

Beth Moore

An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod June 2015

History, Beliefs, Practices

Identity:

Beth Moore is a Christian author and speaker whose books, Bible studies, and seminars on Christian faith and life are intended primarily for women. She is the founder of Living Proof Ministries, an organization dedicated to biblical literacy.

Founder:

Beth Moore (1957-)

Statistics:

Beth Moore has written more than 20 Bible studies and books on Christian spirituality. She has presented seminars in all fifty states. A 2008 simulcast of a Beth Moore seminar in Louisville, Kentucky, reached an audience of 70,000 participants in 715 locations.¹

History:

Beth Moore, born Wanda Elizabeth Green, grew up in a Christian home, describing herself then as a Christian, but also as “a very unhealthy person who made lots of destructive choices.”² She earned a degree in political science from Southwest Texas University and later received an honorary doctorate in humanities from Howard Payne University. Beth married Keith Moore in 1978. They have two daughters, Amanda and Melissa.³ After attending a Bible doctrine class at her church, Beth developed a love of Scripture and the desire to teach other women about God’s Word. Her first published Bible study was *A Woman’s Heart: God’s Dwelling Place*.

Moore is a member of First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, and a leading author for LifeWay Christian Resources, the publishing house of the Southern Baptist Convention. She founded Living Proof Ministries in 1994. According to its website, Living Proof Ministries is “dedicated to Biblical literacy and a commitment to guide believers to love and live on God’s Word. Every tape, book or product offered through the ministry is developed to encourage people to know Christ through His Word.”⁴ Living Proof Ministries believes that salvation is found in Jesus Christ and that Scripture is “God-breathed.” The organization actively supports “the unity of all believers eclipsing all denominational, economic, or ethnic diversities.”⁵ In 2004 Moore started a radio ministry, “Living Proof with Beth Moore.”⁶ She teaches a

¹ Jennifer Davis Rash, “Beth Moore Simulcast Reaches 70,000,” *Baptist Press*, August 15, 2008, <http://www.bpnews.net/BPnews.asp?ID=28704>.

² Jane Johnson Struck, “Beth’s Passion,” *Today’s Christian Woman* (September 2005), <http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2005/september/1.30.html>.

³ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Why Women Want Moore,” *Christianity Today* (August 2010), 23,

⁴ Living Proof Ministries, <http://www.lproof.org/AboutUs/default.htm>.

⁵ Living Proof Ministries, <http://www.lproof.org/AboutUs/OurMission/default.htm>.

⁶ Moore’s radio show is available at OnePlace.com.

televised Bible study on the program “Life Today with James and Betty Robison” and Bible studies at First Baptist Church in Houston.

Texts:

Beth Moore has written numerous books and Bible studies, including *To Live is Christ: The Life and Ministry of Paul* (1997); *Living Beyond Yourself* (1998); *Breaking Free* (1999); *Believing God* (2004); *Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy* (2006); *So Long Insecurity* (2010); *Here and Now, There and Then* (2010 DVD study of the book of Revelation) and *James: Mercy Triumphs* (2011).

Beliefs and Practices:

Concerning Christ’s redeeming death, Beth Moore writes, “The work of Calvary is finished. No more payment for sin is necessary. He did it all by Himself on the cross. We can’t earn it. We can’t add to it. It is finished.”⁷ Baptism is described by Moore as “a mark to demonstrate the salvation Christ has given and the receipt of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

Moore describes her views on the end times and Christ’s return as dispensational premillennialism.⁹ She believes that before or during a seven year period of earthly tribulation, Christians will be “raptured” in a secret return of Christ. At that point, the judgments and promises of God will “fall on unrepentant humanity and national Israel.”¹⁰ Following a seven year tribulation, she believes that Christ will return with his saints to reign on earth for a thousand years. At the end of this millennial period, Satan and his forces will rebel and suffer defeat. The resurrection of unbelievers, the last judgment, and eternal life will then follow.¹¹

