

## "Hair on Fire?" Pt 1

*Hair on Fire?*

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Okay, we're going to pray and then we'll jump into the class. So let's pray. Oh behold. He says, "I'm looking for my brood and now they commit this."

Let's pray.

*Lord God in heaven, thank you so much that you have walked with us through the week, since last week, that you've been with us and preserved us. Thank you, Lord for the colors that are starting to come out, cardinals coming out and flowers blossoming, and we thank you for the beauty that you bestowed upon creation, upon our earth. But thank you for keeping us and preserving us in health. We pray for those who are still struggling physically, those who are dealing with health issues, continue to pray for ?? who goes through treatments and others, and we pray that you would sustain them and strengthen them and grant them recovery. Lord, bless us in our time as we talk for the next couple of weeks on how we should look at the media and how we should think about it and how we should respond to it and work our way through it, Lord. We pray that you would guide us and that you would lead us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

All right, so we're doing a short series. It's will last for sure two weeks. It could last three weeks. It depends on you. Somebody has already prepped. They got me their bumper sticker, "The media is the virus," you know? So yeah. It was pretty funny. I'm calling this "Hair on Fire." You can see the tagline. You're going to hear this so much you're probably going to get sick of it, but validate before you palpitate and authenticate before you propagate and that's really, in the end, where we want to come back to you over and over again, okay? And all this will be online, watching it. This is being recorded if technology doesn't fail us, is it does often. It's being recorded and we'll actually have it out there and so forth.

So let me begin. Okay, yeah, let me begin just a little bit upfront. I've been thinking about this actually for a year, actually longer, but this last year I thought about it even more, and then something happened in January that I found out about. I didn't know anything about it until January, that really piqued my interest. IF you can't read this, just listen and I'll tell you the story. I won't tell you the guy's name because things are still going on in reference to other issues, but this fellow lives up north. He's a distant relative of mine, though he's in a different branch of the family. His branch of the family, and my branch

of the family in the late 1800s split, mine went south and ended up in Oklahoma, his stayed where it was at. In July 2019, he was accused of stealing over \$350.00 in cash and assets from a woman that he was close to and that he had treated like family, who treated him like family. The police, the District Attorney, the courts got involved. He ended up spending months in jail before any court date and the local paper publicized it as big news.

Well, the case ground on for well over a year, about a year and a half, and after time and court appearances, it became glaringly evident that he had not done any of the things he had been accused of, and he was cleared of all charges. He was actually cleared and never even went to a jury trial or any of those things, the District Attorney finally said, "There's nothing here." But when his father tried to have the same media that had publicized all the arrest charges as big news, when the father tried to have that same media source publicize that all the allegations had been dropped and he was cleared of all of the accusations, the media folks rebuffed him on the grounds that his exoneration was not news. I don't know about you, but I think that would be great news. You know, I'd want to put that in the paper. It took more than two months before a larger newspaper in a neighboring state finally published the story and recounted that the court judge had exonerated him of all charges.

Now that's just one episode, that was in the back, I mean, just thinking about what we're going to look at was into my head and then this all happened and I've talked to him and read the news stuff and just always like, that's it. It's not news, so we're not going to publish. You know, this is news, we're going to publish it. This is not news, we're not going to publish it. Which, by the way, should caution us whenever we read the news. You know, whenever you see, how many times have you seen accusations in the paper, "So-and-so was charged with child molestation," but you never rarely ever see, "So-and-so, the charges against So-and-so were all dropped?" Have you ever? You almost never see that second article that you definitely need to see in those cases.

