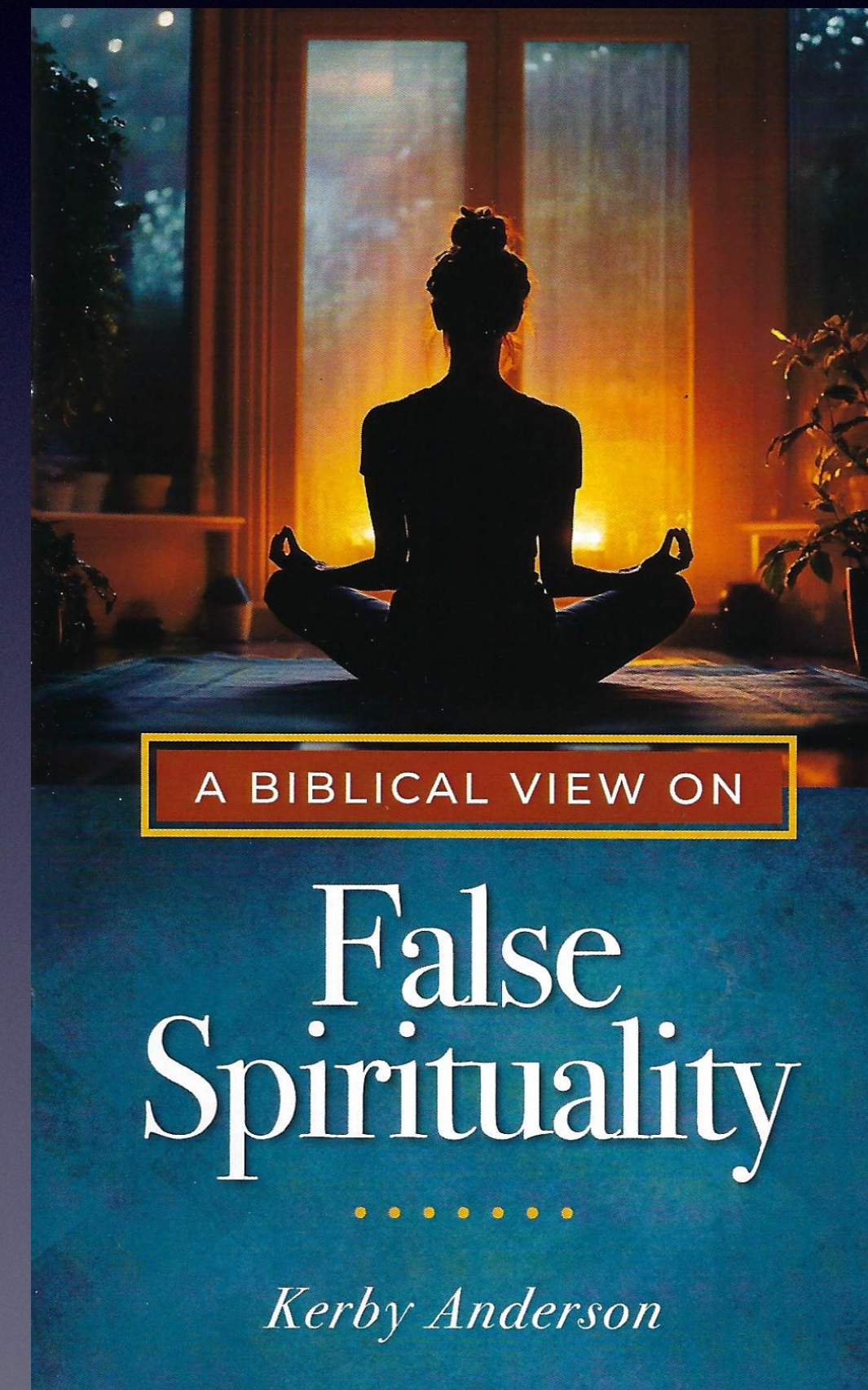
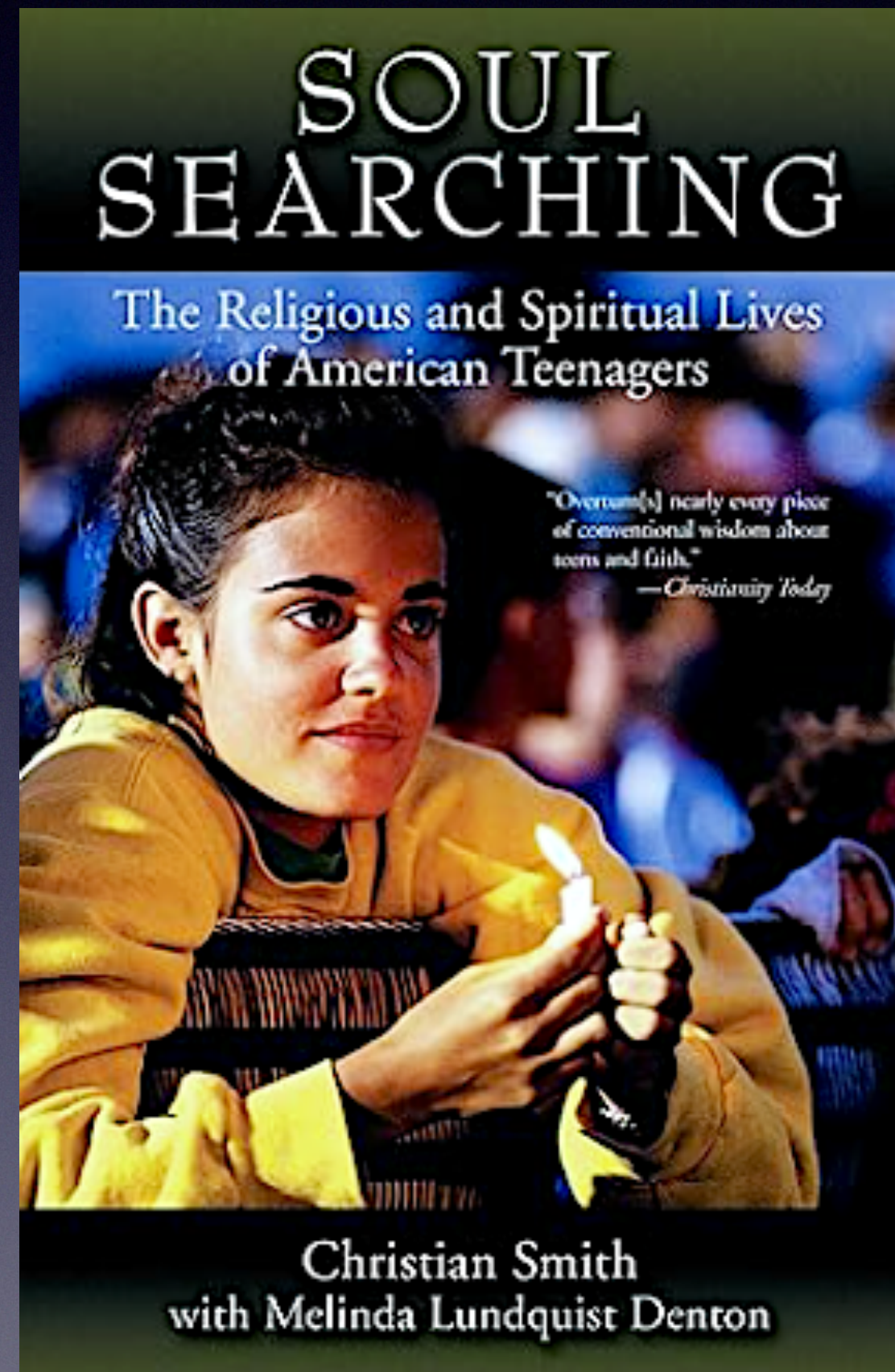
James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- God gives grace to the humble because it is the humble who understand their need for grace.
- The general worldview of our culture is that people are inherently good and that you're a generally "good" person if your good deeds outweigh your bad.
- This comes from secular humanism.

