

Finishing 2023 and Gearing Up for 2024

When you look at the landscape of the world in politics, big tech, big pharma or big box stores, identity politics, recent church and ministry failures, and the economic collapse, it is exhausting. People are tired of living through what feels like historic world events every day. There are no human tools that can bring people through this confusion together, but we are in a divine set up.

“Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both,” (Prov. 20:12, NIV).

We have been watching a very unique set of spiritual events unfold, and if you look with your spiritual eyes you will start to have hope that God is leading us into something.

The Year So Far

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Let's take a look at America as an example.

First we had the Asbury revival or outpouring, which was when a group of Generation Z young people began to cry out after a prayer meeting in repentance and response to the tugging of the Spirit on their hearts. Tens of thousands showed up within weeks.

At the same time, a movie that should have had the normal success of a small well-done independent movie blew up: *Jesus Revolution*, the story of the Jesus People movement which was the last great revival in American history where many of the

Christian leaders who are pastoring in America today got saved.

Around this time during the height of a three-strand cord of identity politics, national rebellion politically and religious intolerance something happened on an NFL field. A player named Damar Hamlin fell down dead, and both teams and everyone watching began to pray to Jesus for his life. We saw something together on national TV that no one had seen before. Then Damar came back. The episode spurred prayer meetings in the NFL and chaplaincy one on ones with many players, some making a first-time decision for Christ in a very vocal way.

Damar had a miraculous recovery that even people reporting for ESPN—which is typically very woke—praised God for. It was no longer the narrative, “Let’s send good energy his way.” But ESPN commentators, one of whom even said, “Let’s all pray to Jesus for his healing,” in a live broadcast, and Hamlin was healed in front of all of culture.

Then we started to see a conservative root system in America activate toward people who wanted to indoctrinate children. Whether woke corporations like Disney, which lost over two-thirds of its market value, or the Target boycott for “tuck friendly” bathing suits that ran as small as mens xxxs, which only can fit boys—but they said they weren’t for children. We watched the everyman start to rise up and say, “I am not spending money here...you are taking away my rights by enforcing yours.” It seemed to have started the first-ever modern culture skirmish on an insidious agenda against households that conservatives seem to be winning for the first time since they were told it was wrong to fight by mainstream news media and specialty groups.

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At the same time these things were taking place, God began to move through the Supreme Court. There have been huge wins for prayer in school, *Roe v. Wade* being overturned, businesses not being forced into oblivion, the cutting off of affirmative action in colleges, and suspending the unfair student loan forgiveness plan which would have created even more recession.

Then an entertainment studio emerged, Angel Studios, who somehow broke records for its small independent group in the theaters for both crowdfunding their new cartoon classic, *David*, and releasing an anti human-trafficking movie, *The Sound of Freedom*, which beat the legendary Indiana Jones Disney franchise in its opening day.

What Else is the Lord Showing Us?

God has been on the move in 2023 in ways that are both obvious but also like a trail of breadcrumbs leading to something He has in store for us right now.

It is so easy to see what the enemy is doing in culture right now, and what the fruit of man's failures are causing in society all around us. It is a dark day but in the midst of that, God wants you to train your eyes to see what He is doing.

In the beginning of this new year, I heard the Lord say "The enemy thinks he has humanity in check..." I saw a huge chessboard and the pieces were all set up for humanity's loss. But then the Lord spoke again and said, "But I have the enemy in *checkmate* and I am going to transition people all over the world in their geography, careers, churches and relationships to divinely set them up to set the stage for this move."

Ever since then I have felt an urgency that God wants us to open our spiritual eyes and look past the human failures and demonic assignments and look at God. What is He doing and how do we train our eyes to it?

Guidance and Equipping

I don't know if you have ever gone to a good leader, manager or even parent with a problem that felt so huge that you couldn't see through it. Then they brought comfort and resolve in a way that you just didn't have the understanding to bring yourself. But this is what God does for us. He is leading and He sees the big picture and as we learn to look at Him, through both the Word and also through His Spirit, we are going to have that comfort.