So anyway, that gives you a little bit of kind of a personal story background there. The incident is disappointing on several levels, but it draws to mind how easy it is to forget that the news sources are geared toward "is this news?" They're geared toward that or "is this not news?" It's not news, we're not going to publish it. If it is news, we're going to publish it. They're just geared towards that and so those items that fall into the "not news" may well change opinions and reputations, but further, this story that I just recounted to you exposes a problem even among people who are reading the news. It's increasingly becoming a disturbing trend in American society. It may have always been a trend, but it's one that that I've seen increasingly and that's this: accusation equals guilt. Okay? I mean, how often do you see them? If you're on Facebook, right in your face every time you turn around, accusation equals guilt. You see new sources that just comes out that way. And so I hear Christians doing that same thing, falling into that, that accusation equals guilt. They won't use those terms, but they'll say, "Well, he was accused." Well, that doesn't mean anything. He was just accused, right? So accusation equals guilt is what's often presented and that's exactly what this distant relative had to face in the small

town he was in because he was accused but even though he's been exonerated, many people in the town just will have nothing more to do with him because he's guilty.

[unintelligible]

No, I'm not saying there's wasn't a charge. There were charges there. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

[unintelligible]

Yeah or not. Yep. Yep. Well, accusation doesn't equal guilt.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah. Unless there's, I know, but if there's, unless there's an admission from that person, we would probably stand off and wait until it actually gets vetted out and tried and so forth. Yeah, yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes, the press issue, legal issue, and it becomes a moral issue when we fall, when we go into that mode, when we assume accusation equals guilt, then it becomes a moral issue and that's our problem.

[unintelligible]

Exactly. Yes, and that's what we need to remember, especially in America. We're a very highly litigious society, right? You've probably heard that before. So there are lots of accusations, you know, that get thrown around often. Yes?

[unintelligible]

Yep. Yep.

[unintelligible]

Right, right, right. But that's a good point right there, Moose, you're making, you're making one of my points, Moose, that we'll get to in just a minute but think about that, it's not until the jury trial and at the end that's where that comes out.

[unintelligible]

Did he?

[unintelligible]

Right, right, yeah, yeah, right, right. So here's the deal. So accusation, which is where accusations are made and people automatically assume or advocate guilt, okay? And so that leads then to the next one, where does that lead to? Does anybody know? What's the trap that that right there, accusation equals guilt leads to? Just another little slogan if you want to use it, guilty until proven innocent. What did you say?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, crucifixion. But guilty until proven innocent. If accusation equals guilt, then we start moving into guilty until proven innocent and that's the wrong way to go, okay? That's like, I stole this from the Times, the New York Times paper but it's like pushing a rock uphill with everything pushing against you. I mean, the chances of you, it's harder and harder and harder, right? So there's the trap. So accusation equals guilt does lead to this guilty until proven innocence, okay?

There's a better way, there is a better way, but first if you got the pastoral letter this week and you read it, you will know. some of this because this will be familiar. It was in the letter, okay? The scripture being our final rule of faith and life, has quite a bit to say about wisely approaching accusations made against people. The biblical stance we're to take is the assumption of innocence rather than guilt. This is why accusations are not to be acted on except with the testimony of two or three witnesses. Anybody know what Deuteronomy 17:67 and 19:15 and 1 Timothy 5:19 say? At the mouth of two or three witnesses the thing is established, right? And our Lord Jesus mentioned that as well, okay? That that's already in scripture is an automatic assumption of innocence until proven guilty. All right, that's where that came from in our Western culture. It didn't come from rationalism, it came from biblical conception, okay? And that's where we're to be.

And so the biblical stance we're to take is the assumption of innocence rather than guilt. This is why accusations are not to be acted on except with the testimony of two or three witnesses, and even they, we'll get into this a little bit more in a minute, but even they have to be cross-examined because there can be false witnesses which leads us to the next one, this is why rotten witnesses are to be hung out to dry. Deuteronomy 19:16-21. What does scripture say about a false witness? Remember what it says in chapter 19, Deuteronomy 19?

[unintelligible]

Yes, so the level of the witness, if it was a witness about larceny, then they would receive that punishment if they're found to be a false witness. If it's a capital offense, they're to receive the capital punishment, okay? I mean that's how important this is to God, that the truth comes out like this, right, and that we don't pervert truth. So the idea that rotten witnesses are to be hung out to dry. So it means we're expected, this goes with what Moose was, kind of like what Moose was talking about, we're to suspend judgment until we have more credible facts. We don't slide into accusation equals guilt and therefore guilty until proven innocent. We're suspending judgment and we need to learn to suspend

judgment. We're not very good at suspending judgment when we read newspapers and so forth, and even then journalists are not good at suspending judgment, okay? So we all have a problem with this.

