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### The Roots: Lonnie Frisbee

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### Excerpt from a March 2005 article in the OC Weekly by Matt Coker

"Lonnie Frisbee put the freak in Jesus freak. With his long brown hair, long craggily beard, dusty clothing, scent of Mary Jane and glint of his last LSD trip in his eyes, he showed up out of nowhere, at the height of the '60s, literally on Chuck Smith's doorstep.

Smith was just another conservative Orange County pastor. He'd moved from a small church in Corona to an even smaller one in Costa Mesa, yet had impressively boosted membership from three people to more than 200...

...his front-porch meeting with Frisbee in 1968 was awash in the wonderful coincidences Christians point to as proof of God working in mysterious ways. The hippie was fresh off an LSD-juiced vision in which God told him he'd turn hordes of young people on to Christ...

...Before long, the two men bonded. Despite his misgivings about hippie hygiene, Smith was always fascinated by the peace-and-love rhetoric. And this kid's Bible knowledge impressed him...

...They went on to stand side by side off Little Corona beach, dunking thousands of young people in the chilly waters for the most informal and joyous of baptisms. At his Calvary Chapel, Smith taught about the End Times on Monday nights and Frisbee packed in the hippies on Wednesday nights. Church membership skyrocketed...

...Lonnie left after about four years as Calvary's unofficial youth pastor and, after a brief time in the Shepherding movement, wound up at the soon-to-become Vineyard Church of Yorba Linda. Same thing happened there: his presence sparked a worldwide movement. Calvary and Vineyard have each propagated about 1,000 churches across the planet...

But if you were to take a look at the written histories of Calvary, Vineyard and Harvest, you'd find barely any—if any—mention of Lonnie Frisbee" Vineyard doesn't even cite him by name, referring only to "the young man."

"It's like John the Baptist walked through Southern California," says Lake Forest historian David Di Sabatino, "and nobody wants to talk about him because he died of AIDS." Di Sabatino recently came out with a documentary entitled *Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippie Preacher*.

**Footnote:** Connie Bremer (Frisbee's wife) had a troubled upbringing and "dabbled in drugs and prostitution to numb the pain. She appreciated that Lonnie made her feel special, wanted—although she says she never had romantic feelings toward him. They lived together for a year in a big house the hippie Christians shared in the Frisco suburb Novato, but she can't remember ever so much as holding his hand. She does remember one oddball she talked to for four straight days: Charlie Manson".

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## Looking At Lonnie Frisbee: A Real Jesus Freak?

By Steve Mitchell Power To Stand Ministries

Jesus Movement historian, David DiSabatino has just released a new documentary film entitled: Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippie



Preacher and its caused quite a stir in film festivals and churches. It documents the life and times of a hippy, Lonnie Frisbee, who many believed was gifted with great power from God after being extraordinarily commissioned and sent. He became influential in the histories of two large church movements – Calvary Chapels and Vineyards, and it is alleged in the film that because he practiced homosexuality and died of AIDS, his part in the formation and growth in these churches has been marginalized and all but written out of history books.

Many testimonies weigh in with their versions of who Lonnie was and what he did and, it can be said, this film attempts to accredit Frisbee for his contributions and feats accomplished through a “powerful anointing”. The subtitle of the film even includes the phrase: “A Bible Story”

I first heard the name Lonnie Frisbee after I got ordained in Calvary Chapels in 1997. It was merely passing mention made by a pastor friend of mine and the only detail I knew was that he had been a hippy preacher that had died of AIDS. At the time I never knew any other details about Lonnie’s life.

It wasn’t until 2005, when I heard YWAM Hawaii Director, Danny Lehmann mention how God had used his friend Lonnie Frisbee in the early days of the Jesus Movement. Lehmann had been teaching some very aberrant things and promoting some unbiblical teachings and ministries and so I wondered about this Lonnie Frisbee. Danny had apparently ministered for a year with Frisbee in those early days and this film documents several elements of Lonnie’s life and ministry.

I would be somewhat shocked with what I saw when I ordered David DiSabatino’s Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippy Preacher. What follows is a look at the content of this documentary. All direct quotations are cited from the 60-minute film, the DVD “Special Features” section, or the website: <http://lonniefrisbee.com/>

## The Beginning...

The documentary opens with film footage of Lonnie baptizing multitudes on a California beach. He looks like a biblical figure, or at least the popular artistic portrayals commonly seen. He even likens himself to the famous forerunner:

“I kind of relate to down in the wilderness baptizing in the river Jordan, sometimes. It’s really neat to see how each one reacts in a different way but I can feel the presence of God comin’ down upon me and upon the person being baptized just all over the place...” (Lonnie Frisbee).

“Lonnie Frisbee was a hippy seeker who came of age during the 1960s. At the end of his quest for truth, he embraced Jesus Christ and became a Christian.” (David DiSabatino, Director).

“He became influential in the southern California evangelical scene, sparking the rise of two denominations that planted churches across the southwestern United States.” (David DiSabatino, Director).

Well, this is the claim and it very well may be true, but we need to look closer at the peculiarities of Lonnie’s “walk of faith”. This documentary is very revealing about Lonnie’s initial “experiences” as documented by his friends and ministry associates. As you will see, these give great cause for concern and are very problematic.

## Far Out, Man!

Early on, we see footage of Frisbee on stage with false teacher Kathryn Kuhlman where he describes his own idea of what God was doing:

"The church for so long has been expecting a certain mold of what a Christians should look like or what a Christian should be or what a Christian should say and God is blowing everybody's mind because He's saving the hippies and nobody though a hippy could be saved." (Lonnie Frisbee)

Mind-blowing is right! Lonnie definitely broke all the molds in his day but even in these words we see something that should be cautionary to us. I rejoice that the Lord moved in the 60s counterculture and that many hippies were saved but Lonnie's earlier assessment of the church here will be relevant to his own involvement later in his life. The "mold" that Lonnie rebelled against was broken right off the bat as the documentary recounts the tale of Frisbee's conversion. Lonnie's actual "conversion" is definitely unorthodox. Frisbee experimented with all manner of drugs, false religions, and meditation practices:

"All the things that went along with the mystic. It just wasn't quite enough for me. I kept on searching and searching." (Lonnie Frisbee).

This early search was typical of many in the hippy movement and no one at that time could be faulted for their base practices as they were yet unsaved. But then, DiSabatino introduces a problematic twist that I believe has severe bearing on Lonnie's alleged conversion account.

"One of the ironic twists of the 60s was that many openly stated that drugs, LSD in particular, played a large part of their experience in Christian salvation." (David DiSabatino, Director).

Steve and Sandy Heefner, identified on the film as "Early Hippy Christians", weigh in on this heavy phenomenon:

"I took my LSD, laid down on the floor a couple of hours and when I could get together to get up, I got up as a Christian. Its just that simple..."

Simply preposterous. One is hard-pressed to see accounts like this as any kind of true conversion. Where is the repentance of sin and the understanding of rebellion. Who preached the gospel to them? How can one be truly saved without hearing the truth of the Gospel? The Bible says:

"How shall they call on Him whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?...so then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:14,17).

In John 17:20, Jesus prayed for all who would believe in Him through the disciple's "word"; the preached gospel message.

Acts 15:7 records Peter saying: "by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe."

I do not doubt that many who have been on drugs have had spiritual experiences of many types but I am afraid that many misunderstood the reality that true regeneration or truly being converted to Christianity is antithetical to the counterfeit experiences one can be caught up in while being high. Many hippies saw the "Christian experience" as just another "trip". It may have been referred to as the "real high" and may have lasted longer than any drug or drink stupor but eventually one needed to "come down" and be sober in order to really be able to accept and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am judging no one's ultimate salvation here but I believe that many of these testimonies are extremely dubious given the fact that the alleged new converts to Christ were, in fact, stoned and in altered states of consciousness. Anyone who has done drugs can tell you that LSD and other hallucinogenic's so rampantly and consistently used can duplicate the most mind boggling and radical false realities imaginable. Meeting "Christ" on drugs is more than an ironic twist, it may very well be counterfeit, especially if the "christ" or "god" you encounter fails to tell you of **repentance** and **the gospel**. Lonnie seems to have met "Christ" on one of these trips. Here are the disturbing



details surrounding Lonnie's conversion: Lonnie's high school friend, Judy Meston, recounts:

"So we drove out to Tahquitz Falls and we hiked up- he wanted to go to the very top falls. And once he got there, he opened his back pack and he spread out- and he had LSD, and he had marijuana, and he had all of his oil paints and he had togas, and he told us to put on togas, so we did. And he proceeded to paint a picture of Jesus on the rocks, a full-sized picture of Jesus on the rock. Then he pulled out his Bible and he got into a kinda yoga position and he says 'We're gonna read the Bible now.' He was reading about John the Baptist and how John the Baptist baptized and he baptized us up at Tahquitz Falls, even though we were all on drugs..."

DiSabatino continues:

"Sometime in 1967 at the age of 17, Lonnie Frisbee took another trip into Tahquitz Canyon. There he took a hit of LSD, removed his clothing and began to pray in a relatively unorthodox but sincere manner. He would later recount that it was here that God came to him in a vision and told him of the unique role that he was soon to play."

