

The First Act of Rebellion: Beyond the King James Version



When news of widespread abuse within the 2x2 church was revealed, I was still firmly a member of the group. The news shocked me. It disgusted me. And it made me start to question everything I had ever known regarding the faith group I had been a part of since I was born.

Anyone who has been a professing member of the 2x2 church can tell you that because you are expected to give a testimony every Sunday morning and Wednesday night, reading your Bible often becomes a practice of finding something to say in the meetings rather than trying to understand and learn. Granted, I would not have said that was the case when I was still part of the group because I didn't see it that way. How could I when it was the only thing I had ever known?

So when news spread like wildfire on Facebook, the first thing that I started to do was read the Bible differently and pray more authentically. I started reading to learn what it actually said—not what someone had told me it said, or what had been preached in every gospel meeting and

convention since I was a child. I was searching for answers, but even more so, I was trying to figure out how a group I had been taught was the only right way, the people God's chosen people, could allow such horrific abuse over decades.

And there were no answers to that question that led me to think that the 2x2 church was what I had been taught it was. And when Scripture points you in the opposite direction of the only church you've ever known, it's pretty monumental.

How was it possible that I had been reading this very same Bible for my entire life and not seen what was so clear to me now? My view of what I was reading had been so skewed by a false gospel that I didn't know the difference. I couldn't identify the counterfeit because I was not familiar enough with the original.

From the time I was a child just learning to read, I always had the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Everyone did. It wasn't until adulthood that someone here or there would have the New KJV at a meeting. Interestingly, the ones with a different version of the Bible in meeting were young workers. It makes me wonder if an overseer somewhere along the line let workers know that it was okay to use the NKJV, and they just failed to pass it along to the congregation.

It wasn't that I didn't use other versions of the Bible, primarily the NKJV and the New International Version (NIV). But I never used them in meeting. Instead, I used these Bibles as references. When giving my testimony, I would read the KJV and then say something like, "The NIV version says X." But still, the acceptable version of the Bible for meetings was the KJV.

I know that the 2x2 church isn't the only religious group that declares the KJV to be the best version of the Bible. In fact, there are KJV-only churches out there, generally fundamentalist groups similar to the 2x2 church. It's not the KJV itself that is the problem, but when used within a culture that discourages independent theological inquiry, combined with a difficult-to-interpret text, it makes it much easier to depend on someone else's interpretation. Plus, we relied heavily on workers to interpret Scripture.

It's no wonder that so many of us failed to identify the false gospel we were being spoonfed. The KJV's Early Modern English is difficult to understand. It's the language of Shakespeare with older vocabulary and grammar, and plenty of thees, thous, and thines. It's not how we speak today, and the further we are removed from that time period (1500-1700), the harder it is for us to understand just because it's unfamiliar.

Beyond the KJV being standard reading material within the church, the majority of people also prayed in Early Modern English with thees, thous, and thines. It's such a bizarre concept that we enter a meeting and begin speaking as if we are in a Shakespeare play. This is just another

example of the duality of life that so many experience within the church—we had a meeting life, and we had a regular life, and the two rarely converged.

This convergence of two lives into the unity of one is perhaps one of the most beautiful things about leaving the 2x2 church. I wear the same clothing, wear my hair the same way, and speak the exact same way in church as I do every other day of my life. My faith and my life have become one, as they were meant to be.

The very first “act of rebellion” that I took when this crisis began was to purchase an NKJV Bible and start using it in meeting. The Bible was even brown in color, which, as everyone knows, your Bible must be black in the 2x2 church. I know, shockingly bold!

Looking back, this was a first step in this convergence of my faith and my real life. I could read Scripture in a language I was familiar with and understood without needing to re-read the verse 10 times. Why did we do that to ourselves in the first place?

It wasn't that an easier-to-read and understand version of the Bible revealed truths previously hidden. The gospel hadn't changed. The words were simply no longer competing with unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar. I could finally focus on what the text was actually saying rather than trying to interpret the language. Switching Bible translations wasn't really an act of rebellion but one of accessibility. If God intended His Word to transform ordinary people like myself, then I should read it in the language I actually speak.

The biggest change was the way in which I was reading and encountering Scripture. Now I was reading out of curiosity with a newfound hunger for truth, actual truth. Combined with an easier-to-understand translation, real growth began to happen. I began thinking for myself, relying on the Holy Spirit to guide me, rather than accepting the meaning I had been supplied all of my life.

When you start reading the Bible and asking yourself, “What does this actually mean?” the results may surprise you. The 2x2 church culture very subtly discouraged comprehension, which forced a reliance on the workers for interpretation.

As I continued studying, I slowly realized that my dependence on the workers wasn't merely cultural—it was theological. I never would have explained it as having a dependence on the workers, because I truly didn't believe that I did. However, I had always assumed that workers were uniquely equipped to explain Scripture because they had devoted their lives to the ministry. But I eventually discovered that this wasn't simply an unspoken assumption; it was rooted in one of the foundational teachings of the 2x2 church movement itself.

This idea is a proven fact of history within the 2x2 church and is referred to as the Living Witness Doctrine (LWD), which was firmly in place by 1907. The LWD is a belief that God normally brings

people to saving faith through a minister (in the 2x2 church's case, a worker), not simply through reading the Bible or hearing the gospel from any ordinary Christian.

While members are encouraged to invite others to meetings, conversion is understood to occur through the ministry of the workers. Your own evangelizing is not enough for conversion under this teaching. This is why, as members, we were expected to invite "outsiders" to gospel meetings instead of simply sharing the gospel ourselves. Your testimony might spark interest, but the workers were viewed as God's appointed instruments through whom the Holy Spirit would bring someone to faith. The LWD supported exclusivity from the very beginning, creating a monopoly on the true gospel while rejecting other churches. The living ministry becomes the exclusive channel through which Christ's saving work is applied.

In light of this, maybe my first act of rebellion was believing that God could speak through His Word without requiring someone else to explain every page. The greatest change wasn't the translation in my hands or what version I used in meetings. It was the freedom to believe that the Holy Spirit was much more powerful than I ever imagined—that He could teach me through the Scripture without outside help.

The abuse scandal didn't destroy my faith or cause me to "lose out" as many have said; it caused me to discover Scripture in a more authentic way.

And in doing so, I realized that nearly every part of the 2x2 system—from the way we read the Bible to the way we viewed the ministry—had taught me to trust the workers more than my own encounter with God's Word.

We do not need the workers to stand between God and us. Scripture tells us there is "one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Faithful pastors are not mediators; their role is to point us to Christ—not become the channel through whom we must reach Him.

A faithful ministry should never ask believers to place their confidence in the ministry. Its purpose is to point beyond itself to Christ. The moment a ministry becomes indispensable—when people begin to believe they need a particular group, a particular preacher, a particular version of the Bible, or a particular institution to reach God—it has stepped into a role that belongs to Christ alone.

If an easier-to-understand translation of the Bible helps someone see Christ more clearly, then it is something to celebrate, not fear. God's Word is powerful enough to speak for itself, and the Holy Spirit can and will lead in the right direction when we sincerely seek Him.