So there's that part of scripture. Before I go on, any questions or anything before I move on?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, we're going to come back to videos and stuff next week. We're going to come back to some of this next weekday, okay, and that's an important area, okay? So keep that in the back of your mind, alright?

So, oh yeah, suspend judgment and assume innocence, there is the first principle. Here is the second one: to suspend judgment and assume innocence unless guilty, unless guilt is proven beyond a reasonable doubt, okay, and I'm using a legal phrase. Beyond a reasonable doubt. It doesn't mean no doubt, but beyond a reasonable doubt. I think that's a very healthy perspective. To suspend judgment and assume innocence unless guilt is proven beyond a reasonable doubt is biblically where we're intended to begin, whether it's while reading news coverage or interacting with people we know. This is why spreading a false report is immoral in God's eyes. In Exodus 23:1, God actually equates spreading false reports, he equates that with joining hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness, right? God is really concerned about truth-bearing.

And so to ensure that we are not party to a false report, it means that we have to validate when we're reading news, for example, we have to validate and we have to authenticate. It doesn't mean we're all private detectives, and we'll get into next week more of some of the ways we can validate and authenticate, but that needs to be what we do. We don't assume. I don't care what your news source is. I don't care if you trust them to the nth degree. We have an obligation to validate and authenticate because what's one thing you know about journalists and news sources? What's one thing you know?

[unintelligible]

Well, they're biased, but why are they biased?

[unintelligible]

New sales, okay. I got all that, yeah.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah. Yeah right, now we're going to get into more of this stuff. You guys are hitting on good cylinders here, but I'm looking for one answer. What's the one thing you know about that journalist?

["He's human."]

He's human and if he's like us, which he is, guess what? He gets things wrong. Like, I mean, he's got his biases. He had a bad morning, she had a bad morning this morning, the coffee pot didn't work this morning or whatever, right? So all that's in there. They're not you know, there's no Immaculate Conception there with them, you know what I mean? I mean, they fail just like you and I fail.

I'll give you a funny example. So when we first got to Midland, TX, we were renting out one side of an Anglican church and I got to be interviewed by the religion editor of the MRT, the Midland Reporter Telegram. And she was all on our side. I mean, she was pro-Christian, pro-Jesus, pro-men. Pro. Pro. Pro. But when she got done with the article, she almost didn't put any of the other stuff we talked about in. She put in one thing and she made a big deal out of it because it was her issue, right, and it made us look like a cult. I mean, it was crazy and I said, I think I said it to Cindy or some other friends, I said, "Man, and she was our friend. I don't know what would happen if she'd been our enemy, right?" They're just as human as you and I are, and they're just as prone to mis-seeing, mis-hearing, misrepresenting accidentally even, as you and I are and we know that, we should know that and remember that when we get into what we're reading. That's why we need to validate and authenticate. If you're really concerned about an article you read, you need to stop and check other things and we'll get into that, like I said, next week.

So we want to start with innocence. When we start with innocence, it means that we won't become easily swallowed up in the wrong-headed view that accusation equals guilt. So a second principle, if you will, is for us to remember that accusation does not equal guilt. And so the right-minded position pours out of Proverbs like water gushing out of a fire hydrant. Just one example. All you have to do is just read Proverbs and you cannot miss it. But just think of Proverbs 18, comes out all these little sensible jewels. "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. It is not good to be partial to the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice. A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." And here's one that Bill actually preached on or taught on eight years ago when he was being looked at as an elder. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits."

So it's, but it's primarily verse 17 that we need to look at that gives us some direction here of where we're headed. "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." Not only are we supposed to suspend judgment, assume innocence, and eschew the accusation equals guilt mindset, but we should also be cross-examiners of the news and the information we're choosing to hear, and that means we should be asking good questions of our sources and of ourselves. Okay, we've got to cross-examine a little bit ourselves as well. And so we're going to be about asking good questions of our sources and of ourselves.