This vision?

"He saw like the Pacific Ocean emptied out of water but filled people raising their hands and crying out to God to be saved. He says he saw a sea of humanity crying out to the Lord. He said the Lord told him that he would have a unique ministry and that he was not to be afraid." (Neal Liebig, "Pastor")

Lonnie continues:

"When the Lord called me, I was going into the desert and I was taking all my clothes off and I was going 'God if You're really real, reveal Yourself to me!' And one afternoon, the whole atmosphere of this canyon I was in started to tingle and get light and started to change and I was going 'Uh-oh!' I didn't want to be there!"

Could drugs have contributed to these special effects? Most assuredly, and with such a bent towards mysticism and **occult practice**, a young Frisbee was wide open for a dangerous visitation. None of the actualities of this account can be verified or believed to be from the True God because of the self-admitted state he was in. I've had addict friends who saw very vivid manifestations and convincing deceptions while on drugs.

"Early Hippy Christian", David Sloane reveals:

"All of a sudden the Spirit of God hit him hard and he went almost into a trance and he saw himself standing up there with a Bible and he was preaching the gospel powerfully to young people and God told him He was going to use him to bring young people to Christ."

So according to the film, a high, naked Lonnie receives a vision from a being he identified as "God" who especially selects him for a mission. Although this film is referred to as a "Bible story" and continuously makes comparisons between Frisbee and Bible characters like John the Baptist, Jesus, Samson, and David, one is hard pressed to find any such episode in the lives of these men in the Scriptures. Why is this any kind of credible testimony? Why should any true believer in Christ believe that this was anything other than a counterfeit? Both his "conversion", confrontation with God, and his subsequent alleged commission all happened while he was high on LSD. Please understand I am not judging whether Lonnie was ever saved or unsaved by his life's tragic end. All I am saying is that these details don't indicate this particular series of events to be genuine.

It is alarming to me that these testimonies were left unexplained and largely unclarified throughout this film. I just have to ask, is this

evidence we are asked to believe pointing towards a true conversion to Jesus Christ? Is this drug-addled experiential episode the real thing or could it be a counterfeit spiritual experience whose falsehood would be revealed in later fruits of Lonnie's ministry?

Director DiSabatino offers this perspective concerning whether these experiences were authentic or not:

"The history of human spirituality is full of moments like those here the recipient claims to receive a message from God, but the significance of these events is not found in the vision of light or the burning bush but rather what happens afterwards – the tremendous zeal by which the person embraces the calling. Whatever happened to Lonnie Frisbee in the canyon that day so transformed him that it shaped the course of his entire life."

First off, Lonnie's phenomenon cannot in any way be compared to Moses and the burning bush. Was Moses high when he saw that? Hardly. Secondly, tremendous zeal to embrace a "calling" as the aftermath of an experience like this is not indicative as to whether this was really God or not. Thirdly, the whole after the fact account is relegated by DiSabatino to "whatever happened to Lonnie" in the canyon and that is where we must leave it at this point. If more details were provided such as repentance from drugs and a true turning away from homosexuality then one might argue the validity of a true conversion. What DiSabatino appears to be doing is what we all must do: marginalize the glaring problems with this alleged conversion account if we are to really believe that Lonnie was so used by God as the rest of the film claims. What follows is more testimony concerning the change that Frisbee underwent after this bizarre scenario.

Lonnie himself believes he was changed:

"He just changed my life. I entered into something that the Bible calls the 'born again experience'. I was transformed on the inside. I became a new creature in Christ Jesus and the old things passed away...I wanted everybody to experience the experience of Jesus Christ. When I first turned on to drugs I thought that was the truth so I turned everybody on to drugs."

I believe Frisbee was sincere. Something had definitely happened to him. Note his constant use of "experience", the "born-again experience". The "experience" of Jesus Christ. True to many in the Jesus Movement, Christ and salvation was an experiential encounter often perceived to be totally real as a result of a heavy trip while under the influence. All that can be said is that Lonnie had an encounter but we must ask "was it genuine?" Just because he was sincere in his belief about what happened does not make it actual or genuine. If Lonnie truly met God, where was the call to repent of his drug use? If God actually came to him in his drug trip, one would think that he would be told to repent for his sins, but there is no mention of this occurring. We must be wary of anyone who claims to be commissioned by God to serve Him without being told anything about **repentance** from their sinful lifestyle.

The sad part as featured in the rest of this film is that we will have to acknowledge that not all of the old things were left behind. There just seemed to be no fruit of real repentance, therefore no credible evidence that Lonnie was really saved. The drug use didn't stop right away either as this testimony of one of Lonnie's early Bible studies shows:

"I think that Lonnie must have fixed this one particular room up. There were candles lit and everything. The room filled up with people and we had taken some LSD and he was reading the Gospel of John out loud, and we're goin' through the whole gospel. And we get to the end of it, it's the crucifixion stuff, everybody's crying, you know, and not one person left the room. And then it was over. He was a planner of experiences." (Connie Bremer-Murray, "Lonnie's Ex-wife" Special Features section)

Is he zealous? Was he sincere? Did he "do" a lot of stuff? Absolutely, but that doesn't really mean much because Christ said that by our fruits will we know someone (Matt. 7:15-20) . "A good tree bears good fruit..." (Matt. 7:17). This is not to say that we all don't struggle or that anyone is perfect. I certainly am not pointing fingers without first acknowledging my sins before God and that I fall as well. But when false teaching and erroneous belief consistently characterize someone's life and public ministry, we must be careful to just automatically attribute the power behind that person to the God of the Bible, especially if there is no repentance evident. Sadly, Lonnie's "Christian" life is



riddled with erroneous belief and what can best be described as counterfeit signs and wonders associated with false revival and the presence of sexual immorality.

## Life in the Big House

Soon after this experience, Frisbee moves to another part of California and meets a similar group of folks who have started a commune called the Big House in the Haight Asbury district. Frisbee fits right in. The leaders weigh in on some of the bizarre beliefs held by Lonnie concerning Christ. One must ask how sober or "with it" Lonnie was when he began sharing about his experiences and his newfound faith. It is hard to believe that he was able to comprehend what had actually taken place in that canyon. Ed Wise, Leader of the Big House Commune:

"Some of the times he would be talking about Jesus being from another world, coming out of a flying saucer, which is not unusual in those days."

The leaders of the Big House allegedly steered Lonnie towards a "more orthodox" understanding of the Christian faith but a major problem still remained:

"His thirst for experimentation did not stop." (David DiSabatino, Director)

Again, these terms are not descriptive of any of the men that God ever appeared to in the Bible to be given a special commission. I find it hard to believe that the very man that God had actually appeared to and personally commissioned to do mighty things could still entertain thoughts of Christ in a flying saucer or other things, especially experimentation in drugs. Again, where's the call to repent that is integral for a real relationship with God?

## "Fringe" Benefits?

This hunger in Lonnie drove him to seek out some of the stranger elements of Pentecostalism, especially in the practices of dramatic manifestations like being **slain in the spirit**, bizarre miracles, and **ecstatic utterance**. By these references I have in view the unbiblical "fringe" practices of some hyper-Pentecostal preachers and their churches where I believe Lonnie was largely influenced in how he wanted to do ministry. I believe in the Bible's accounts of men who were unable to stand in the presence of God but don't believe people falling and hitting the floor or violently thrown around in church has any connection to the biblical examples. I also believe that **God can heal** and do whatever miracles He ordains as well as even cause someone to have the gift of glossalalia, biblically defined. These gifts and practices have been abused and twisted in teaching and practice by many churches today so I need to define my terms. Lonnie's ministry, by all accounts in this film, is empathetic to the abuses mentioned above, as we will see.

Early on, Lonnie begins to teach the doctrine of subsequence, or the **baptism in the Holy Spirit** (the "second blessing" version or a derivative thereof), obviously taught to him from the Pentecostal ministers he was attracted to. This area becomes sketchy because many of these practices cannot be supported biblically and much error and heresy has emerged in churches that don't have a biblical understanding of doctrine or the gifts. The evidence exists in this film that something otherworldly seemed to accompany Frisbee's practices but we cannot be certain this was from God.

When Lonnie prayed for Steve Toth to receive subsequence,:

"I felt the Spirit of God come down upon me in such a powerful way and Lonnie was kind of encouraging me to start speaking in this unknown prayer language."

It's obvious that Frisbee has now fallen into ranks with some of these Pentecostal teachers whose ministries have been characterized by major aberrance and in some cases, abject error. Typically Frisbee was hailed to be from God because things happened when he prayed and put his hands on people. We can see the manifestations increase as his ministry grows and many testify to amazing powers coming from Lonnie as the Lord allegedly worked through him.

