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## Joel Osteen Issues Apology

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Joel Osteen has issued an apology for his disappointing June 20 appearance on CNN's Larry King Live program. The apology is published on the Joel Osteen Ministries Web site.

"It was never my desire or intention to leave any doubt as to what I believe and Whom I serve," he stated. "I believe with all my heart that it is only through Christ that we have hope in eternal life. I regret and sincerely apologize that I was unclear on the very thing in which I have dedicated my life."

Further: "I believe that Jesus Christ alone is the only way to salvation. However, it wasn't until I had the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview that I realize I had not clearly stated that having a personal relationship with Jesus is the only way to heaven. It's about the individual's choice to follow Him."

The statement reflected both humility and candor. "God has given me a platform to present the Gospel to a very diverse audience. In my desire not to alienate the people that Jesus came to save, I did not clearly communicate the convictions that I hold so precious," he acknowledged. He also described the interview and its aftermath as "a learning experience" and expressed his confidence that "God will ultimately use it for my good and His glory."

Mr. Osteen's statement is encouraging on several fronts. First, it is encouraging to know that the constituency of Joel Osteen Ministries was so upset about the interview. Second, Mr. Osteen's statement includes a clear and unambiguous affirmation of the exclusivity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Third, the timeliness of the statement underlines the importance of the issues at stake. Fourth, Mr. Osteen's apology is free from the evasions typical of the pseudo-apologies so often issued to the public. He did not say that "statements were made," but instead acknowledged that he had failed to communicate Gospel truth. The humility and honesty of the statement serve to fortify its authenticity.

This is a reminder to all of us who appear in the media. Statements made to an audience of millions are difficult to retract and are often impossible to correct. When Mr. Osteen writes, "I hope that you accept my deepest apology and see it in your heart to extend to me grace and forgiveness," the only proper response is to extend the very forgiveness for which he asks — and with equal humility. Other concerns can wait for another day.

SEE ALSO: The We Believe statement from Joel Osteen Ministries. My weblog entry from yesterday, The Limits of Encouragement.

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