So, going a little bit beyond scripture here but I think this is a really very helpful position. To ask good questions will require us to slow down and not respond reactively, to not make immediate assumptions. For example, I really like a maxim called Hanlon's razor and it goes like this: never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence. Now that's actually Napoleon Bonaparte's rendition of that statement. Hanlon actually said: never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by neglect. I like both of those, right? But once you have that in your head, I mean, it changes the way you think about what you hear in public. You know, when governors, I'll just give you an example without going into detail. When governors make decisions and proclamations, I doubt most time it's because they have malice in their heart and they want to wipe out one specific group or shut down one specific group. I assume first off, unless I know otherwise, that it's just incompetence and neglect, right? And that usually gets teased out really well. You begin to realize that when you start noticing that their declarations are not really about one group, but it's actually everything that fits within this paradigm or this standard they have set up, and then it makes no sense and you just go, "They're weird. They're making not the best of decisions at times," right? So I mean, that's just my assumption.

So I think that Hanlon's razor helps us to be biblical in the sense of we hear a case, so we hear charges or accusations, it sounds good, but then we need to go and cross-examine, okay? And so I think that that's a good place to begin. This maxim gives us one of the questions that we should ask: was this, whatever is being recounted in the media or whatever you think about the journalists, how they're reporting it, whatever, was this really a malicious action, or is it more likely a result of incompetence? So here's the big sign. Hanlon's razor. I actually printed this out and gave one to West and put one on my wall in my library. It's just a really, it's a very healthy tool.

So let me give you some funny examples here just cause you need a laugh. All right, so these are real headlines. I looked this up. Here are real headlines. "State population to double by 2040. Babies to blame." I mean, okay, that's pretty funny. I think Moose and Ben will like this one a lot, "Federal agents raid gun shop, find weapons." Now this is more of an opinion piece but this was pretty cute, "One armed man applauds the kindness of strangers."

[unintelligible]

Yes. "Statistics show that teen pregnancy drops off significantly after age 25." Yeah, yeah, and again, Moose will really appreciate this one, "Homicide victims rarely talk to police." They're always stonewalling the police. I mean, even just the silly things and you realize, "Ah, they're just human," right? And they do human things and funny headlines could be that. By the way, none of this is to take away the more serious stuff that we'll actually get into more deeply next week in some other areas.

So let's talk about different kinds of reports, and some of this goes along with some of the things you guys have already said just a minute ago. Let's talk about different kinds of

news reports. There's the sensational or attention grabbing news reports. So this was a real headline, "A NASA probe may have found signs of life on Venus 40 years ago." And then when you read the article, it's not signs of life, it's some gas or something that usually comes when there's microbes. But that's not a sign necessarily of life. In fact, this is in the Scientific American, six weeks later they came back and actually wrote another article thankfully that retracted that and said, "Well, the scientists that said all this are now backing off and saying it really is not a sign of life, it's just stuff, you know, that's out there," right? So, but there is that sensational attention-grabbing aspect.

Okay, why would there be a sensational attention-grabbing aspect of headlines and news articles? Why would they want that? Huh? Why they wanted you to read it? To sell, right because you know, the more people read your article, then the more statistics you can hand to advertise and advertise for your advertising, your clients to say, "See, this is why you need to advertise with our paper and our journalists are all hungry and we need the money." You know? I mean, that's nothing malicious in that, that's what you call free market. All of you capitalists, you should be going, "Yeah, okay, I got it. I got that figured out." Right? So those things happen. It doesn't excuse this kind of stuff, but it's good for us to remember that as we're looking at these headlines and whatnot that there's a lot, there's several times, not all the time, not even a majority of time, but there are several times it's intended to draw you in so you'll look.