In these early years, Frisbee begins to embrace strange practices associated with the heresy of being able to transfer the Holy Spirit. This doctrine in its most popular form relegates the Holy spirit to an "it" or a force that can be thrown around a room, thrown on people, and hit folks with such force that they are knocked around, sometimes violently. Many people erupt into ecstatic gibberish or even animal sounds (as is the case in the Vineyards), which is a counterfeit version of tongues-speaking and completely violates the guidelines for exercising that gift as found in 1 Cor. 12-14. Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland and a host of other false teachers refer to this power as the "anointing". Again this is utter heresy and sadly, Lonnie seems to have picked up this wickedness from false teachers in his day.

[See [Tongues.. Gift of What Spirit?](#) ]

**IPS Note: It would be difficult to find a charismatic/evangelical service/program/tract/book that is not liberally sprinkled with the word 'Anointed, which has become arguably the most overused, overworked, misunderstood, misinterpreted term in the Pentecostal and Charismatic arenas. See [The Anointing](#)**

As Lonnie's popularity grew, so did a tendency for weirder stuff:

"Then at one time, Lonnie had a feeling that if he took his deerskin, of course he was a little eccentric, we probably all were, and he painted a picture, a likeness, of either Jesus or himself- its debatable. And he wore it around his shoulders and that was pretty good... But then he got the idea that if he put this sheet over people they would manifest the Holy spirit and begin speaking in other tongues. And it did - it happened that way a few times... Then he thought this is his ministry." (Steve and Sandi Heefner, "Big House leaders").

Lonnie elaborates:

"I got a deerskin to be my mantle and I painted a picture of Jesus on it and I wore it like a cape. So when I would pray for people and the Spirit of God would come on 'em, I'd take off my cape and throw the mantle over the top of them I think."

Eccentricities like this seem to characterize Lonnie's new ministry practices and also show his penchant to be influenced by some of the aberrant and bizarre fringe methodology of some Pentecostal practitioners. So where is this "steering" to better orthodoxy that supposedly happened at the Big House?

## Lonnie Marries Connie

Lonnie witnesses to Connie, a girl he had known from earlier in his life and she believes and is baptized by Frisbee. In April 1968 they were married but it wasn't all well. Lonnie gave certain indicators early on of a battle that would be with him throughout his life:

"When Lonnie asked me to marry him, at that particular time is when he told me that he was gay. He didn't say it as though he was still gay but that he had gotten saved out of that lifestyle." (Connie Bremer-Murray, "Lonnie's Ex-wife").



More on this issue later, but noteworthy in this film is the presence of quite a lot of confusion concerning Lonnie's sexual orientation. Lonnie himself seems to clarify it later in the film.

## Lonnie Meets Chuck

I appreciate the love Pastor Chuck Smith developed for the hippies and for the many he ministered to. For the most part, those who sat under his teachings for an extended period of time were taught the true gospel and many were truly saved. It was under Chuck's ministry that the Bible was expounded and truth was proclaimed and, I believe, is one of the places where many hippies, who had formerly had these wired experiences and continued to use drugs, thinking they had been truly saved, perhaps first heard the **actual message of salvation**. The Holy Spirit cut through the fog in many minds during those days and I believe God's Word was honored with the fruit of seeing many young people pass from death to life in a genuine way.

DiSabatino and the voices in the Frisbee film would have us believe that it was basically with the advent of young Lonnie Frisbee, that all of these things began to really take place. Pastor Chuck's ministry was rejuvenated and the real movement began under Frisbee's influence.

I'll say initially here that this circumstance may have been partly true although I believe that Chuck's teaching of the Word was far more instrumental in the growth and development of Calvary Chapels than was Frisbee's presence which was, at times, extremely troublesome and laden with error. I believe Pastor Chuck, who is given a rather negative light in this film should be commended for eventually separating from Lonnie because of the presence of such error that eventually came to a sort of fruition with **Wimber and the Vineyards**.

Pastor Chuck also acknowledges a power that accompanied his first meeting with Lonnie. He attributes this to the power of the Lord:

"And Lonnie extended his hand and there was such a warmth of love manifested in his greeting, I was caught off guard. There was an instant bond. There was the power of God's spirit that was very easily recognized."

Whether this was a true assessment or not we may never know. Obviously Pastor Chuck and everyone else on this video believed wholeheartedly that Lonnie was indeed truly saved and about ready to be used explosively for the Lord. All I can say is that what follows really fortifies my concerns and misgivings concerning the claim that God Himself was truly leading Lonnie's ministry. Again, I mean no disrespect and I realize that all I have to go on is what this film documents but I think my concerns will be validated.

Chuck Smith Jr., Chuck's son and pastor of Calvary Chapel Capo Beach has been rightly chastised by his father because of his involvement with and promotion of false teachings and error of **the Emerging church**. Nonetheless, he was close to Lonnie and is featured quite frequently in this film and shares several observations about Lonnie. He definitely concurs that his father and mother were enamored with Lonnie when they first met him. His mom Kay Smith gave a prophecy concerning Frisbee and he was welcomed into the ranks of ministry in the early days of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa.

[See **Footnote** For more on Calvary Chapel's recent position Paper ]

Honestly, it was a bit disturbing to see the film's still photo of Lonnie onstage with Pastor Chuck being commissioned to essentially "impact the world" as was prophesied by Kay Smith. Knowing what would occur after this, the reason for being disheartened is evident. Here's some background about that prophecy:

"There were 15 of us at the altar praying and the Spirit of God came through a prophecy with Kay Smith and said to us: 'Because of your praise and adoration before My throne tonight, I'm gonna bless the whole coast of California'... And when we started to receive the word as from God, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon us and we began to weep and the Lord began to give people visions of that

prophecy and then the Lord continued on to say that it was going to move across the United States and then go to different parts of the world..." (Lonnie Frisbee).

Chuck Smith, Jr.:

"My dad and mom were so convinced that this was a wave of God's Spirit and that all of these people coming to Christ represented the new church."

Was this prophetic word really from the Lord? Well DiSabatino and the contributors to this film would have us believe that Lonnie should truly be recognized and accredited for being used mightily by the Lord and even globally. In fact, according to this documentary, he was the reason for the big beginnings of this movement. But I think the following quote hits on the real reason for the growth of Calvary Chapels which also was present around that time:

As recounted by Henry Cutrona, "Christian Musician",:

"For the first four years I was there, all he(Pastor Chuck Smith) preached on was love, because love at that time had so many different meanings and I think Chuck hit the nail on the head. He just basically said 'God is love.'"

I have trouble believing that Lonnie Frisbee, who may have been involved even then in immorality behind the scenes, and who most definitely separated himself from the biblical direction Pastor Chuck was going in the following few years, was really the groundbreaking reason God has blessed and continues to bless many in the Calvary Chapel movement, then and now. I believe that it was the teaching of God's Word. Insofar as Lonnie towed that line and taught some truth, then God chose to work, but I think the overwhelming evidence shows Lonnie's penchant for ministry and methodology that was largely unbiblical and, if I may be so bold, downright dangerous in its subsequent manifestations.

But DiSabatino and others attribute this massive growth to Lonnie's influence and the "power" that seemed to follow him in his endeavors:

"Throughout the Bible, we are confronted with historical figures said to have held special power, granted by God to perform acts that promote faith but defy rational explanation." (David DiSabatino, Director).

While this is true, many of these giftings and callings were unique. God can certainly do miracles and work supernaturally today, but from what this film declares, any belief that Lonnie was on par with the apostles and prophets of Holy Scripture in terms of his gifting and authority should be thoroughly tested. Truth be told, I find it hard to believe with the evidence that will emerge in this documentary that Lonnie was the spiritual powerhouse/powder keg that others claimed he was. I'm afraid that abundant evidence exists that there was a hearty mixture of truth and error in his ministry and practice. More info is needed but the portrayal here is clear. Here's a few eyewitness accounts mentioned in the film:

"Early on, he was a little whacked out, but he was powerful..." (David Sloane).

Whacked out and powerful? A dangerous combination to be sure.

Eccentricities aside: "God's anointing always got on him. People tried to copy him and do what he did..." (John Ruttkay, Lonnie's Friend).

Cutrona tells of a blind man someone brought to Frisbee: "He looked at the guy and says 'In the name of Jesus Christ, you can see!' and the man got his sight back."



Kenn Gulliksen, "Pastor": "I was scared to be with Lonnie because my faith, born out of Lutheran tradition, meant that you had a certain level of Norwegian social grace involved in your relationship. To be with Lonnie was not to be safe, and everywhere Lonnie would be God was doing things."

One testimony called him a "bag of dynamite."

Debbie Kerner-Rettino, "Christian Musician", describes how Lonnie was followed by these manifestations: "These miracles and phenomenal things happened. Lonnie didn't ever try to force that..."

"I don't know anybody else who I've ever felt this way about and I'm rather skeptical today when it comes to the claims of the charismatic, but with Lonnie it was like walking with an apostle, someone who was tuned into a divine frequency." (Chuck Smith Jr.)

"I watched, people did fall down in the Spirit and then I started hearing stories about healings that lasted...He spoke his mind. He didn't care what he said. And that had a big impression on me. This guy's got the power of God. How could I deny it?" (Darrell Ballman, "Lonnie's Friend").

