

# December 2017: Mary's Angelic Encounter

## COVER STORY

### **Mary's Angelic Encounter**

Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, more believers are reporting supernatural encounters with ministering spirits. Have you met one without realizing it?

## FEATURED ARTICLES

### **Follow the Bethlehem Star**

Filmmaker Rick Larson examines the scientific evidence of the star that led the wise men to the baby Jesus.

### **Make Jesus Known**

Share the message of Christ's love and experience the gospel afresh this Christmas season.

### **Keep Christ in Christmas**

Learn how families can ensure the Christmas Grinch doesn't steal their focus-or their faith-despite the enemy's tactics.

### **Weather the Storm**

Believers rush to the frontlines, providing much needed disaster relief to hurricane victims.

### **A Glimpse of God's Glory**

Embrace the unusual as the Holy Spirit manifests in strange,

bizarre and even embarrassing ways.

## INSPIRE

**Prophetic Words Save a Pastor's Kid After a Near-Fatal Drug Overdose.**

**Avoid a Sick Heart After Your Dreams Die.**

**Five-Word Prayers Can Spark Deeper Dialog with God.**

**Revelation from Genesis Brings Order to Chaotic Lives.**

## EMPOWER

**This month's resources:**

Stephen E. Strang's, *God and Donald Trump*

James W. Goll's, *The Discerner*

Jeremy Camp's, *The Answer*

...and much more

**Reviews:**

Jefferson and Alyssa Bethke's, *Love That Lasts*

Matthew West's *All In*

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# **A Military Veteran's Fix for**

# Cracked Feet

In the military, your feet take a beating.

All that marching and running in heavy boots, it tears up soldiers' feet.

Just ask Private First Class Jack Franklin, who almost didn't make it out because his feet were so cracked and damaged.

Jack was heading out on assignment, marching when he had to stop in his tracks.

Severe pain was shooting through his feet. He pulled off his boots to take a look.

His feet were cracked, dry, sore, and covered in painful callouses.

He called out to his buddy—a military doctor—who hurried over to help.

“Jack,” the doctor said, “your feet are gonna get us killed!”

Thinking quickly, the doctor pulled out a homemade cream that he had whipped up back at the base the day before.

Within minutes, Jack was feeling relief and sprung back into action!

When he got back to the base, everyone in his squadron wanted to know his secret.

He told them about the incredible solution the doctor had found. Soon enough, his entire platoon started using this method with incredible results.

And once word got back, soldiers, first responders, veterans and civilians started using his at-home method, because it works so well to relieve dry, cracked, pained, calloused feet.

Finally, the doctor created a video presentation about this method that shows how you can do it right in your own home.

**Go [HERE](#) to watch the doctor's video presentation.**

This military-inspired science is shockingly easy. Anyone can do it in just a few seconds.

If you have ever suffered from cracked, dry or calloused feet, you absolutely need to **watch this presentation right now**, which has already been used by thousands of military veterans to help relieve their foot problems.

**Click [HERE](#) to learn the at-home method to relieve your cracked feet.**

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## **US Catholics, Protestants Agree: 500 Years After Reformation, They Have More in Common Than Not**

The theological differences that led to the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago have dwindled since in both the United States and Western Europe.

That's the finding of a Pew Research Center survey released Thursday (Aug. 31), weeks before late October's 500th anniversary of the schism in western Christianity.

Among U.S. Protestants, many seem unaware of the differences,

voicing beliefs today that are more traditionally Catholic than they are Protestant.

“I think it’s fair to say the differences between the two groups have diminished to a degree that might have shocked Christians of earlier centuries,” said Greg Smith, associate director of research at Pew Research Center.

“Maybe it’s not a huge surprise in the context of modern-day United States, but if you look back at the longer term—at the 500th anniversary of the Reformation—that would be quite surprising to a Christian of 300, 400, 500 years ago.”

Of course, Smith noted, no survey data exists to measure responses to the same questions in the 1500s.