Now you see the worst kind when you see online media stuff. They have what they call clickbait, right? So I have even, I was telling West, showing West this article I have that shows all the right lines to use in your headline to get more people to click on your article, right? That's clickbait, okay? Here's one from history. This is a Hearst, way back when Hearst was alive and had the New York Journal back in the late 19th century. This is not the cause of the Spanish American War, but almost every article I looked at said this had a lot to do with the Spanish American war when the USS Maine was bombed in up in Cuba, I forgot the name of the harbor it was in. It was in Havana harbor, right? So Hearst goes down there, he tells, apparently, he tells one of his reporters, "You give me the pictures, I will give you the war." Right?

[unintelligible]

Yep, right. That's yellow journalism. But this is an extreme case. What was, not to get into all of this, the politics or any of that stuff, it's funny that Teddy Roosevelt's right underneath here and if you've ever read any of his biographies, you know he was just right there with Hearst ready to go, you know. So but the point is, Hearst wanted to be, his paper to be the top dog because that means money. And so he was competing with another New York paper who was doing some of the same things. They're always in competition and so often the sensational aspect to draw readership in, okay? You just have to know that when you're looking at news articles and headlines, but there is that aspect, okay? Does that make sense? I mean, most of this you kind of go, "Yeah, I know all this." That's good. I'm glad you do.

[unintelligible]



Right. And that's how I began this. Remember that? No, that's not news. We're not going to report that, right?

[unintelligible]

Right. That's what I just said. I'm just saying that's how I began this and you're right, that's exactly right. Yeah, right. And we'll get into some of this here again, more of this next week. So if I don't hit all your stuff today, just wait till next week.

Okay. There's also assumptions in reporting. Here's an example. So this was a, I mean, this was on, I saw this in the paper and this was the main headline on 6th of April. It said this and this is in Stats which is a medical journal or something like that also. That's where I pulled this from. But on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April it said, "One in three COVID-19 patients are diagnosed with neural psychotic conditions in the next six months, large study finds," okay? So when you read that first part of that, one in three COVID patients, what do you think of, what do you think patients means? Just it's okay, there's no right or wrong answer necessarily. Huh?

[unintelligible]

Anybody that has COVID. Anybody else? Currently sick who currently has it?

["Hospitalized."]

Hospitalized or critical patient in the hospital. Okay, anybody else? So West read it that way. When I was showing this to West, he read it your way. I read it your way because if I go to a doctor's office, I'm a patient, right? And sometimes we use the word patient, like, I do this all the time with my wife, I say to her, "You're a bad patient," right? Because she won't do what a doctor says. She's not in the hospital or anything.

So it was a big, it was kind of a fluid word, so the writer's assuming you know what she meant or he meant by patient. It's not until you get to the 5th paragraph that it's just suddenly listed, "Oh, this has to do with hospital records of 200 and some odd 1000 people. Oh, you're talking about hospital patients." But she didn't bring out and say, "Here's what I mean," okay? Well, I wasn't the only one that read it as everybody who's got COVID because the very next day CNBC, I just pulled this off the web, CNBC said, "One in three COVID survivors suffers neurological or mental disorders, study finds." So this this author, Holly, she read that the way I read it, it's here when you get to the third bullet point before you get all the way, that's the second bullet point that you finally go, "Wait, wait, wait, she misread it too." Right, the health record. "The results are based on observation study of more than 230,000 patients' health records." Well, where are health records? Usually the doctor's office or the hospital, right? So it's not until you get to that second bullet point that you realize she misstated in the headline.

[unintelligible]

I'm holding a position of innocent until proven guilty. Or instead of malicious, thinking of incompetence, which is what I assume because she's human. So I'm going to start there, okay? I have no reason to go anywhere else because when you read the article it actually contradicts her headlines because she does bring in this right here, okay? So, I think it's a valid assumption because she reports basically what's in here, which ends up saying she's referring to hospital patients. She just didn't, she just misread it.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, right, that's a good point too.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah. That's a great point. I mean, a lot of places the editor is the one who writes the headlines, so that maybe the writer may have actually been on target and the editor misread the article because he's in a hurry to get that stupid thing published.

[unintelligible]

I'm not going to tell you.