"I saw the power of God moving through him." (Danny Lehmann, YWAM Director, Hawaii").

This film features extensive testimonies to miraculous acts like the abovementioned. It seemed to many that Lonnie was a sparkplug and an actual conduit for the supernatural. The things others professed or taught about, Lonnie allegedly actually did. This "signs and wonders" outpouring may actually have really been that dynamic but will become a major problem in ensuing years. We must soberly evaluate what the reality may actually be. DiSabatino also leaves the interpretation and believability of these deeds and miracles open to question:

"Q: The movie recounts some events that border on the mystical. Do you really believe that Lonnie did the things that people say he did?"

DiSabatino replies:

"I am not sure there ever was a time when people did not exaggerate spiritual phenomenon. If I am not mistaken, the region of Galilee where Jesus' ministry was centered was teeming with these wonderworkers and spiritual snake oil salesman of the day. Our age is no different, and I understand the skepticism. I think it is healthy to ask questions and raise an eyebrow when someone makes such grandiose claims.

But many of the people I interviewed cannot simply be categorized and marginalized as "true believers," those folks that are so desirous to see a miracle that everything is parsed as an extraordinary event. Many of the people in the movie are skeptical of a lot of stuff in the religious world, but they believed that Lonnie was the real deal. I don't think that one should spend too much time trying to prove things pertaining to faith, since, by definition, that doesn't make much sense. But those skeptical interviews were compelling to me. And besides, whether you believe the stories or not, who cares? It is a mesmerizing story regardless." (FAQ Section from the Frisbee website: <http://lonniefrisbee.com/faq/>).

In other words, these may not be true accounts. And, by the way, it is extremely important whether or not these accounts are true, especially if Lonnie was truly the man of God others portrayed him to be. Sadly, Frisbee may have been a false "wonderworker" or even a "spiritual snake oil salesman" (I.e. dispenser of a false anointing) albeit; I don't think he was necessarily aware of it.

## Lonnie and the "Anointing"

David Sloane, "Early Hippy Christian":

"And it was almost like a fun thing to do to sit there and watch when the anointing would hit him, because it was like two different people. He was goofy and kinda almost embarrassing when he was himself and then all of a sudden almost at some point, the Spirit would hit him and this authority would come on him and he would speak with absolute authority."

Ken Fish, "Lonnie's Friend":

"If you've been near someone who's a carrier of the anointing, somehow there's something that happens as a result of that. Somehow it changes your life forever."

This is of course the all too common heresy regarding this belief in "the anointing" held by some in the third Wave movement, Word/faith movement, Vineyards and a growing number of other groups today. They get this error of the anointing "hitting" someone or that someone can be a "carrier" from false teachers and practitioners who distort and twist the Word of God. All too often and, at the origins of these heresies lie the work of demons as well, deceiving and misleading many who believe they are experiencing the true Holy Spirit. **[What Does the word means according to Scripture? See [The Anointing](#)]**

Lonnie's unpredictability and change of demeanor seemed to coincide with a manifestation of "the anointing" which again is not biblical in the way it is viewed here. I believe in situational boldness as given by the Holy Spirit but is this what is being expressed here? The testimonies point to the fact that there was far greater mystical phenomenon that surrounded Frisbee when he ministered. At least implied is this emerging belief in Lonnie's life of a forceful manifestation or eventual transference of the "Spirit" in times of ministry. Benny Hinn says his children don't recognize him and are in fact afraid of him when he is "in the anointing" and this error is quite pervasive throughout these accounts. This theology develops more as Frisbee gets involved with the Vineyards.

DiSabatino shows a few books on the anointing by false teachers like Benny Hinn and explains:

" Conservative Christians especially Pentecostals, will use the catch phrase "The Anointing" to describe these unique individuals. An anointed person is recognized by the power and presence of God upon their life."

I trust you can see what is actually happening here. These new versions are really old and foul attacks on the truth of God's Holy Word. 1 John 2:18-27 clearly teaches us what the "anointing" actually is. Taken in context with other teachings in Scripture, we must understand that the true "anointing from the Holy One" (1 Jn. 2:20) is something that every believer possesses and is a description of the power and work of a real Person of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit. This precious anointing is the guidance and discernment that we have as part and parcel of the inner ministry of the Holy Spirit that resides in all who are truly "in Christ". As such, the anointing has been given to us by God, and teaches us concerning all things ( 1 John 2:27). This reality is not a force or a strange substance that some believers have more of than others. The Holy Spirit is a Person, not an "it" and cannot be transferred to other people or thrown around a room. All of these distortions come from heretics like John Wimber and others associated with the counterfeit "signs and wonders" false revivals of the Vineyards, Toronto, Pensacola and other evil outpourings. The sad fact remains that perhaps Wimber received this foolishness from Lonnie Frisbee! It's tragic to see a young Lonnie get caught up in and perpetuate these things. One wonders where was the true discernment, the true guidance of the true Holy Spirit in his life and ministry.

Because a counterfeit is convincing, we can see why it is so dangerous. It is no coincidence that the true Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John to write these teachings clear as day and in close context with the warning against "antichrists" (1 John 2), which were falsely anointed deceivers by Greek definition. They are with us today and more prolific than ever. (For more info on the Holy Spirit's ministry



in/to/through believers: 1 Cor. 2:6-16).

These manifestations and this particular twist on the doctrine of the anointing have proven in many cases to be counterfeit signs and wonders with no biblical basis or real revival result. Frisbee's friend Darrell Ballman, mentioned earlier that "people would fall down" or be **slain in the spirit** when they were near Lonnie and he claims Lonnie never did anything to encourage that. It just happened. This leads us into the next phase in the film, which talked about the fallout Lonnie experienced because of these manifestations and his promotion of them. I believe it is clear that these miracles were largely of the counterfeit kind and the implications, then, are not pretty or pleasant but we must discern here.

## Growing Pains

As the falling down and other phenomena increased around Lonnie's ministry, Pastor Chuck rightly stepped in to put a stop to the nonsense. Allegedly, Chuck Smith told Lonnie,

"If you pray for people and they fall down, you're going to lose your job. He did not want this happening at Calvary Chapel, and so Lonnie said, 'Debbie, we can't let em fall down'. So we'd be praying for people and holding them by the hair to hold em up so that they couldn't fall" (Debbie Kerner-Rettino, "Christian Musician").

I praise the Lord for Pastor Chuck's discernment. God allowed him to see that these were manifestations that were a combination of learned behavior, hypnotic induction combined at times with demonic deception. I think Chuck's function as a shepherd and watchmen of this flock protected many people from being deceived and engaging in counterfeit practices that are dishonoring to God.

Needless to say, the proper exercise of Pastor Chuck's discernment wasn't received well by Lonnie and he viewed this restraint as a restriction to his calling. In addition to this, the film portrays Pastor Chuck's philosophy of ministry as harmful to Lonnie's marriage. Here's the testimony of Chuck Smith, Jr. and Lonnie's ex wife:

"My dad's philosophy of ministry had harmed Lonnie and Connie's marriage... And my Dad's belief was that the hierarchy of values was God, ministry, and family." (Chuck Smith Jr.).

"Chuck Smith looked at me and said, 'The only thing that's important right now, Connie, is that people are getting saved'. I could tell that Lonnie now had a "carte-blanche" to be as irresponsible as he wants to be." (Connie Bremer-Murray, "Lonnie's Ex-Wife").

I had to ask while watching this film, "Is this really all true?" Well, sadly, I have seen quite a few men of God who admit to being "workaholics" in the ministry and have at times struggled because of issues of family neglect. If Pastor Chuck's own son is critical of his father's approach to ministry, then is it really true that Chuck told these things to Connie. I am inclined to believe that this may have been the case although I would like more details concerning that conversation between Connie and her pastor. I pray that this was not really the issue as described but it is also a warning nonetheless.

Insofar as we trust DiSabatino's version of what happened we see these two areas set the stage for Lonnie's departure, but as we shall see, I think it was definitely the healthiest development possible as far as Calvary Chapels were concerned.

## Lonnie And the Vineyards

DiSabatino:

"Feeling his brand of Pentecostal ministry wasn't being appreciated, Lonnie accepted an invitation from another ministry to leave Calvary Chapel..."

Frisbee later returned to be an associate pastor under Smith once again, but Lonnie was definitely unhappy and the hunger to be released from his perceived restraint was gnawing at him. Again we see this hunger for experience and experimentation. Was Lonnie's drive in ministry dictated by a love for the Lord and His Word or a passion to "see the stuff" as Wimber would later describe signs and wonders? I believe that Lonnie's love of mysticism and experimentation combined to justify his lengthening departure from biblical truth and God-honoring ministry. What was perceived as "quenching the Spirit" was actually discernment exercised on the part of Chuck Smith to protect the flock at Costa Mesa.

Notice something. Lonnie left Pastor Chuck for four years and according to the film, during those four years great growth happened:

"In only four short years Calvary Chapel had expanded into a movement with satellite locations all over the western United States. Chuck Smith had replaced the aggressive Pentecostal dynamic with a focus on Bible teaching, and rather quickly, Lonnie realized he was an uneasy fit and started to look for other outlets to express his more aggressive Pentecostalism." (DiSabatino, Director).