According to the survey, more Protestants reported they believe salvation comes through a mix of faith and good works (52 percent)—the traditionally Catholic position—than through “faith alone” (46 percent). That belief—*sola fide* in Latin—is one of five “solas” that form the backbone of Protestant Reformers’ beliefs.

The same shares of Protestants also reported they believe Christians should look to the Bible, church teachings and tradition for guidance—the Catholic position—rather than the “Bible alone,” or the Protestant belief in “sola scriptura.”

Only 30 percent of U.S. Protestants affirmed both *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*. Belief in both doctrines was higher among white evangelical Protestants (44 percent) than white mainline Protestants (20 percent) or black Protestants (19 percent) and jumped even higher (59 percent) among white evangelicals who reported they attend church at least once a week.

U.S. Catholics, in contrast to Protestants, voiced beliefs more in line with the teachings of their church: 81 percent reported both good deeds and faith were needed to get into heaven, and 75 percent reported Christians should look to the

Bible, church teaching and tradition for guidance.

And while differences between Catholics and Protestants once led to wars and persecution, most U.S. Catholics (65 percent) and Protestants (59 percent) now agree they have more in common than not.

The U.S. survey of more than 2,500 adults, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, was conducted online from May 30 to Aug. 9. The margin of error for results based on each sample in that survey is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. {eoa}

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# August 2017: Where is YWAM Now?

## COVER STORY

### **Where is YWAM Now?**

Loren Cunningham looks at the past work of YWAM and its' future path. He also speaks of his stand on the Second Coming and revival in America.

## FEATURED ARTICLES

- **Filled With Laughter**

Learn of the approach Christian stand-up comedians are taking to address a dark world, the power of laughter and why clean comedy is becoming big business.

- **Should Christians Drink Alcohol?**

Experts and authorities in the church speak about both sides of this debate as they discuss the potential dangers of prevalent alcohol use in the church.

- **The Fourth Great Wave of the Holy Spirit is Underway**

Larry Sparks offers an overview with evidence that will encourage you to keep praying.

- **Getting Past Your Identity Crisis**

Seven key truths of life are uncovered from the “I Am” statements of Jesus.

## INSPIRE

- How one pastor birthed a cross-cultural movement in his church
- Cancer survivor encounters God in the wilderness
- Meet a modern-day Joseph of Arimathea

## EMPOWER

- This month's resources: *Victor – Praying for Girls – The Heist – Planting the Heavens – The Sacrament of Happy – Lift – Can I Just Hide in Bed 'til Jesus Comes Back? – The River*
- Reviews: *Steve Greene's Love Leads – Landry Cantrell's Projections*

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# When God Calls You—But Your Spouse Disagrees

One of the most important and shortest talks I ever had with Bob Buford—later to be my boss—was in 2008. I'd come to his organization, Halftime, to find clarity about whether to leave

my career in finance for a nonprofit. But first I found myself in a chair next to him. "Lisa's not where I am on this," I said referring to my wife. "I'm ready to go, and she's not there."

Bob never blinked. "Stop, then," he said. "Do nothing until you can agree."

Really? I thought. When I'm sure God's calling me? "It'll be a disaster," Bob said, and that froze me.

As all spouses eventually find out, that other person standing at the altar with you—the one putting a ring on your finger, as well—has interests and passions independent of yours. My passion is my work helping marketplace men and women find their Ephesians 2:10 calling. Lisa loves girls, pageants, the arts, dancing, acting. She's about seeing young girls fall in love with Christ and seize their potential. Needless to say, until I met Lisa, pageants were off my radar, but I can be interested if she is. And she puts up with my baseball, football and, for now, boxing.

For Lisa and me to be in step starts with my matching her pace—letting her agenda guide mine. One way to begin to do that is to know her agenda in the first place, to ask her questions and listen closely to what she says.

"What do you think?" is a reasonable conversation starter. And it's what she thinks that matters, not what I think. In making major career decisions, one of our Halftime coaches instructs each of his clients to go to their spouses with a three-part question: What are your dreams for one year, three years and 10 years from now? And answer each one on three levels: 1) for you as a child of God, 2) for us as a couple and 3) for us as a family.