[unintelligible]

Well, it's an okay article. I was thinking, yeah, well, no wonder one in three patients have neurological problems or psychological problems because they've been in the hospital for six weeks. They're worried about finances and everything else. I mean, that part didn't come in the article, but that's as I was reading, I was thinking about that, but it's basically hospitalized patients they found this trend neuro-psychic conditions or what was the other one?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah. Some kind of mental disorders or neurological disorders.

[unintelligible]

Yes, you know, and I think I'd be with Moose, I'm tired of those homicide victims stonewalling the police and not talking to them.

[unintelligible]

Well, see, that's all in...and those are questions. That's good. Ask those questions. That's all I'm saying. Part of what I'm saying is ask those stinking questions, right? And that's how we do all the news reports.

Okay, but notice I'm going off the assumptions of reporting. It's almost clear to me that she made an assumption that's the same assumption I made about this headline on the next day, okay? So just know that when you're reading those headlines and articles, there sometimes are just assumptions. They assume you understand what they're saying and you have no idea what they're saying, and it comes out maybe 5th, 6th paragraph by which point most people are no longer reading which is unfortunate, okay?

Let's get moving on. We've got some more here. All right. There's also typically human coverage. I mean, some of you mentioned this earlier about biases. A correspondent's own enthusiasm will govern what is narrated and what is left out of the narration. It's just they're just human, okay? And so if they're really animated about something, it really comes out. Think about the gal that interviewed me and she was on our side and it really governed what she wrote. You know, it was crazy, okay?

So you have to remember that or the accounts get shaped by social media. This is something we found out, I found out as I was sort of doing all the research. Social media, news reports gets shaped by social media context, like Blogspots, Twitter tweets or Facebook posts, by what you're posting on Twitter and Facebook actually impacts several of the journalists and what they're actually writing about. I'm going to say that again because you need to realize that, that in some way you're actually part of what ends up getting reported or how it's getting reported, okay?

So here's how, this is from an article in 2015 by Dr. Swayze from Reynold's Journalism Institute in Missouri. She wrote it, she gave it then to the AP. Here's what she says. If you can see if you can't, just listen. "The authors of this study," that's [unintelligible] study of 2008, "did a content analysis of about 2,000 articles over a six-year period from the New York Times and the Washington Post." So they limited what their studies were, where the studies were, "and found that the newspapers used blogs as credible sources. Between 30," well, I mean we do. How many of us in this room who do blogs think of them as credible sources. So it's no surprise that journalists would, it's what we're doing, right? So "between 30 to 40% of the Times and Post articles cited blogs as sources." So her question is setting our agenda, who controls the news? She goes on to say in the article to show in the article how our posts on Twitter and Facebook are actually driving many, not all that, maybe not even a majority that are driving many of the news reports.

And then there's, and some of you mentioned this as well... Yes?

[unintelligible]

Sure. Sure. Yes, but you still have to validate and authenticate, yes, right.

[unintelligible]

Yes, right, right. And blogs don't have, usually do not have any kind of accountability. So even somebody who's an expert in the area, if they wrote a journal, it actually gets reviewed by a board of compatriots, whereas a blog doesn't. It gets reviewed by us and

we don't know the difference. So there's a difference there. So, but that's something to keep in mind.

Then there's outrage reporting, okay?

[unintelligible]

This was written by a guy and this is just his blog, okay, so speaking of blogs, here we go. Alright, but he was a Canadian intelligence officer, cyber security and he's got a deal called Farnam Street Media Inc, which is apparently being read and ingested pretty heavily at Wall Street, and he just made this observation. He said, "Modern media treats outrage as a profitable commodity. This often takes the form of articles which attribute malice to that which could be explained by incompetence or ignorance. We see examples of this play out in the media multiple times a day. People rush to take offense at anything which contradicts their worldview or which they imagine to do so. Media outlets are becoming increasingly skilled at generating assumptions of malicious intent. When looking at newspapers, websites and social media, it can be beneficial to apply Hanlon's razor to what we see." Anybody ever read Dan Crenshaw's book, "Fortitude"? He's the senator, yeah, senator down who's a medically retired Navy SEAL that was a congressman, congressman, yeah. Patch on his eye congressman down in Houston. In his book "Fortitude" he spends a lot of pages talking about an outrage culture, okay, and how where, what that looks like and how that responds. I mean, so I understand what he's talking about.