In her teaching Moore encourages readers to study God’s Word. She also speaks of receiving “an authentic word from God” within her spirit:

In my own attempts to distinguish my desires from an authentic word from God, I find that what God reveals to me in my ‘spirit’ is deeper than what I feel or sense in my emotions or, for the sake of distinguishing the difference, my ‘soul.’ In other words, when I can put aside my feelings for a moment, what I still consistently sense as the leading of the Holy Spirit I assume to be a clearer word from God. Feelings come and go, but do I have a greater certainty at a deeper level that I have heard from God on a matter?¹²

Moore does, however, warn against promoting personal agendas or opinions as a supposed “word” from God: “Sometimes we can assume we’ve walked with God so long that every ‘religious’ thought we have is from Him. Untrue.”¹³

In her desire to have readers and listeners experience a dynamic relationship with Christ and a life free from the burden of past sins, Moore emphasizes the individual’s free will with regard to salvation and

⁷ Beth Moore, *To Live is Christ: Joining Paul’s Journey of Faith* (Nashville: B&B Publishing Group, 2001), 33.

⁸ Moore, *To Live is Christ*, 148.

⁹ See the discussion of dispensational premillennialism on pages 3-6 of the 1989 report of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The End Times: A Study of Eschatology and Millennialism*, available at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=417>.

¹⁰ Beth Moore, *Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2006) 151.

¹¹ Moore, *Daniel*, 169.

¹² Moore, *Daniel*, 189.

¹³ Beth Moore, *James: Mercy Triumphs* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2011), 111.

sanctification. She writes, “According to 2 Peter 3:9, God doesn’t want anyone to perish. Rather, He wants everyone to come to repentance. He gave us a will so we could choose whether or not to accept His invitation, but God purposely created us with a need that only He can meet.”¹⁴ Becoming a liberated person comes “only to those who have allowed God to create in each of them a new and clean heart.”¹⁵ Biblical characters provide examples of cooperation with God and the resulting fulfillment. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was full of God’s grace and power, “not just because he accepted Jesus as Savior, but because he surrendered his whole life to Christ’s will and purpose. The more Stephen poured out his life for Christ, the more Christ poured His life into Stephen.”¹⁶ Lydia, the convert described in Acts 16, “made herself available to God. Because she did, ‘the Lord opened her heart to respond’ (vs. 14).”¹⁷

Moore encourages readers to seek a satisfying relationship to Christ: “Jesus is absolutely satisfying ... However, I believe that a person can receive Christ as Savior, serve Him for decades, and meet Him face-to-face in glory without ever experiencing satisfaction in Him ... Is your soul, your spirit, your own inmost place—the real you—entirely satisfied with Christ?”¹⁸ She says of the Savior, “The Jesus who graces our midst is greater than we have yet learned, more able than we have yet seen, more willing than we have yet dreamed, infinitely worthier than we have yet risked.”¹⁹ Moore wants her readers to have a successful Christian life, full of “divine power” and the realization of God’s personal promises.²⁰ She writes, “Certainly those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior have received the automatic and glorious result of eternal salvation. However, the primary reason God left us on earth after our salvation was for our Christianity to ‘succeed’ right here on this turf. We’re getting by but getting by was never our destiny. We were meant to be profoundly effective. Why have we accepted average?”²¹ Although the Promised Land and Sabbath rest “culminate in heaven,” Moore suggests that an earthly Promised Land also exists for her readers, a place “where God’s personalized promises over your life become a living reality rather than a theological theory.”²²

A Lutheran Response:

Moore rightly encourages her readers to trust in Christ for eternal salvation and to grow in faith through the study of God’s Word. She regards Baptism as a sign or mark of faith, but Holy Scripture teaches us that Baptism is not merely a symbol. It is a means of grace, a “washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

The dispensational premillennialism promoted by Moore contradicts Lutheran teachings on the end times. The Lutheran Confessions speak against the belief “that before the resurrection of the dead the godly will take possession of the kingdom of the world, while the ungodly are suppressed everywhere.”²³ On the Last Day, Jesus Christ will return, not secretly, but openly “with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him” (Rev.1:7). Believers and unbelievers alike will be raised from death on that day, believers to “the resurrection of life” and unbelievers to “the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29). All those who trust in Christ will live,

¹⁴ Beth Moore, *Breaking Free: Discover the Victory of Total Surrender* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 65).