Get all nine responses and go to dinner, the coach says. After dinner, sit back and read through the answers. Unlike a workplace assignment with a hard deadline, he'll add, getting

to a thoughtful response on these questions can take time. Wives especially, if they have poured themselves into raising kids, tend to bury their own dreams. Still, a marriage on life support is hardly a gender thing. Male or female, if you're an achiever, your drink of choice is challenge and success, feverishly hoping the next glass brings more joy or happiness. Welcome to sobriety.

It's a fact that hard-driving men and women can skip time-consuming conversations at home for more time at work. It's also true that when work is everything, the person at home can seem less valuable than someone able to push us up the company ladder.

At the same Halftime event where Bob told me to wait to match step with Lisa, he told the group that an all-time top decision in his life had been to come home every day and, for at least 15 minutes, hear about Linda's day; his job was to say nothing. At first, he wanted to break in with commentary and news of his own, Bob said, but listening is a muscle. As he grew familiar with Linda's days, the people in them, her challenges and decisions ... his interest genuinely grew. Linda felt the connection, too, and their relationship showed it.

For myself, when I talk about marriage, I tend to emphasize words like authenticity and openness because I'm a get-along guy. Instead of putting conflict on the table, I prefer for difficulties to stay under the rug. On those days when Lisa and I get it right, when we risk the hard stuff together, we grow from candor and forgiveness. (We also benefit from knowing each other's hot buttons and avoiding them.)

One day a guy at our office went home and said, "Honey, I want to know your passions and desires for the rest of your life." Later as he spoke about it to us—his wife standing next to him—tears ran down his cheeks. It went that well. Since then this family's adult kids see their dad, 34 years into the marriage, honor their mom in a whole new way.

Not every honest conversation guarantees to transform a marriage. But until your spouse is for your decision, it's not God's call. My yearning to "do something" for God began in 1999. Not until 2010 were Lisa and I on the same page, and not until then did I fully sense God's perfect timing.

As a type A, I think I know when I'm ready to move. As a believer, I'm never free to act alone. Meanwhile, the journey to my spouse's endorsement—or not—prepares me for the final destination. We see that looking back. And in God's economy, all we do is better for it. {eoa}

*Dean Niewolny is CEO of The Halftime Institute, which helps high-capacity men and women understand their Ephesians 2:10 callings, and author of TRADE UP: How to Move from Just Making Money to Making a Difference.*

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## **Read How You Can Sign the Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality**

In my new book *God and Donald Trump* (which releases Nov. 7), I make the point that there was a time in America not too long ago when there was a common understanding of what was right and wrong, and we didn't have a large percentage of the population, including the elites, trying to say the things that were once wrong were right and things that were right are now wrong.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the changing mores on human sexuality. Even if people weren't following biblical standards years ago, there was a general understanding that

they should be—that marriage was between one man and one woman for life, that babies should be born in wedlock and even that young people should wait until marriage to have sex.

In the last couple of decades, the gay agenda has come to the forefront, culminating in the Supreme Court ruling in 2015 that same-sex couples could “get married.” Now it seems as if there is a drumbeat of opposition to anyone who puts forward a biblical standard and says any of this behavior is wrong.

Thankfully, a group of 170 Christian leaders earlier this week issued the Nashville Statement, which affirms in 14 articles what the Bible says about human sexuality. It was initiated by some leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention, including Dr. Denny Burk, who is the president of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

Then they invited other Christian leaders, including me, to sign it, which I was happy to do after reading their very clear statement.

Now you can participate too, by signing this statement online. Since Tuesday, 8,000 have done so, and I hope we can get many thousands more.

Below, I have printed the statement in its entirety and given a link where you can sign it as well as read the names of the 170 leaders who originally signed the statement. A group met in Nashville to deal with how to affirm the biblical standard as a part of the national debate about what is right and wrong regarding sexuality, so that’s why they called it the Nashville Statement.