But you can't miss outrage reporting. I just saw one yesterday, last night, I never read Yahoo News ever. I might glance at it quickly, but I just never read it because...anyways, I just never read it, okay? So but I happened to see this article and I won't tell you what it was, but it just, I was going you're asking for a fight in this article, that's what you're asking for. You're asking to cause trouble and you're just feeding, you're fueling what's already a hot situation, I can't believe that the editors let you put this out. But they do.

But outrage reporting, and then there are inaccuracies. Bah, bah, bah, bum. So this was put out, you can see this right here. This is in a Scott Meyer accuracy matters across market assessment of these papers, and there he put it out in the Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. It was presented at a place called the Journalists' Resource at the JFK School of Government at Harvard, okay? I'm just trying to decipher that for you so you'll know where this came. So Scott Meyer says, "Even the facts can be elusive. A 2005 study of 14 local newspapers funded by the Knight Foundation found that 3/5," remember he's writing this for journalists, "3/5 of their stories contain an error. Some errors were minor, as in the misspelling of a name, others were more significant, as in the case of a misleading headline or faulty claim. None of the newspapers had a low, none of the newspapers had a low error rate. Neither stature of the paper nor market size, the study concluded, was closely associated with accuracy." Okay, I mean, but they're human, so I'm not surprised, but it's good that people are saying this from within journalism, right? They're saying we have a problem with the accuracy. We need to work on this. That's what they were doing in the in the article.

So you have to realize that sometimes there are just sheer inaccuracies. Okay? So that's where I'm going to, I'm not done, done, but I'm kind of done, okay? So that's where I'm going to stop in reference to the information. We're going to come back to this more next week. I've got a couple places that we need to go. I'm going to make a case for something that will actually challenge us to do certain things and you'll see how that works out.

But any questions or any observations or any input? Any challenges of anything you've heard thus far of these things?

[unintelligible]

Right, and that's what you keep in mind right there though it's an accident, they don't really know what they're reporting on. So you think about this and so let's move to Christianity for just a minute. Mostly of the reporters probably don't even go to church. Maybe, I don't know about a majority or not. So if you talk about the Eucharist, you talk about the Lord's Supper, they won't have a clue or just a vague notion what you're talking about. So I'm not surprised when I see them reporting stuff on Christianity and they get it wrong, right, because they don't know what they're talking about or police reports or other things. They don't know what they're talking about because they have a bachelor's degree. All right, let me say it again, they have a bachelor's degree. They have maybe a little bit of an internship, but that's it. How many of you all have bachelor's degrees and always, always are accurate in what you represent, raise your hand? okay, Scott, everybody bow. So, I mean, you get my point?

So it's not a surprise. Now listen, it's not to let him off the hook. I want them, and some are, I mean, I do assume many of them are working towards integrity, okay, I just do assume that just up front, but there are some who are working towards strengthening those accuracies, making it more accurate, but we need to know that, and we're the ones that buy the paper. Guess what? There'd be no news if we didn't buy any, if we didn't click on anything. Think about that. There would not be mostly that kind of news if it wasn't profitable, if it wasn't getting attention. You want to know why the guy from Nigeria or the woman from Nigeria was sending out all those emails about the millions and trillions of dollars that she had that she got from her dead Army general husband? And why you, "Oh my beloved, my heart warms for you." Why she sends you that e-mail? Because it works, or it did. When's the last time you saw one? It's been a long time. You know what I'm talking about? Look me in the eyes, do you know I'm talking about? Yeah, yeah. And so it worked for a season.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah. Yeah, cannibals and eating babies or something. Yeah, yeah. Just miss. Yeah. John. Go ahead.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I've read that before too, yeah.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah, it can be. Yes, John.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Finding source. Great example. Great example. There was a Virginia gun law that was coming out and all the pro-gun folks who I thought I was trusting their articles, come to find out, they didn't record the law right. They left out a whole paragraph that changed the whole thing. So going to the source documents is extremely important if, if, listen, if it matters to you. I mean, there's a lot of news stuff out there that doesn't really matter to you, right? But the ones that really matter to you, if you before your heart ruptures in a heart attack and you just die on the table, right before you palpitate, validate. Go check it out yourself, okay? That's to validate before you palpitate.