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- Unfortunately, this is also the belief system of many people sitting in the pews of American churches this week who don't really understand the Gospel, believing instead in a distortion of Christianity that scholars have named "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."
- But those who understand the Gospel understand we are all sinners in need of God's grace.

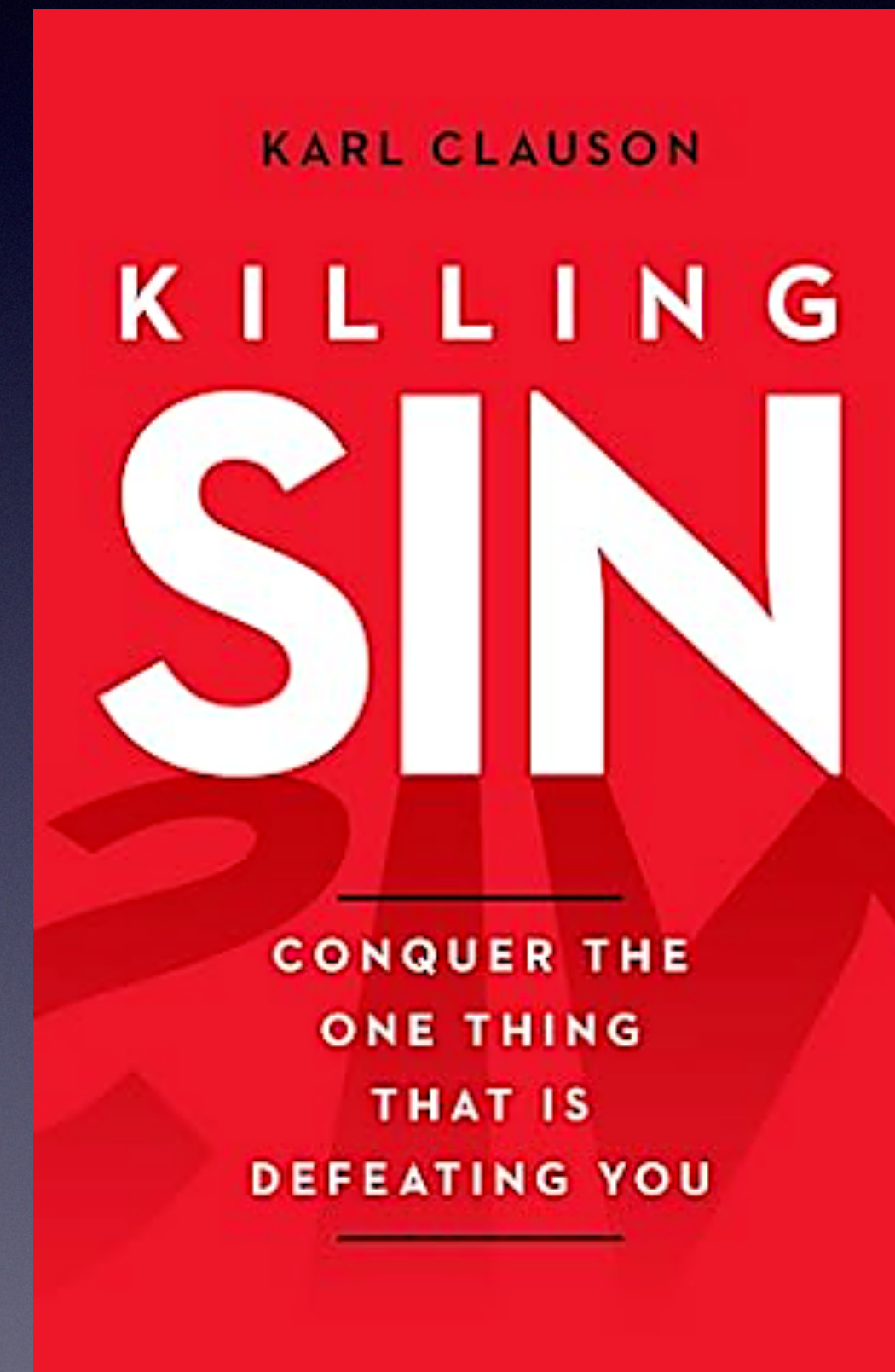
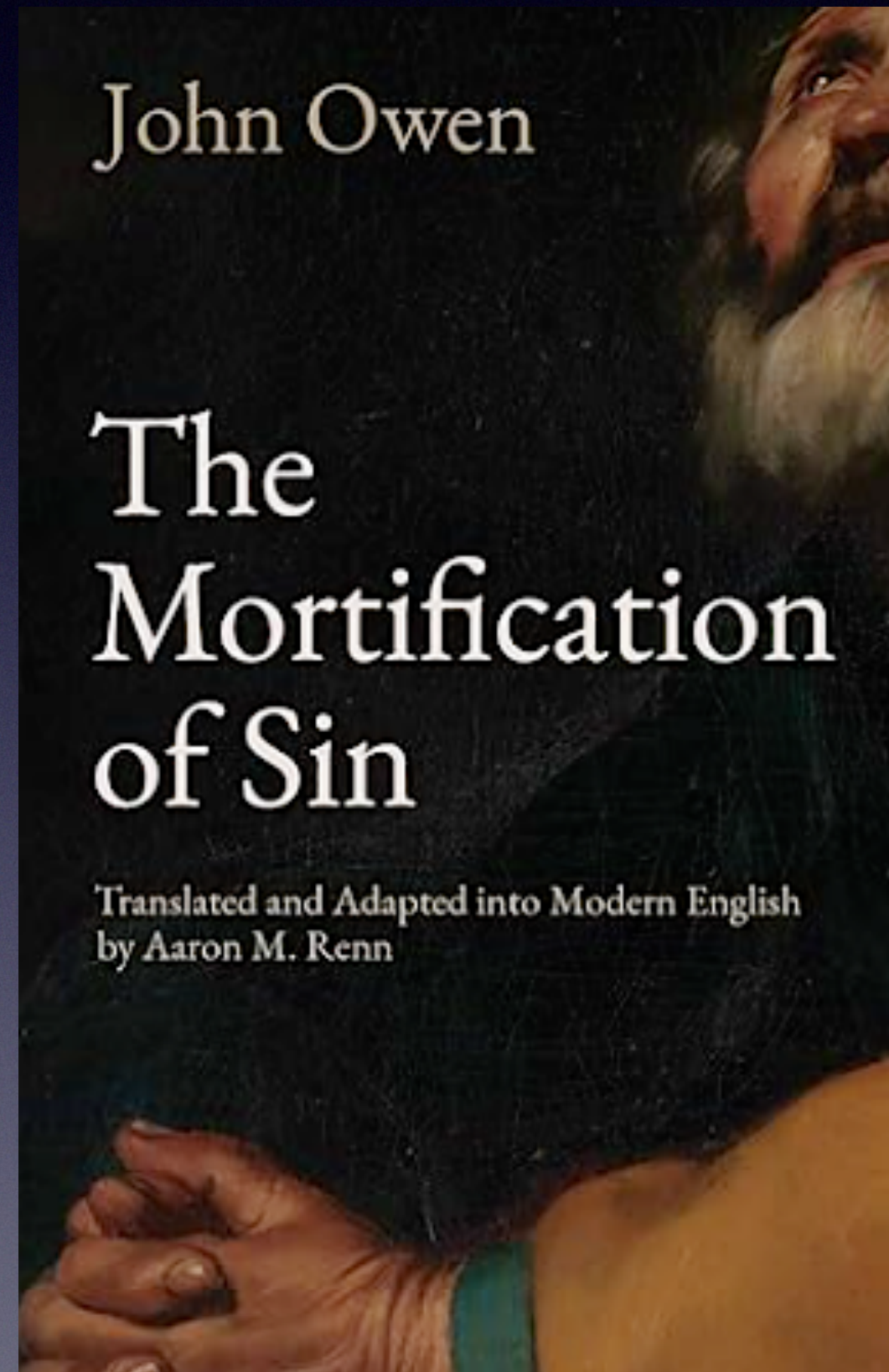
Moralistic Therapeutic Deism



