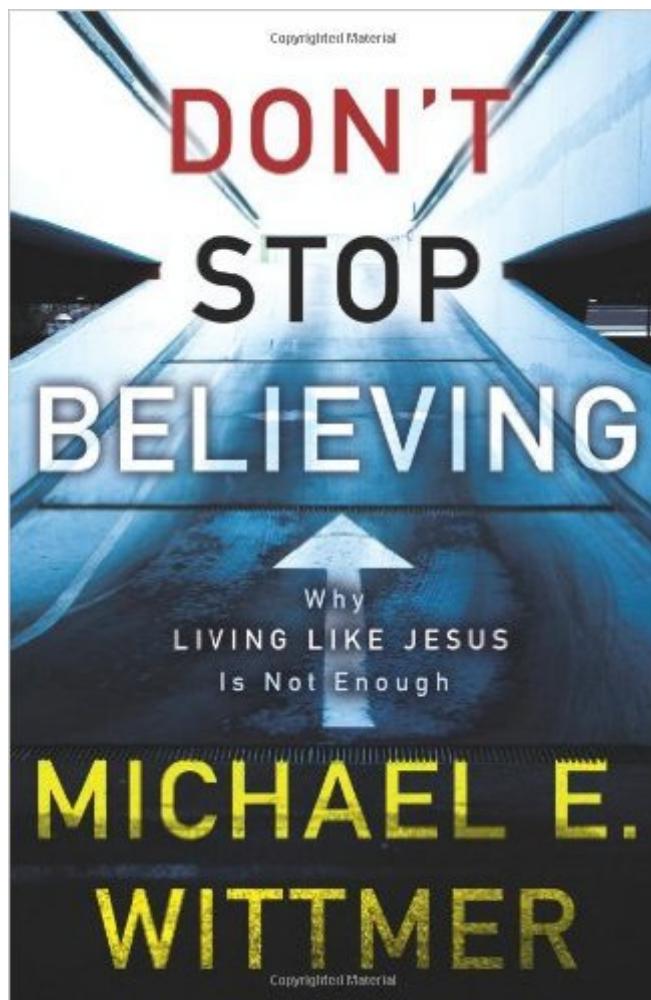


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# Don't Stop Believing: Why Living Like Jesus Is Not Enough



## **Synopsis**

Must you believe something to be saved? Does the kingdom of God include non-Christians? Is hell for real and forever? These are big questions. Hard questions. Questions that divide Christians along conservative and liberal lines. Conservatives love their beliefs and liberals believe in their love. Each pushes the other to opposite extremes. Fundamentalists imply that it doesn't matter how we live as long as we believe in Jesus, while some Emergent Christians respond that it doesn't matter what we believe as long as we live like him. Theologian Michael Wittmer calls both sides out of bounds and crafts a third way that retains the insights of each. He examines ten key questions that confront contemporary Christians and shows why both right belief and right practice are necessary for authentic Christianity. Here is an urgent reminder that best practices can only arise from true beliefs. Genuine Christians never stop serving because they never stop loving, and they never stop loving because they never stop believing.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Ever feel like you don't fit in with either 'side' in todays Christian controversies? Do your conservative friends think you might be teetering on the edge of liberalism, while your liberal friends think you are way too sympathetic to the concerns of conservatives? Ever feel that you are just as disgusted by postmodernism at certain times as you are by modernism at other times, albeit for different reasons? Well if those sentiments resonate for you, as they do for me, Michael Wittmer can relate, and is trying to work out a deep, Biblically grounded, culturally aware third way forward which

embraces the good of each side while critiquing their shortcomings. To articulate this way forward Wittmer (professor of historical theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and author of "Heaven is a Place on Earth" a brilliant examination of the new creation) has recently written a second book, "Don't Stop Believing: Why Living Like Jesus is Not Enough". In his newest work Wittmer eruditely works through some of the most controversial issues in Christian thought today, such as whether or not we need to believe specific things to be saved, if people are basically good, the ethical issues of homosexuality, the controversies of whether penal substitution is divine child abuse, and whether it is even possible to know God or his word in any real sense. In examining each of these issues (and more) Wittmer steers a path between the extremes of both sides, as he puts it "conservatives fear that postmoderns don't care enough about doctrine, and postmoderns think that conservatives don't care enough about people. Conservatives say we must believe in Jesus, while postmoderns say it matters most that we live like him.

Michael Wittmer feels trapped in the middle. To one side are conservative Christians demanding lockstep allegiance to narrow doctrinal statements--statements so detailed that they insist on specific theories of the end times or specific understandings of the spiritual gifts. Such people interpret doubts, questions, or appreciation for other viewpoints to be the first signs of an inevitable slide to liberalism. On the other side are postmodern Christians who question many traditional assumptions--or maybe even every traditional assumption--but who go about it in ways that discredit their arguments; they offer new and novel interpretations of key Scripture texts and refuse to state exactly what they believe. To the one side are those who want to believe like Jesus while on the other are those who want to live like Jesus; to the one side are those who love their beliefs while to the other are those who believe in their love. Each position is polarizing and each position seems to offer something less than a robustly biblical faith. Wittmer's position on the conflict between conservatism and postmodernism shows itself in the book's subtitle: "Why Living Like Jesus Is Not Enough." A professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, he is clearly not a person who has recklessly jettisoned theology in order to pursue theology-free living like Jesus. This book is his measured reaction against the postmodern tendency to live like Jesus at the expense of sound theology. "My goal," he says, "is not to define a certain segment of Christianity but merely to examine the specific questions that many postmodern Christians are asking." The book, he says, is a friendly warning that rejecting abuses may well lead to a slide into equal and opposite errors.

The emerging church may have mostly died, but not their questions. Their questions and perspectives show up on blogs and among the usual suspects - but they also show up among our kids, in the most conservative of circles, among people who have never read a Brian McLaren book in their life. A lot of these questions come from a new cultural mindset that is sweeping through the church. A new generation is trying to correct the mistakes and blind spots of earlier generations, and they just see things differently. I saw this in a young crowd recently. The crowd was young and somewhat conservative, but had serious questions that didn't fit the conservative mold. How should we respond? We could dismiss these concerns and questions, but this would be wrong. They are important questions. A lot of people have them, and we can't wish them away. Besides, many of their concerns contain insights that we need to hear. We need to face these issues, and that's where *Don't Stop Believing* by Michael Wittmer comes in. Wittmer is a professor of systematic and historical theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. He is conservative, but he understands the questions. "I am caught in the middle," he writes. "This book attempts to bring both sides together, eliminating the extreme views of each party and uniting them around a biblical center." Wittmer tackles the tough issues: tolerance, deeds vs. creeds, original sin, homosexuality, the legitimacy of other faiths, hell, truth, the meaning of Jesus' death, and the truthfulness of the Bible, and more. What I like about Wittmer is that he deals with the issues honestly and thoughtfully. No cheap shots. No casual dismissal of legitimate questions. No straw men.

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