[unintelligible]

Sure. Sure. Always remember that, "I'm with the government. I'm here to help you." Just remember that. And I'm actually right. I mean, so it's not a surprise. Yes, Pam?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, right. Yeah, right, right. Right, right. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, now I'm I may not go down that road too far, but all this applies to that as well. Even Christian media. Any reports you get on this is persecution, validate it before you palpitate. Validate before you palpitate because I can tell you from experience, we don't have a clue what it's like for... I'll give you examples from Africa or from even Burma, Myanmar. We don't have a clue what it is to be tribal, okay? And so we don't realize how important tribalism is everywhere else but here. And so very often it just so happens that a tribe is Christian and is then attacked by a stronger tribe and it gets reported in our media, our Christian media as persecution when the reality is they're the wrong tribe, okay? We have to stop for a moment and we have to validate because if we're running around telling everybody, "Persecution! Persecution!" all the time, we are simply the boy who cried wolf because when it does happen, if it ever happens, when it really happens, nobody is going to believe us anyway, okay? We have to even vet our own media, Christian media, but I'm not going to go down that way too far but that's a good point.

Yeah, real quick.

[unintelligible]

It's not essentially not trusting, you're just validating. I'm assuming that the right intent is normally there and that they're somewhere in the ballpark. And you know, just like you're somewhere in the ballpark whenever you're talking to me, if you're telling me fact, right?

I mean, just like that, right? So I don't want us to be suspicious people. Of all people, we should not be the suspicious one, right? Because we know that there is real, capital T, truth. Does that make sense? And so we work from that.

Okay, real quick.

[unintelligible]

Yes, yes. Oh yeah, yeah, sure. I would disagree with the organized, but I agree that there's evil and it's in there and there's no doubt so don't ever mishear what I'm saying. I'm just giving us, as we actually look at media, there are all these other aspects as well. We're going to talk about one aspect that ends up being evil next week, okay?

But, yes, real quick.

[unintelligible]

Yes. Yes. Yeah. But discernment is exactly we're supposed to be about, but discernment does not mean suspicious. If I was, I can be discerning of everything you say without being suspicious of you. Suspicious means I doubt your motives, bubba. Like being discerning is what does Alan mean by that from his context, you know, and how do I work with that? Do you see what I'm saying?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, when you have evidence. Right, when you start having evidence, long set of evidence.

Okay, real quick.

[unintelligible]

Yes, Very good. Yes, yes. At the same time. And do you know what they said? Mark Twain and Ronald Reagan both said? Don't trust anything you read on the media, on the Internet. No, I'm just joking. That's a funny joke, sorry. Ronald Reagan and Mark Twain.

[unintelligible]

Right, right. All right, so real quick, okay, suspend judgment which does not mean no judgment. You suspend it, and it's until proven guilty. If there are reasons, if you have, you know, there are reasons to say, "No, there's something going on here that's not right," then you can make that judgment. But suspend judgments. Assume innocence. Accusation does not mean guilt, remember Hanlon's razor, don't attribute it to malice if it can be explained with incompetence. Reporters are human. So validate before you palpitate and authenticate before you propagate, okay?

So next week just very quickly as an overview, we're going to deal with another aspect of media and how to deal with it, some effects of our media, more questions to ask ourselves, and then one approach that may be helpful. So here's a prayer that I wrote in that book on the media and I want to end with this prayer, okay?

Let's pray.

*Almighty God, the lips of the wise spread knowledge, not so the hearts of fools. We acknowledge that truth can come through many voices and falsehood can appear very plausible, therefore, we implore you to direct in our time those who speak where many listen and write what many read in our country. May they do their part in making our hearts wise, our minds sound, and our perceptions clear, and our resolve righteous. O Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.*