¹⁵ Moore, *Breaking Free*, 251.

¹⁶ Moore, *To Live is Christ*, 38.

¹⁷ Moore, *To Live is Christ*, 113.

¹⁸ Moore, *Breaking Free*, 36-37.

¹⁹ Beth Moore, “Unrolling the Scroll of Freedom,” *Christianity Today* (March 2015), 51.

²⁰ Moore, *So Long Insecurity*, 242.

²¹ Beth Moore, *Believing God* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2004), 2.

²² Moore, *Believing God*, 4-5.

²³ The Augsburg Confession, Article 17, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 51.

not on this earth for a thousand years, but for all eternity in the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

While Moore may desire “a clearer word” from God, the Lutheran Confessions warn against seeking revelation apart from the Word of God, speaking against those “who imagine that the Holy Spirit is not given through the Word but is given on account of certain preparations of their own, for example, if they sit idle and silent in dark places while waiting for illumination”²⁴ Moore rightly cautions against promoting personal agendas as a divine word. God warns against such self-made prophets: “But ‘the burden of the Lord’ you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man’s own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God” (Jer. 23:36).

Moore teaches that people have the free will to accept or reject salvation. As Lutherans, we believe that human beings have free will concerning “things below,” that is, in earthly matters, but not in “things above,” that is, in matters of salvation: “Concerning free will it is taught that a human being has some measure of free will, so as to live an externally honorable life and to choose among the things reason comprehends. However, without the grace, help, and operation of the Holy Spirit a human being cannot become pleasing to God, fear or believe in God with the whole heart, or expel innate evil lusts from the heart. Instead this happens through the Holy Spirit, who is given through the Word of God.”²⁵

We are born anew in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. After our renewal we cooperate with the Spirit in bearing the fruit of good works, but this cooperation is carried out only in the Spirit’s power:

It follows from this, as has been said, that as soon as the Holy Spirit has begun his work of rebirth and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that on the basis of his power we can and should be cooperating with him, though still in great weakness. This occurs not on the basis of our fleshly, natural powers but on the basis of the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit initiated in us in conversion, as St. Paul specifically and earnestly admonished, that “as we work together with” the Holy Spirit “we urge you not to accept the grace of God in vain” [2 Cor. 6:1]. This should be understood in no other way than that the converted do good to the extent that God rules, leads, and guides them with his Holy Spirit. If God would withdraw his gracious hand from such people, they could not for one moment remain obedient to God.²⁶

Even as we bear the fruit of good works, we are acceptable to God only through the righteousness of Christ: “Instead, only the righteousness of the obedience, suffering, and death of Christ, which is reckoned to faith, can stand before God’s tribunal. Even following their renewal, when they already are producing many good works and living the best kind of life, human beings please God, are acceptable to him, and receive adoption as children and heirs of eternal life only because of Christ’s obedience.”²⁷ We do not, of our own free will, make ourselves “available to God,” or surrender to Him, for God does not rely on our availability but on His call: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (John 15:16).²⁸

Moore at times invites readers to question their faith and their satisfaction with Christ. For example, at the beginning of one book she asks:

²⁴ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article 13, *The Book of Concord*, 220-221.

²⁵ Augsburg Confession, Article 18, *The Book of Concord*, 50.

²⁶ Solid Declaration, Article 2, *The Book of Concord*, 556-557.