I think we cannot overlook the significance of the above circumstance. In Lonnie's absence, Chuck began expository preaching and great growth happened. Lonnie didn't fit in with that type of ministry nor did he want to apparently. I believe this is extremely telling as to where Lonnie was at in his philosophy of ministry and it wasn't biblical but experiential.

Enter the next experience of Lonnie's journey: **John Wimber and the Vineyards**, who at the time, were still affiliated with Calvary Chapel. This section is, I believe the most revealing into the nature and possible source of the "signs and wonders" wrought by Frisbee. History has declared that the "**Toronto Blessing**", Vineyard phenomenon, and the Pensacola outpourings were counterfeit revivals. The false teachings, prophets and bizarre unruliness that permeate much of these participating churches have, thankfully, been exposed for what they are. Jesus warned that in the Last days, false prophets, lying signs and wonders, angels of light, lots of false anointings, and counterfeit spirits would infiltrate the Church. Sadly, the Vineyard fellowships, especially under the ministries of Wimber and others have proven to be a volatile hotbed of these dangerous manifestations in recent years.

Imagine my shock to see this film, which attributes the onsets of these perverse practices to none other than Lonnie Frisbee. He felt Pastor Chuck's take on ministry was too stringent and left Calvary Chapel only to return four years later but not for long. Lonnie was about to become the apparent catalyst for a large outpouring of counterfeit signs and wonders in the Vineyards. I'm glad he left Calvary Chapels, although it appears or seems to be the case that Lonnie was instrumental in leading several churches out of the Calvary Chapel movement and into what was characterized as the Vineyards. In other words, Lonnie's influence on Wimber and others caused them to view Pastor Chuck and Calvary Chapels in the same way Lonnie did; as quenchers of these manifestations and by implication not conducive to the "power" that Lonnie and others were so hungry to see. Pastor Chuck Smith described the Vineyard churches as having embraced every error of the pent898090909

But the prime time player and bringer of these deceptions is, according to DiSabatino's film, Lonnie Frisbee. I must note, however, that the testimonies of the vineyard occurrences are more glowing than condemning. Lonnie is still believed to have had great power from the Lord but I disagree with that assessment partially based on the info we're given in this film. At any rate, there are testimonies of Lonnie's "power ministry" methods and the ensuing aberrance.

## Lonnie and John

Feeling uneasy in Calvary Chapel, Lonnie looked toward John Wimber, of Calvary Chapel satellite location in Yorba Linda, California which



eventually became the most prominent fellowship in the Vineyard movement. It was in the presence of Wimber that Lonnie felt he had found an avenue for his "aggressive Pentecostalism" which was so contrary to the biblical direction Pastor Chuck Smith was headed in. John Wimber was hungry for signs and wonders and Lonnie was apparently the man with the power. According to Lonnie, this was a divine partnership:

"John and I met three years ago at a pastors conference and the Lord told us that he was going to join us together but its taken three years top do it because I'm a chicken." (Lonnie Frisbee).

John gave Lonnie a Sunday night, Mother's Day service in 1980 and the rest was history. Lonnie, on that night said:

"I think the Lords gonna meet us tonight in a special way so I want you to be in expectancy for a move of the Spirit of God."

"Lonnie got up and very quietly said, speaking into the microphone said 'The Holy Spirit has been quenched by the church but don't worry about it. The Holy Spirit isn't mad. Matter of fact, He wants to come tonight and minister to you.'" (Steve Zarit, "Vineyard Church Member").

With that invitation, the "stuff" as Wimber later referred to signs and wonders began to happen but what must be noted is that many of the practices that happened under Lonnie's ministry there at Wimber's church were unbiblical and unaccompanied by biblical preaching and teaching. Much of it cannot be characterized as decent and "in order" which needs to be the case when we are testing phenomena by God's Word. I believe that much of what these Vineyard testimonies tell us in the film were nothing less than the beginnings of the false spiritual experiences of the counterfeit revivalism that many Vineyard churches became famous for. At the inception, here apparently under Lonnie's influence and presence, were the beginnings of some of the most shameful wickedness the church has ever seen. Those present gave these testimonies:

"He asked people 25 and under to come forward, so probably 300 or so go forward. He just says the words 'Holy spirit, Come'. Almost immediately, everybody just fell on the floor. They were sort of like trees in a forest falling on each other. It wasn't a clean thing...One of the kids, Ricky, when he fell to the floor, he pulled the microphone down. A lot of them started speaking in **tongues**, others were crying. But the sound was shocking and I didn't know what to do. I stared at this thing. I didn't know Lonnie. John was shocked. He was trying to figure out what's going on. A lot of people got up and left. They were angry and whatever." (Bob Fulton, "Vineyard Church Leader").

Another Vineyard leader testifies:

"He went like this with his hand, and I was part of that group that everybody just went over. The whole group, we couldn't get up. It was like dominoes. It wasn't like people knocked me over either, you just felt that "Whoosh" of the Spirit. Everybody just went down."

I, for one, am so glad Pastor Chuck protected Calvary Chapels from this. Lonnie interpreted the ensuing chaos as a "tremendous outpouring" but anyone can see that a biblical sermon and orderly conduct would have been the true desire of the Lord for those folks. Its just tragic and I'm rather sickened at this kind of nonsense being attributed to the Holy Spirit. I can't accept that this spirit had anything to do with God.

#### **Also See [Slain In The Spirit](#)**

When one carefully examines the texts put forward to make the case that "slain in the spirit" and other related manifestations such as laughter, shaking and other bodily convulsions are phenomena rooted in the Scriptures, it becomes patently obvious that this is not the

case. Holy Canon is void of any accounts, testimonies or experiences that even faintly resemble 'Slain In The Spirit'. Where then does the practice originate? Unfortunately being "slain in the spirit" and "holy laughter" are only two more examples of doctrine that has been directly derived from occult sources. It has terrifying parallels with the Hindu practice of "awakening" a person's Kundalini, a concentrated form of life force, lying dormant in our bodies. The 'awakening' of the Kundalini, or expanded states of consciousness, is often brought about by a guru conferring the spiritual "power" or awakening on disciples by means of a touch to the forehead. If that isn't disturbing enough, Not only are the requirements for receiving are the same, but the methods of transmissions are the same and the resulting physical manifestations are virtually indistinguishable. How then can these practices be Christian... especially since, when people have fallen in the Biblical accounts, it is the sinners who fell backwards.

Even some of the leadership was troubled; rightly so and called a meeting to discuss the aftermath of that Mother's Day debacle but as we see in the film, attempts at organization are no match for a zealous Frisbee:

" We had to have a special meeting a couple days later with all the elders. They want to know what in the world is going on here. Lonnie comes back up and disrupts John and says 'Listen, the Lord just spoke to me. I don't care what kind of issues you have here. What needs to happen is you need to have an encounter with God.'" (John Ruttkay, "Lonnie's Friend").

The supernatural forces Lonnie brought with him also invaded this same meeting:

"All of a sudden, I'm seeing this guy next to me, this Ph.D. in Microbiology, begin to shake and he's begun to shake under the presence of God. The presence of God's coming. So I begin to stand up. The power of God knocks this guy down and he began to roll under my feet on the ground, screaming hysterically. And the whole room began to- the power of God came down on everybody in the room. And it was just absolutely mind-boggling. I mean we went from zero to ten in the Spirit like that." (John Ruttkay, "Lonnie's Friend")

I think we are seeing accounts of a demonic element of disorder and danger manifesting in Lonnie's presence. These "signs" bear no resemblance to biblical examples of the Holy Spirit's ministry to the Church. "Self-control" is one fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23) and the Holy Spirit would not violate the Word by causing hysterics and mayhem, yet the Vineyards have promoted this type of false manifestations for years and apparently Lonnie brought a heightened level of this type of activity. In fact, if we are to take this documentary as our source, Lonnie was the bringer of these initial occurrences.

Apparently Wimber himself became subject to this influence and broke off from the Calvary Chapels to start Vineyard Fellowships, so that this new power could be spread in the name of "signs and wonders" theology. He even enticed some fellowships to leave Calvary Chapels as they followed the signs and wonders wrought by this new leader. Although [John Wimber](#) is largely known for that, the film claims that it is Frisbee's influence and power that began this movement.

The counterfeit continues with a new dynamic duo leadership team:

"So John would speak and Lonnie would minister. They were the dynamic duo. Lonnie got up there and he'd wave his leather coat and the power of God would come and people would be falling all over these old pews in these Baptist churches. And Lonnie would start climbing over the pews and start laying hands on people saying 'Speak in tongues! Speak in tongues!' And he'd hit them in the forehead and they'd instantly begin to speak in tongues. So I was blown away by that..." (Steve Zarit, "Vineyard Church Member").

Ken Fish, "Lonnie's Friend" testifies that Lonnie cast some sort of demonic spirit out of his mother, which healed her mouth lesions. It was a "deliverance" type reaction where she began to retch and gag.