Part of it is that we recognize what we are discerning. Discernment as both a gift and a spiritual awareness was meant by God to train our spiritual senses to His spiritual realm. Many people have downgraded this gift or underrated it to be something that keeps us focused on discerning humanity's failures and the enemy's strategies. Although these things can be discerned, this isn't what discernment is about at all. Discernment is when we can look at very hard circumstances and know or discern God's thoughts and perceptions about these very real matters. We hear the perceptions of Christ over the world that He died for, and we see the thread of His resurrected thoughts in everything we look at.

Discernment and opening our spiritual eyes to what God is seeing is the antidote to a lot of the poison that is flooding media and social influence right now. When you talk about what God is doing it brings clarity while also blowing away all confusion.

For those who are looking with God's eyes, you will see there are more of these "wins" and "breadcrumbs" coming all through the rest of 2023. You will feel it is Him leading us into something that He has been planning for a very long time, a wonderful move of His Spirit for salvation but also transformation that I believe we are right on the precipice. It could be another Jesus People Movement, but one that will affect not just people, but also industries, nations, church

movements and the environment.

This is a time to strengthen your spiritual vision by looking for what God is doing in your own life, family, career, church, city, region and country. As you learn how to focus on what He is doing you will put other things that are hard circumstances and even war tactics of our enemy into perspective and you will truly feel like you are winning.

“Keep your thoughts continually fixed on all that is authentic and real, honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always,” (Phil. 4:8, TPT).

Here's What You Can Do

So how do we bring this down to our own responsibility to look with our spiritual eyes and see the potential of what God wants to do in our lives right now?

First, we have to cleanse our pallet. Meaning, we are living in an information age and we are digesting negative and new information at a rate that no other generation would have understood. News media and social media are assaulting us with new subjects to be afraid of or to be offended by. To really create space for discerning what God is doing in your own life and in culture, you need to fast from the negativity and the offensive information that you are being bombarded with. Do a media fast, an entertainment fast, set some boundaries on relationships that are focused more on negative than positive. Spend 30 days resetting and each day ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He is doing in the very same issues that have been so important but also so unresolved in your life or in the world and areas that you have passion for.

Next, don't allow your focus to be on a problem or a negative aspect of something. Do you care about racism? Don't focus on the injustice but ask God what He wants to do and look

actively online and locally for people who are seeing solutions and bringing God's redemptive plan there. Are you passionate about anti human trafficking? Fast from the negative part or the impact of the injustice and start to look for the dream of God and the potential resolution. Are you devastated by a loss of relationship or by some of the choices someone is making who you are still in deep connection with? Don't focus on what is wrong in the situation, ask God to show you what He loves about them, about your connection to them, about your relational capacity for others and strengthen yourself in Jesus and His wisdom and perspective.

Don't just try and pray off the hard or bad things, but look to replace the bad with the will of Jesus in heaven. What does He want to bring? How is His help manifesting or going to increase? When we just rehearse the problems over and over each time we pray, we don't make room for the vision to lead us into our eternal hope through Jesus.

Also, be intentional in your relationships right now. Press into friendships with other Christians who are not stuck or polarized over issues. Look for people who have a lot of hope, an abundance of fruit and who have ambition to see what God can do in their lives. Relationships that form around negative agreements are not difficult to attain. But relationships formed around hope and faith take more effort. Reorganize your relational priorities around people who are living from a positive vantage point.

Finally, spend some time in your prayer life asking God questions and doing some listening prayer. Expect answers even if they don't come in the moment, but come through conversations throughout the week, or what people preach at the services you go to. God is looking for you to make room for His voice and then to listen and recognize when He is coming.

Our Road Ahead

If we are going to look up the road to where these breadcrumbs of divine activities are leading us, we are going to start to get a vision for how big God wants to move in our generation. We are going to also be able to live with that as an atmosphere of greater hope around us.

God has given us everything we need through connection to Him to do it, so let's look for what God wants through the rest of 2023 and forward into 2024.

Shawn Bolz is a TV and podcast host, an author, producer and a Christian minister. He has been leading conversations in the church, entertainment industry and in social justice that help believers connect their faith to culture in a transformative way. Shawn's connected yet humorous style of speaking, media hosting & coaching through his unique expert perspective has brought him around the world to meet with churches, CEO's, entertainers and world leaders.