James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- It may seem strange that James told the people to turn their laughter to mourning and their joy to gloom.
- When we read it in this context, we see James was talking about mourning our sin.
- The verb translated “be wretched” means to be grieved.
- The humble are grieved by their sin.

Killing Sin



James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- Psalms tells us that the only people who can stand in the presence of God are those who have clean hands and a pure heart (Psalms 24:3–4), which means none of us can stand before Him in our own righteousness.
- But when we humble ourselves before God and confess that we are sinners in need of His grace, He cleanses our sins and puts a new heart in us (Psalm 51; Ezekiel 36:26).

James 4:6–10, Proverbs 3:31–35

- Because God's kingdom and the world are diametrically opposed, when we draw near to God, we move away from the temptations of the Devil (verse 7).
- This is how we can resist the fleshly desires of the world, by drawing near to God. James called the people double-minded or literally "two selves." Submitting to God as Lord brings purity and oneness of heart.

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- Do not slander or condemn one another.
- After talking about humbling ourselves before God, James moved into what that means when it comes to judging other people.
- When we humble ourselves and recognize that He is God and we are not, this also means recognizing that only God has the authority to sit as judge over humanity.

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- This doesn't mean we shouldn't ever make judgments about what other people are doing.
- Jesus tells us to make judgments when He tells us to evaluate false teachers by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20), to confront someone when they sin against you (Matthew 18:15-20), and to remove the speck from our brother's eye (Matthew 7:1-5).

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- Making a judgment about a person's sin in order to help them grow or to repair a breach in your relationship or a conflict in the church are all focused on helping the situation and helping the person.
- The type of judging that James is talking about here is about hurting the other person to make you feel better about yourself.

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- “Speaking evil against each other” is things like slander, gossip, and bullying.
- These are things people do to tear other people down.
- It’s the opposite of “speaking the truth in love” which is done to build other people up (Ephesians 4:29).

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- When Jesus talked about the speck and the log, He didn't say not to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
- He said you have to remove the log from your own so that you can see clearly to take the speck out of their eye.
- Taking the speck out of someone's eye would be a helpful thing to do.

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- This passage is in the context of the Sermon on the Mount; Jesus had just given three other examples of hypocrisy – those who pray, fast, and give alms in public to be praised by others instead of out of real devotion to the Lord (Matthew 6:1-16).
- The word “hypocrite” comes from the Greek word for an actor playing a character on stage.

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- James said those who speak evil against others are “judging the law,” referring to what James calls “the royal law” – love your neighbor as yourself (James 2:8).
- It all comes down to love; those who slander others and approach them with a haughty attitude place themselves above the law – there is no love in this attitude or behavior.

James 4:11–12, Matthew 7:1–5

- Loving friends sharpen each other like iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17). They speak hard truths to each other in love (Ephesians 4:15).
- They care about both healing their own sin and their friend's sin. Because they want to help each other grow to be more like Jesus.

James 4:13–17, Proverbs 16:1–9

- Only God knows what the future holds.
- It's important to read this passage in context.
- The first section references humbling ourselves before God because only God is Lord; the second reminds us only God can judge; and this one tells us only God knows the future. Only God is omnipotent. Only God is sovereign.