"Vineyard went through a phase where we were seeing cancers healed, brain cancer healed, lumps in the breast disappearing. We saw all sorts of things there. Actually saw and witnessed it." (Phil Mahlow).

All these incidents brought the "Wow" Factor with them as testimony after testimony unfolded concerning the pervasive power that surrounded Lonnie and the fact that he seemingly never had to "work it up" or cause it to happen:

"You right there! The Holy Spirit's comin' upon you right now!' And I'm like 'What's happening to me?' I was starting to get baptized and **filled with the Holy Spirit**. None of this could've been suggestion, (Mercedes; "He had no paradigm for it."), Hypnotism, nothing 'cuz I had- I didn't know what was happening. It was happening to me and I didn't know it. It was happening to me before he even got close to me." (Brian and Mercedes Marleaux, "Lonnie's Friends").

David Owen, "Pastor": "Then (he) lifted up his hands like this and just pointed towards people and said 'The Holy Spirit is resting on you'."

Here's my concern with these stories. First off, if anyone disagrees with them it is tantamount to many to denying God or not believing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Some also take my caution as words of attack toward "God's servant", Lonnie Frisbee. But please understand, these things must be tested for validity and all I can say is that Biblical Christians need to be extremely wary of anyone who behaved or taught the things Lonnie did and yet seemed to have this extraordinary power. Just because things happened doesn't automatically stamp someone as being anointed by God. In fact, many of these sign and wonder experiences again happen apart from teaching the Word or in contexts where abuses routinely were accepted and participated in. We cannot also rule out the fact that none of these events have been medically confirmed or documented and the eyewitnesses appear to be quite undiscerning because they are approving of some of Lonnie's unbiblical practices. These testimonies do serve to show how influential Frisbee was in the early 80s among people who were extremely famished to see "signs and wonders".

DiSabatino makes something very clear:

"Though little credit is given to Lonnie, he was influential in what the Vineyard church movement called "Signs and Wonders Theology" – a paradigm of teaching that suggest that all Christians could operate in a similar manner to Lonnie; that they too could perform miracles like they'd read in the New Testament..."

Again Frisbee is hailed as some sort of a catalyst for the growth that followed in this movement. So, according to the Frisbee movie, he was the person behind the scenes almost that God allegedly used to spark the incredible growth of two famous church movements, Calvary Chapels and the Vineyards.

Chuck Smith, Jr., "Pastor": "John told me; he was very outspoken about the fact that it was Lonnie that really brought the Vineyard into the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit into the Vineyard..."

While attendances may have mushroomed and people apparently flocked to see Frisbee in both of these movements, we still cannot take this as any kind of gauge for whether God was behind all that Lonnie said and did. Again, more details would be needed about his conversion and subsequent teachings for some of these points to make any sense in formulating the opinion that Frisbee was indeed doing these things by the power of the true God. While that has thus far been the assertion of DiSabatino's documentary, it appears that what has actually been uncovered is some of the dubious and dangerous origins of the counterfeit revivals and the Vineyards and the prolific abuse of hyper Pentecostalism. Thus far, the best player in this drama seems to be Pastor Chuck who, apparently equally concerned about the developments surrounding Frisbee as some of the rest of us, took the higher path of teach God's Word and testing ministry antics of Lonnie and others who seem to be getting carried away by hype and heroism.

## Lonnie's Tragic "Secret" (?)

The conclusion of this film is extremely heartbreaking, tragic, and yes, revealing. Where there is false doctrine and false practice, where there is unorthodoxy in ministry, there usually exists a lifestyle of the same ilk (2 Peter 2). Often hidden for a while but inevitably brought to light because God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7). This issue is primarily of Lonnie's homosexuality and is something the church really needs to discern. **[See Section on [Homosexuality](#)]**

Chuck Smith, Jr. tells us how he discovered evidence leading towards what would become the final scandal that ended in Lonnie's death:

"I got a telephone call one day that this young man who was in the church here at Laguna Beach was feeling really bad, really convicted, really guilty and he confided in his pastor that he had had a six-month affair with Lonnie... One night I went to the Vineyard on a Sunday night and John and Carol asked my wife and I if we wanted to go out with them and have a cup of coffee after church. We started talking and I said 'John I want to ask you a question. As far as Lonnie goes with his homosexuality, is that something that you just show him mercy with?' And John said, 'How do you know Lonnie's homosexual? Has he told you himself?' And I said 'Yes, he has.' The next day John called me. He said 'I spoke to Lonnie today. I asked him if this was so, and he admitted it. He confessed that it was so.'"

In the rest of the film, this claim is never disputed or denied. Regardless of what several other questioning voices said, if we are to believe Chuck Smith, Jr.'s testimony, then Lonnie himself admitted he was a practicing homosexual. Lonnie Frisbee was apparently practicing homosexuality. Other testimonies confirm that this was the case. However several in his life didn't believe that he was actually gay, but merely struggled with it:

"Opinions are sharply divided as to whether Lonnie was a homosexual. His friends believed that even though he may have once defined himself as being gay, that after his conversion to Jesus Christ, he renounced homosexuality and always maintained that it was a sin. Though he may have lapsed into this behavior on occasion, so they reason, he was never a practicing homosexual again." (David DiSabatino, Director).

Many who spent time with Lonnie were never able to see through his deception or that he was struggling so bad:

"I remember fishing around with Lonnie to what his attitude was towards homosexuality and I remember us together on the streets witnessing to gay guys in which Lonnie would be very strong in that homosexuality is a sin. It's a sin that needs to be forgiven but it's a sin that can be repented of." (Danny Lehmann, YWAM Director, Hawaii").

John Ruttkay, "Lonnie's friend, doesn't believe he was "practicing homosexuality"

Director DiSabatino, is asked on the website: Q: Do you think Lonnie Frisbee was a homosexual?

His reply:

"The only one that knows that is Lonnie Frisbee. I can only tell you what I know. It is imperative to understand that after his conversion at no time did Lonnie ever justify homosexuality. He always maintained it was a sin. And I have many tapes of him talking about this.

The problem being, that his actions suggested that this was an area where he continued to involve himself. What most of his friends believe



is that if this kind of thing occurred (and in their mind there is still a definite question as to whether the allegations are true or they are from people intent on slurring Lonnie's memory), it was the occasional lapse. There are those, of course, that argue that his continuing in this behavior suggests something innate.

I would hope that people would listen to his own testimony and not read in to his life without giving great weight to Lonnie's own beliefs. He never believed homosexuality was anything other than a sin in the eyes of God. He is not the poster child for "gay Christianity." That being said, neither is he so easily placed in a Christian framework that tends to view conversion as the moment where these sorts of things are forever renounced. I'm comfortable with this being unanswered territory."(<http://lonniefrisbee.com/faq/>).

These assertions aside, one thing is abundantly clear in this film: many who were close to him or spent time with him had no idea that he was engaged in salacious activities. That's the nature of the beast. Sin wants to stay hidden and many of us are great at that. Lonnie is no exception. We must keep in mind that, although we don't want to believe that someone who did so much in the Church was homosexual, he admitted to Chuck Smith Jr. and John Wimber that he indeed was. A six-month affair, which Frisbee admitted to, is not indicative of merely struggling or lapsing occasionally. That is a lifestyle; every bit as staggering as recently exposed **Ted Haggard**.

What are the implications/ Well, 1 John 3:4-6 clearly tells us:

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him."

This passage and others is clear when it tells us, by divine inspiration, that a true believer in Jesus Christ will not continually practice sinning as a lifestyle. There is no way around that truth. The evidence that is given us in this film is indicative of a lifestyle that Lonnie lived with secret, extended affairs and outright admissions. Around some he would proclaim a biblical view towards homosexuality but in private and with others, he would practice this sin.

Other evidence points to the fact that Lonnie was indeed a practicing homosexual:

Hi ex-wife Connie confirms that he told her he was gay when they married but understood it to mean that he was saved out of that. One wonders why he would tell her he was actually gay if that was truly the case. She also testifies:

"At the end of the marriage he told me that he had been staying late in some gay bars." (Connie Bremer-Murray, "Lonnie's Ex-Wife", from the "Special Features" section).

Steve Toth:

"It was a hard thing for me to understand, how he could party on Saturday night and preach on Sunday morning and the Spirit of God moved and there was no doubt about it."

Danny Lehmann, "YWAM Director, Hawaii":

"One of the little controversies I ended up having with God was 'Lord, I'm giving up all this stuff for you and I'm being so careful – I don't dance, I don't do all these things, and yet, Lonnie, he'll go out and he'll boogie down and do stuff like that. And he'll go out and do what I would consider questionable things, but yet I saw the power of God moving through him.' Of course as I grew in the Lord I realized the gifts and calling of God are from God and they're not based upon your works anyhow."