However, on Tuesday, the mayor of Nashville, Megan Barry, tweeted, “The @CBMWorg’s so-called “Nashville Statement” is poorly named and does not represent the inclusive values of the city & people of Nashville.” Her tweet was picked up by media all over the country and gave the Nashville Statement much more visibility than it would have

gained otherwise, according to Dr. Burk, whom I interviewed about the statement on a podcast, which you can listen to below.

Please take time to read the statement, sign your name and encourage others to do the same. Sadly, there are those in the church who are beginning to “evolve” on what they believe is right and wrong, and in an attempt to be “inclusive,” are no longer saying homosexuality is a sin. But that’s a topic for another newsletter.

And be sure to listen to my powerful podcast with Dr. Denny Burk of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood by clicking [here](#).

Read the entire text of the Nashville Statement below, and remember to sign it and see the names of the original 170 leaders who signed it) at [this link](#).

## **Nashville Statement**

### **PREAMBLE**

*“Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves...” –Psalm 100:3*

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God’s design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God’s beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an

individual's autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes glad-hearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

## **ARTICLE I**

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

## **ARTICLE II**

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

## **ARTICLE III**

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

## **ARTICLE IV**

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

## **ARTICLE V**

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

#### **ARTICLE VI**

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

#### **ARTICLE VII**

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

#### **ARTICLE VIII**

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

#### **ARTICLE IX**

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality—a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

#### **ARTICLE X**

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

#### **ARTICLE XI**

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his imagebearers as male and female.

#### **ARTICLE XII**

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

#### **ARTICLE XIII**

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

#### **ARTICLE IV**

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord and supreme treasure. WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

Remember to sign the Nashville Statement (and see the names of the original 170 leaders who signed it) at [this link](#).

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## **5 Encouraging Ways to Help Your Kids Stand for Holiness**

One of our subscribers pointed out the fact that if we are raising our children to stand for what is right, then we are raising them to be a minority. A minority is a hard place to be, and it's a hard position to put our children in—even though we know that it's the right approach to take. If, then,

we do choose to raise our children to be people of integrity, then it's also incumbent on us to equip them for the task.

Author Flannery O'Connor put it this way with her timeless insight: "You have to push as hard as the age that pushes against you." O'Conner was talking about not only owning values, but also having the resources to make sure they stick in a world that doesn't always offer much encouragement to those who are different. Do your children have the strength to push back against all the cultural pressures? Here are five ways to help your kids stand up for what's right.

### **1. They have to know what's right.**

Teaching and training children is fundamental to family life. So let's start by making sure our children are clear about integrity, and that they know first hand the source of what is right and wrong and what we say we believe.

### **2. Practice talking about values, ideals and standards.**

Just like our lessons in school, learning what is right becomes easier to articulate via practice. Talk about what is right. Be deliberate about identifying "teachable moments." Practice asking hard questions, and then expect your children to explain themselves so they'll be ready when it becomes necessary (and it will).

### **3. Practice right behavior as a family.**

It's more practical to stand for what is right when the family stands with you, when "doing right" is a family value. The first-century writer James once said, "But a man may say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). James understood how important it is to live our values and integrity out loud.

### **4. Pick them up gently when they fall.**

We all fail to stand for what is right in varying degrees. So be a compassionate teacher at home. Your job as a dad is to lead, not drive, your children. So pick them up when they fall, comfort them, encourage them and be their strength.

## **5. Make sure your children learn to respect people with different values.**

Your children are different. So teach them to respect differences in others. Our children need their peers to know that they love and respect them as people, even while they cannot/will not compromise their own values. This is tricky, but the ability to survive is often tied to humility. Plus, we can't expect to gain respect if we're not willing to offer it in return.

What is an example of a time you stood up for what was right that you can use to teach your kids? {eoa}

*This article originally appeared at .*

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# **Former Southern Baptist Convention President Exposes Hidden Health Stigma in the Church**

Frank Page—former Southern Baptist Convention president and megachurch pastor—still remembers the phone call that shook his world.

He was alone at home when the call came that his daughter had committed suicide.

Now, he's exposing the hidden stigma of mental illness in the church. Page and his wife share their daughter's heartbreaking story with CBN.

Watch the video to find out more.