James 4:13–17, Proverbs 16:1–9

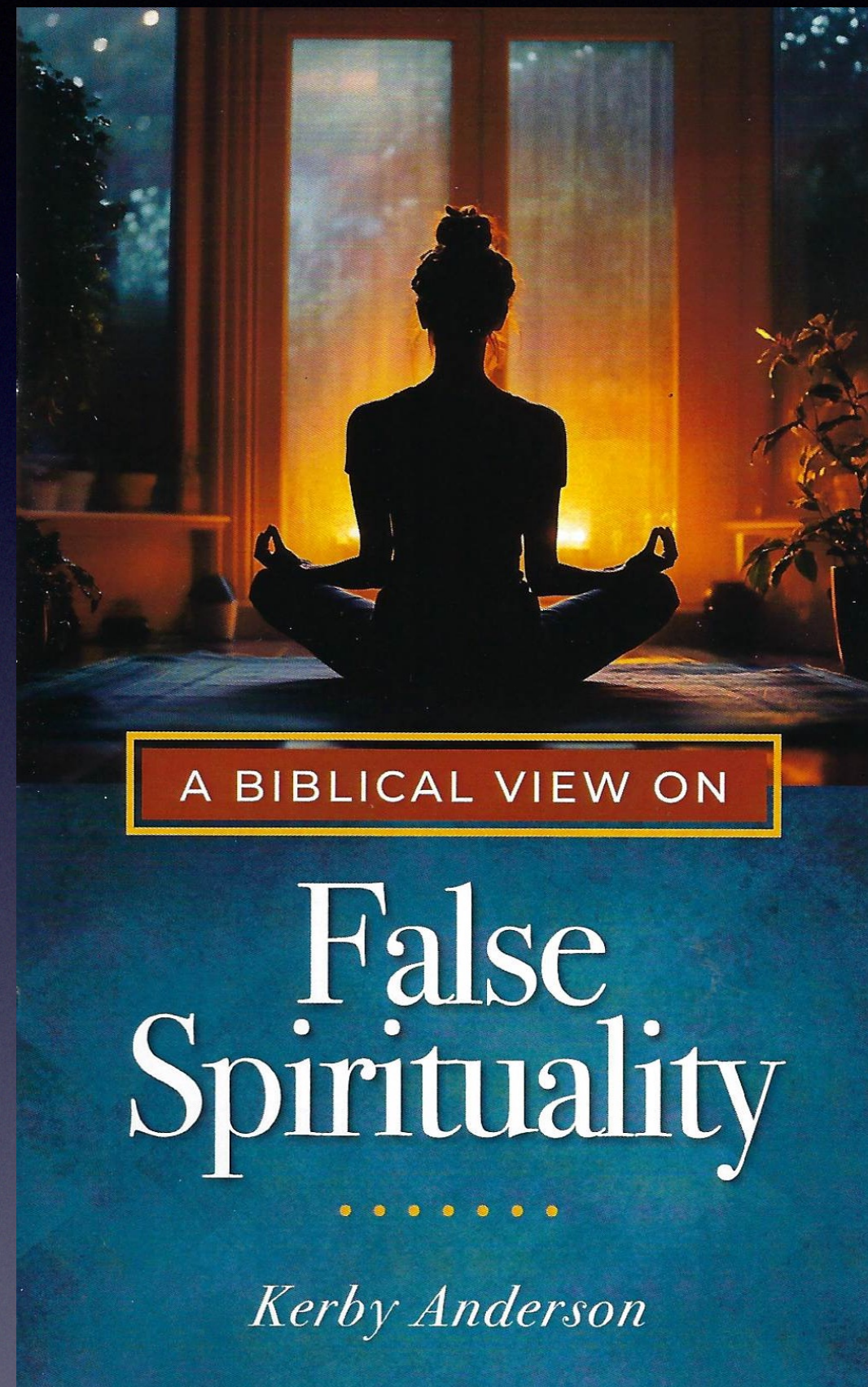
- This doesn't mean we shouldn't make plans for the future.
- James didn't tell the people not to make plans. He just said to do so with the caveat of "if the Lord wills."
- In the context of trusting the Lord. With the attitude of humility, submitting to the Lord's will in all things.