One can see how Lonnie's lifestyle caused many to stumble and again, it is debatable that what was at work in Frisbee was really "the power of God". However much his friend and family wanted to attribute Frisbee with being mightily anointed by God and validated by signs and wonders, they must realize the danger of their assertion in light of the fact that he admitted to being a practicing homosexual. The Bible disagrees with the notion that the "gifts and calling of God" would be administered to a homosexual without first requiring **repentance** and regeneration which of course does away with that lifestyle. Most assuredly, the counterfeit transferable anointing he practiced was heretical and has nothing to do with the biblical reality of the Holy Spirit. It is sad to see so many people that surrounded Lonnie fail to discern such prolific error. Yes, I do have a problem with believing that God placed gifts and callings on a practicing homosexual.

Ken Gulliksen's assessment:

"I think that's one area of his life that never got- it was never broken. He was never free of it and it remained hidden away and would manifest itself very secretly, very privately."

Another referred to Lonnie's "moral failings" as an "open secret" and still another Vineyard spokesman, Bob Fulton, described Lonnie as a "practicing homosexual" and revealingly explains an all too popular concept concerning Homosexuality:

"The kingdom of Satan has stronger demons. I just think that homosexuality is a stronger demon." (Bob Fulton, "Vineyard Spokesman").

Faulty at the core because the Bible says that it is a sin of the flesh. I do not doubt that demons can be influential in this and other areas but primarily **Homosexuality** is an abominable lifestyle choice made by fallen men and women who are given over to licentiousness. This is not to say that people don't have struggles in this area but we cannot put the blame on homosexuality being some "stronger demon" that completely controls someone, especially in Lonnie's case where he claims that he was truly saved. The obvious implication here, especially with the realization that he never fessed up until he was caught, is that Lonnie had never truly repented of his gay lifestyle.

Ken Gulliksen, "Pastor" responds to the interviewer's question: "Do you think he was a homosexual?"

Gulliksen: "Oh yes, yes. I believe Lonnie had homosexuality in his background growing up. He came to Christ, was filled with the Spirit, became a new creation, became a saint, not a sinner. I think that's one area of his life that never got - it was never broken, he was never free of it. It remained and got hidden away and would manifest itself very secretly, very privately. He had a long-term relationship with someone at Camp Pendleton - an officer."

If this is true we must ask Gulliksen and others the pertinent question: "Has the precious and complete work of God's salvation met its match with homosexuality?" In other words, these statements cannot actually be true if Lonnie Frisbee was truly saved. He was either entirely a new creation or a practicing homosexual. The Bible does not allow for both as simultaneous coexistent realities (1 John 3:4-6). While saints still sin, the Bible clearly teaches that **they do not practice sin as a lifestyle**. We can't reinterpret what God's Holy Word says in light of even the most charismatic of human beings.

Remember Lonnie admitted to a long-term relationship. **Pastor Ted Haggard** after being caught also fessed up and accurately labeled himself a "deceiver and a liar". We need to be honest with what scripture actually says and sorrowfully we need more info on Lonnie's life and even his conversion to feel confident as to whether he was truly born again.

Here's a major problem. If this film is true then we must say, "Hold everything!" It is imperative that we take a closer look at the facts of his life and if we are biblical Christians we have no choice other than to conclude that Lonnie's life was marked by great deception, lies, and the reality that he definitely wasn't fit for ministry at all. It cannot be winked at or sluffed off, nor excused on the basis that all kinds of



powerful signs may have surrounded this poor fellow. The scandal of hailing a practicing homosexual as “anointed by God” to perform apostolic miracles and putting him in ministry flies in the face of what the Scriptures teach and the qualifications of leadership in the church. A Leader in the church who is going to minister and teach must be, among other things, “blameless” (see 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9) and the scandal that surrounded Lonnie Frisbee, with both his false teaching and lifestyle disqualify him completely for the role he was given.

## Wrestling with the Truth

Because of the deception that apparently was being practiced, long term, by Frisbee himself, it is understandable why even Pastor Chuck Smith would not have been able to see the danger of putting him in ministry. Now the scandal rocks church history as DiSabatino’s film reveals some awful details. I think it absurd that some featured on this film would point fingers and blame the church for not accepting Lonnie anyway or anything like that. Are we to love and care for those who are in this lifestyle and struggling with these feelings? Absolutely, but they should not be hailed as any kind of hero or someone likened to the biblical prophets and apostles. Those men had their flaws but the Scriptures also speak strongly that homosexuality is and abomination, something that God hates:

To Israel: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” (Lev. 18:22).

“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination...” (Lev. 20:13)

In the New Testament:

“Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” (Rom. 1:27)

“Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Rom. 1:32).

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

These will suffice and they carry a heavy message to all of us, whether we want to accept them or not. All of us must examine ourselves to make sure we are not deceived and practicing these things as a lifestyle.

DiSabatino acknowledge that some Christians take these verse for what they say but that a “minority” believe they should be reinterpreted. Emerging church leader Brain McClaren also believes this despite what God has already clearly revealed about homosexuality. He believes the church should take a 5-year “moratorium” on the issue to try and figure out what we all are supposed to think about it.

Hmmm...Scripture is clear, should we believe false teachers like **Tony Campolo** and **Brian McClaren** or God’s Word? The answer to true believers is simple.

The commentators on DiSabatino’s film weigh in with some quite disturbing comments:

Chuck Smith, Jr.:

“Lonnie’s misfortune is he got caught because there are a lot of charismatic homosexual ministers right now. I’m not saying that it’s okay as long as you don’t get caught. I’m saying we need to find a way for them, find a way within the Body of Christ to love and minister and accommodate them.”

Gay activist Mel White is featured, as is the homosexual “pastor” of the Metro fellowship are featured in defense of being homosexual and saved. He also blames the church for their attitude towards homosexuals and even alleges that they are forced to go out and do their wickedness all the more because the Church rejects them. They denounce those in the church and blame those of us who believe in God’s Word for even making them be more sinful.

**IPS Note: For more on how the church should treat all sinners see [The Inclusiveness of Jesus](#). It’s true that the inclusiveness of Jesus was extraordinary. Yet, it was not of the “come as you are” sort. Jesus offered new, transformed life in the kingdom of God, not acceptance of all people as they were in their broken, sinful state.**

Both of these comments are extremely troubling. Do we need to love those involved in this abomination? Absolutely? But what does it mean that we must “accommodate” gay ministers within the church? This is absolutely revolting and needs clarification. Lonnie was accommodated in public ministry because few knew what he was really doing, although if it was really an “open secret” then it’s debatable who knew what at what time. All that can really be said is that this whole thing is tragic and needs to be clearly rebuked in terms of excusing or promoting homosexual activity among ministers and people who profess to be genuinely born again.

DiSabatino includes testimony that is sympathetic to Lonnie as coming from other homosexual men making a mockery of the high calling of the ministry before God:

Q: Why did you interview (Metropolitan Church founder) Troy Perry and (gay activist) Mel White?

DiSabatino: “Who better to understand being marginalized by the evangelical movement? I went to them because I had questions that couldn’t be answered by someone who didn’t go through a similar sort of journey as Lonnie did. I don’t agree with everything they believe, but I sure liked and admire their honesty. But neither did I agree with everything that other people told me. And neither do either group believe everything that I do. That is the blessing and bane of free will.” (From the website: <http://lonniefrisbee.com/faq/>)

Tragically, [Frisbee](#) was a hit at gay and Lesbian film festivals and this mixed message is being promoted on a wide scale now. I definitely don’t think it beneficial to Calvary Chapels and it adds yet another blemish on the worsening testimony of [Youth With A Mission](#) and other groups represented there. DiSabatino’s film amounts to an endorsement of Lonnie’s alleged power and a sympathetic view of Vineyard heresy and homosexuality. Not to mention the negative light in which Pastor Chuck Smith is painted. I, for one, wouldn’t want my name attached to this thing in any way, especially if I was working with Calvary Chapels.

## Lonnie’s Bitterness

Wimber had no recourse but to terminate Lonnie after he admitted to being homosexual. For all the bad things associated with the low discernment levels among the Vineyards, this at least was preferable compared to letting him remain as a minister. The rest of the film chronicles Lonnie’s bitterness towards those who he felt had either restricted his ministry or just flat-out abandoned him because of his sinful scandalous lifestyle.



Tragically we learn that Lonnie had been molested as a child and of course, we sympathize. But what's really going on here? Does even these awful circumstances entitle one to be bitter at almost everyone he had worked with?

Chuck Girard, "Pastor":

"It was many year years I didn't see Lonnie, and when I did the thing I was most impressed by was, 'cuz you're going for the truth here, how bitter he was. He would just come in and it was almost like a person who didn't have personal restraint. He would just go off on how he had been used and abused and trashed. You know, kind of pathetic in a way."

"Knowing my brother, one thing he suffered from was unforgiveness. And he had bitterness. He had rejection issues. Sometimes we would get bitterness from his preaching." (Stan Frisbee, "Lonnie's Brother").

"He blamed his dad, blamed his step dad, blamed Chuck Smith and then John Wimber." (John Ruttkay, "Lonnie's friend").

"I need to tell you that I moved in big circles with big bozos..." (Lonnie Frisbee).