²⁷ Solid Declaration, Article 3, *The Book of Concord*, 567-568.

²⁸ See also Romans 9:10-16; Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:15-17)

Is it working? Your belief system, that is. Is it really working? God's intention all along has been for the believer's life to work. From divine perspective toward terrestrial turf, God meant for His children to succeed ... Are our Christian lives successful? Are they achieving and experiencing what Scripture said they would? ... "Why are we doing everything we can to convince others to do something that hasn't worked terrifically well for us? Why won't some of us admit that for all practical purposes the present belief system of most Christians isn't working?"²⁹

In another of her books, Moore asks, "Have your insecurities bothered you for more than ninety days? Mine have. Then they've been chronic. Enough said."³⁰ Moore describes a reader who confessed the burden created by this approach: "A darling woman approached me and said, 'Beth, I did *Breaking Free* three times and I still have the same stronghold.' She wasn't the first person who'd told me something like that." In response, Moore asked the woman, "'But did you actually do what the Scriptures said?'"³¹ In contrast to Moore, the Lutheran Confessions stress that our attempts to achieve such "spiritual success" by our own efforts will only end in failure and despair because we can never perfectly obey the Law's demands: "[I]f we had to believe that after our renewal we must become acceptable not by faith on account of Christ but on account of our keeping the law, our conscience would never find rest. Instead it would be driven to despair. For the law always accuses since we never satisfy the law."³² We have forgiveness and freedom only through faith in Christ Jesus (John 8:36; Rom. 7:24-25).

To give her readers guidance in spiritual growth, Moore may provide lists and steps to follow. For example, she comments, "Five obstacles block our access to the benefits God wants for us," or "God intends five benefits to be the daily experience of every child of God."³³ In another book she suggests, "Once you familiarize yourself with the three faith actions, you'll need a time frame in which to practice them... Three months is another effective time period for developing a new approach to life. Pray about it and stick with it for the season God and you set. If you forget and blow the faith practices one day, get back to them the next."³⁴

There is better help to be found—for this earthly life and for eternity—in two steps found in the words of our Lord Jesus, steps accomplished by the Spirit at work in the Word: "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The apostle Peter lists qualities marking an effective and fruitful Christian life (2 Peter 1:5-8), followed by just one step for those who lack those qualities—the remembrance of forgiveness (2 Peter 1:9). Our Christian faith "exists in repentance, that is, it is conceived in the terrors of the conscience that experiences the wrath of God against our sin and seeks forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin. In such terrors and other afflictions, this faith ought to grow and be strengthened."³⁵ Our hope in God's promises is not merely a "theological theory." We have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). The saints who grew strong in faith in the midst of trouble and trials did not long for an earthly Promised Land. They trusted the promises of God and looked for something better to come:

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth... But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13, 16).

²⁹ Moore, *Believing God*, 1-2.

³⁰ Moore, *So Long Insecurity*, 22.

³¹ Moore, *James*, 78.

³² Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article 4, *The Book of Concord*, 148)

³³ Moore, *Breaking Free*, 24 and 253.

³⁴ Moore, *Believing God*, 29.

³⁵ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, *The Book of Concord*, 142.

For Further Reading:

Bailey, Sarah Pulliam. “Why Women Want Moore,” *Christianity Today* (August 2010), 21-25.

Disston, Susan. “‘Believing God’ by Beth Moore,” *Modern Reformation* (November/December 2005), 36-38.

Moore, Beth. “Unrolling the Scroll of Freedom,” *Christianity Today* (March 2015), 48-51.

Links and Websites:

Living Proof Ministries

www.lproof.org

CTCR document, *A Lutheran Response to the “Left Behind” Series* (2004) (teachings on the end times)

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=406>

CTCR document, *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* (1989)

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=417>

CTCR Evaluation of God’s Learning Channel (see the discussion of teachings concerning the modern nation of Israel)

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=379>