James 4:13–17, Proverbs 16:1–9

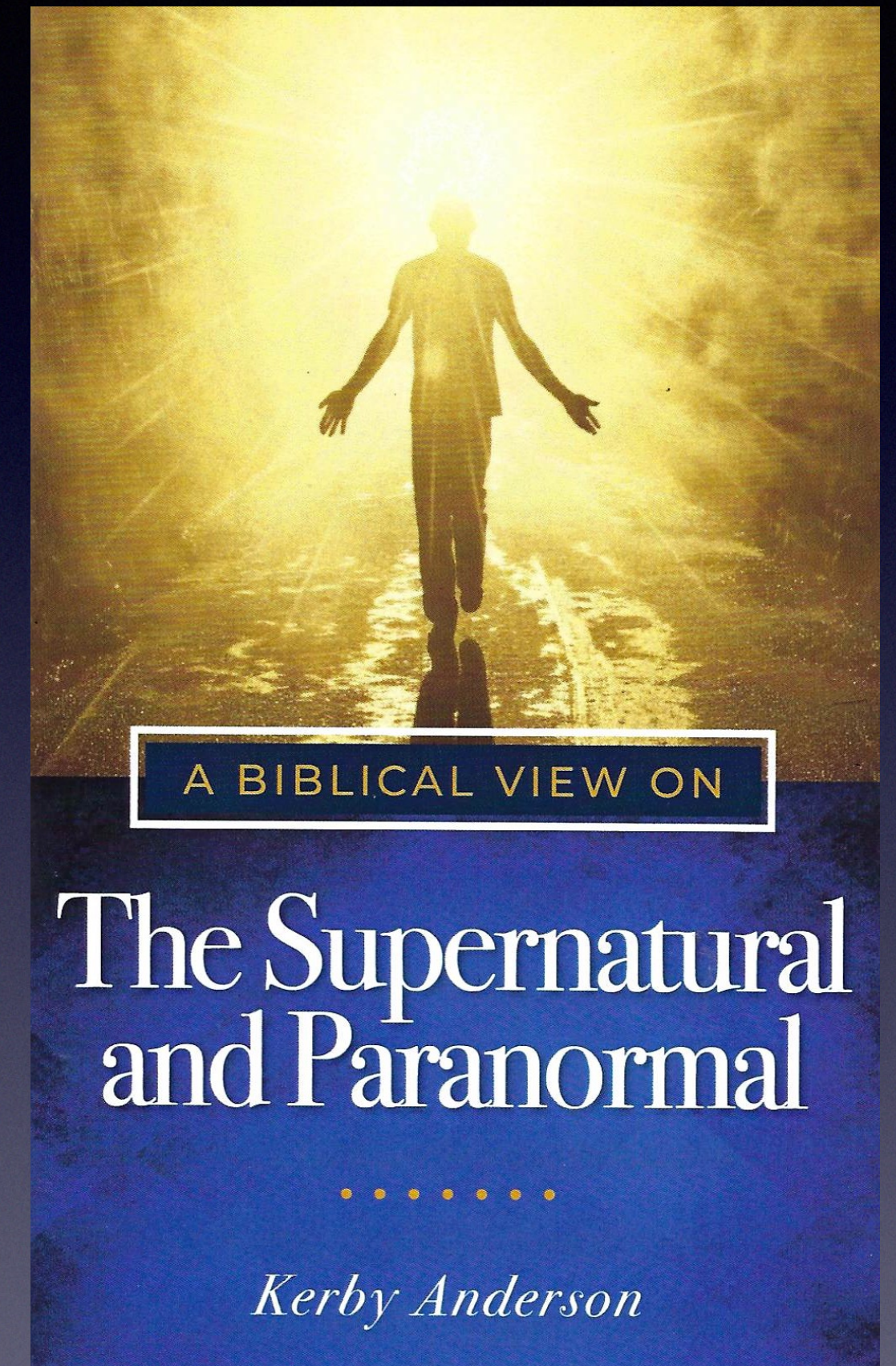
- It's not a bad thing to plan for our future; that's a wise thing to do. But we need to take care how we plan for the future.
- Our plans should always be made in the context of seeking the Lord's will not focusing on our own desires, "making a profit" (verse 13).
- Humility is seeking the Lord's will for your life and your future.

James 4:13–17, Proverbs 16:1–9

- Proverbs tells us we can plan our paths, but it is the Lord who establishes our steps (Proverbs 16:9).
- Make your plans only in the context of God's will.
- When we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts because our desires will be His desires (Psalm 37:4). We will want what He wants.



The Spiritually Interested



The Spiritually Interested

- According to a recent Pew Research Center article, nearly a quarter (22%) of all Americans fit into the category of spiritual but not religious.
- They think of themselves as spiritual or at least consider spirituality very important in their lives.
- But they don't consider religion important.

The Spiritually Interested

- Five characteristics of spiritual but not religious:
- They emphasize a personal, subjective connection to something beyond themselves. They avoid religious institutions and groups and don't like to be labelled religious. They believe they have a relationship with God but aren't involved in organized religion. They are more interested in the present life than in the afterlife. They utilize a variety of spiritual practices.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

- Five components of MTD:
- A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over us on earth. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. God is not involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Supernatural and Paranormal

- Lee Strobel provides lots of evidence for the supernatural (miracles, deathbed visions), but one of the more compelling was his interview with John Burke on NDEs (near-death experiences).
- He previously discussed this in chapter 3 of his book, *The Case for Heaven*, but goes into more detail in chapter 8 of *Seeing the Supernatural*.

Supernatural and Paranormal

- Hebrews 9:27 says that “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”
- Burke says these may be a clarifying reminder that God knows everything about us, and that one day we will all give an account.
- No final judgment will take place until human history comes to its conclusion (Revelation 11:15-18).

Dangers in the Spiritual Realm

- In the final chapter in his book, “Ghost Stories, Psychics, and the Paranormal,” Lee Strobel interviewed Ron Rhodes.
- He explains that people are looking for the supernatural, but often in the wrong places, such as spiritism and the paranormal phenomenon.
- Satan “has blinded the minds of the unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan is the master of deception.

Dangers in the Spiritual Realm

- Many psychics promote heresy, even claiming to have such gifts given to them from God. That is why Paul warned Timothy that there were people teaching the doctrine of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).
- Leviticus 19:26 - "You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes." Leviticus 19:31 - "Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God."

Resources