Definitely vitriolic.

## Lonnie's Last Days

In the early 90s Lonnie was diagnosed with **AIDS**. He felt ashamed about having contracted this, obviously as a result of his sinful lifestyle. This part of the film does tug at one's heart and have compassion for him even though I don't believe he should have ever been in public ministry in the first place due to even some of the other aspects we have already looked at. That said, I must mention that testimony was given that he had indeed been somewhat repentant before he died shortly after contracting the virus. He did mention to others that he was sorry for everything and wanted a clean slate with everyone he had wronged or worked with. I don't know from the film but there was no real mention of his repenting from his homosexuality to God but that may have occurred between God and him. We just don't know and that makes this final chapter of Lonnie's life all the more sad.

If Lonnie truly knew the Lord, I believe that what Chuck Smith said at his funeral after talking to Lonnie a week before he passed away was extremely timely and the most gracious way to express the concerns over what the situation may have been:

"A man who knew the powerful anointing of God's Spirit on his life, but unfortunately a man who never experienced the optimum of potential. I often wonder what he could've been." (Pastor Chuck Smith, at Lonnie's Funeral).

Lonnie's ex-wife and closest friends immediately followed this comment in DiSabatino's film with testimony of extreme anger at Chuck's comments. Chuck was painted as being "arrogant" and less than compassionate towards Frisbee because he distanced himself from the powder keg and said those final remarks at his funeral. Chuck Smith, Jr. implies that his father's refusal to let Lonnie minister was an abandonment and hypocritical:

"Lonnie's bitterness, I think he was entitled to it. If I can say that, I mean if anyone's entitled to bitterness... I think that both my dad and John were like father figures to him but fathers who rejected him and that had to be extremely painful for Lonnie and I think it's part of the tragedy of his life." (Chuck Smith, Jr., "Pastor").

"My dad made the announcement 'If we have to turn away one young person because they're barefoot, and their bare feet are going to ruin our carpet, then we'll pull out the carpet, remove the pews - we'll sit on the concrete floor. These kids have nowhere else to

go to connect with God. If we turn them away where else will they go?' Now, we can say that about drug-dealing, free-sex rock-n-roll hippies but not say that about homosexuals. If the church says to anyone 'You cannot come here. You cannot engage in the life of the church' to anyone, then where are you supposed to go to find Jesus?" (Chuck Smith, Jr., "Pastor").

I agree with the above statement except that I don't believe it necessarily applies to Lonnie's situation. Lonnie was apparently a practicing homosexual who insisted that he had to be in ministry. That is quite a different scenario than allowing the unsaved, of whatever sexual orientation, come and hear the gospel so they can get saved. That was not the case with Frisbee. He was not able to continue ministering because he was apparently unrepentant until close to the very end, if that was true repentance. Lonnie was a "seeker" and as such, had every opportunity to go to Calvary Chapel, to name one place, to sit and hear the truth of God's word. If that happened, great. We are not told, though, and his subsequent ministry, teachings, and lifestyle leaves a lot to be wondered about concerning where Frisbee was really at with the Lord.

The viewer is left at films end with the feeling that Lonnie was some sort of tragic hero or a "reformer" who was misunderstood, maligned, and mislabeled by leaders in the church, and for that I guess a feeling of shame is intended for all those, like myself, who question the sketchy details and the clear implications of this narrative. Even after the facts are out, albeit perhaps incomplete in some areas, many still defend Lonnie as someone who definitely had an anointing from the true God and is looked at as a minister of the gospel who was mightily used by God.

## Final Comments

"Lonnie wasn't wise enough to understand that people constantly wanted to use him for his anointing and throw him away as a human being...he said they like the goodies Darrell, but they hate me." (Darrell Ballman, "Lonnie's Friend").

DiSabatino laments the fact that Calvary Chapel and Vineyard fellowships make no mention of Frisbee as per his influence in these various movements. And again, this caused great bitterness in Lonnie's life.

I think the fact that this man could emerge as somewhat of an unsung hero shows the low discernment level of many in the church today who would come against any who would question Lonnie's conversion, ministry and lifestyle and some who would wink at his deception and bitterness without denouncing him as a leader in the church who doesn't deserve this level of credit or acclaim.

A few more testimonies will suffice to show the near veneration, and whitewashing Lonnie Frisbee receives by people that are either biblically ignorant, devoid of discernment or perhaps not even saved themselves:

Kenn Gulliksen, "Pastor": "God was just, I believe, sending this clown - God wanting to receive the glory is almost laughing in Heaven in delight and joy at this silly little man with his silly beard doing these silly things."

No, Pastor Gulliksen, God was most certainly not laughing off the serious tragedy that was Lonnie's life struggle. Being a practicing homosexual in ministry is not "silly" or laughable and definitely not glorifying to God.

Rich Buhler says that God "placed his spirit on a homosexual".

No, He did not.

The final concerns I have center on the claim that Frisbee's story is "A Bible Story". Here's what DiSabatino had to say in response to that query on the website:



Q: At the beginning of the movie, you call it "A Bible Story." What is the significance of that? Surely you don't mean that this story is in the Bible.

DiSabatino: "Well, yes and no. First, all of those who have conversation with God are adding chapters to a dialogue that does not end with the Bible. Those people in the Bible were flesh and blood. They were real. They were just like Lonnie, and just like you and me. When we distance ourselves from the struggles they entered, I think we do people a disservice.

Second, I think Lonnie resembles a number of biblical characters. He is a little bit of Ezekiel, a little bit Samson, a little bit of Elijah and Elisha, a little Jacob and some John the Baptist as well. When I heard the stories told by his wide-eyed friends, it wasn't hard to make connections.

Finally, who said the canon of Scripture is closed?"

One need only to carefully watch this film and one thing is stunningly clear: Aside from some cursory parallels and mannerisms that might resemble these Bible characters, Lonnie's actual situation is not the same as the men God used. The closest is indeed Samson but it's interesting that no parallels are cited from the church age. That is because the Bible clearly condemns the lifestyle and leadership practices, and heresies and errors that characterized much of Lonnie's ministry.

As for the canon of Scripture being closed? Sorry, Dave, it most certainly is and only those who want to cast off that restraint and be open for whatever "comes through" in these last days will see Frisbee as any kind of credible or actual parallel to a biblical prophet.

**InPlainsite.org Note: Many cessationists say that the evidence demands the view that the New Testament prophetic gift ceased its operation very early in the history of the church. That although no one single argument alone demonstrates this, the combined weight of the total evidence decisively points to this conclusion. They add that the Body Of Christ should soundly reject any and all claims to prophecy and other 'sign gifts'. However The 'evidence' presented from Scripture itself is far from convincing and none of the quoted verses proves their case. On the other hand the flamboyant claims of the Charismatics are beyond tolerance and have succeeded in leading Christians to seek the 'gifts' rather than the 'Giver' and has already done untold harm to the people of God. See [Cessationism](#)**

One final concerning statement by DiSabatino: "I think if you met Lonnie, you'd have probably seen a very attractive part of Christianity, one that allowed a wide berth for humanness."

That "wide berth for humanness" refers to Lonnie's own deceived perception of ministry, teaching, the gifts, and the engagement in homosexuality and the "humanness" is precisely what we all need to be rid of through the power of Christ. Indeed, it was nothing to be celebrated in Frisbee's life because, ultimately, the "old man" was the reason for the scandalous characteristics surrounding the life and death of this hippy preacher.

I myself found this documentary extremely interesting albeit sympathetic to Lonnie and other homosexuals. Perhaps there is more info on the "Making of" documentary that needs to be shown but as far as can be told, there's no reason to believe that the powers he displayed were from God. Having said that, I cannot judge someone's **salvation**. I do not know where Lonnie was or is with Christ or whether that is the case. I pray that he eventually repented for real and entered Heaven via the same mercy and grace that all of us must lean on both now and when we leave this earth. Until then, we must be vigilant watchmen,

"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." – 1 Thessalonians 5:21,22.

**Footnote:** June 16, 2006 - Costa Mesa, CA: Last week at Calvary Chapel's annual pastor's conference, founder and Senior Pastor Chuck Smith announced that Calvary Chapel was rejecting various movements and practices that have been taking place within the Christian church at large as well as in some Calvary Chapel churches. According to a number of pastors who spoke with Lighthouse Trails this week, Smith asked that those Calvary Chapel pastors who were going in the direction of the emerging church would no longer call themselves Calvary Chapel churches.

The decision to issue such a position paper was not easy, according to sources we spoke with. Chuck Smith Sr. (founder of Calvary Chapel) is the "spiritual father" to many Calvary pastors and such a severance would have significant consequences. For instance, his own son, Chuck Smith Jr. (a Calvary pastor), is among those who have apparently turned toward the emerging church. According to statements made recently by Chuck Smith Jr, his Capo Beach Calvary Chapel is no longer a part of Calvary Chapel: "Officially, we have withdrawn from the Calvary Chapel affiliation." It is expected that other Calvary Chapel pastors may follow suit because of the new position paper.

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"You are the *Christ*, the Son of the living G

