

Urgent Messages for These Troubled Times

I love books. When I say “books,” I’m primarily talking about real books—books you hold in your hands and read with your eyes. (And yes, that includes e-books.)

Podcasts and audio books are fine for traveling or for when we don’t really feel like concentrating. But books—real books—are (in my opinion) the preferred storehouses of life-changing insights and truths.

Books distill the thoughts, convictions and emotions of other human beings onto the printed page. You can hold these thoughts in your hand. You can underline and highlight them, dog-ear and bookmark them, and refer to them again and again.

When I studied for the ministry at Moore Theological University in Sydney, Australia, my instructors filled me with a sense of urgency to preach the uncompromised Word of God. They instilled a love of truth in me by pointing me to classic Christian books—the works of such great Christian minds as Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther and John Calvin. In the books I read, tongues that had been stilled for centuries could speak once more, communicating timeless truths to my hungry mind.

Over the years, the two authors who have had the deepest impact on my life (other than the Author of the Bible) are John R. W. Stott and J. I. Packer. Both of these great Christian souls have gone to be with the Lord—Stott in 2011 and Packer in 2020—but their books are still prominently displayed on my shelves. I open these books frequently, and they speak to me as compellingly as ever.

Because God has used books in such a powerful way to shape my life, I feel called by God to write. By the grace of God, I

have had the privilege of setting forth, in book form, the thoughts, convictions and feelings that God has poured into my heart.

I am deeply grateful to Charisma House for providing such a good home for my four most recent books. I have written these four books out of a sense of urgency, during a time of crisis out of a belief that we are entering times of increasing and intensifying challenge for the Christian church. Now, more than ever, we face times that call us to get serious with God and to obey Him with every ounce of our being. Let me tell you why I wrote these four books.

Hope for This Present Crisis

I wrote *Hope for This Present Crisis* in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had paralyzed the global economy, bankrupted businesses, closed schools and threatened the global economy. The pandemic killed millions of people and showed us that our civilization was much more fragile than we ever imagined.

Yet the pandemic was not the “present crisis” I was writing about. I was alarmed and troubled over an even *more dangerous* global crisis: the decline of Christianity and the collapse of Christian influence in the world. This crisis continues to threaten our civilization. Across America and Europe, churches are emptying. Unbelief is spreading. A generation has turned its back on the God of the Bible.

The result is an epidemic of addiction, suicide and violence. Across our society we see ever more abortions, more empty cradles and fewer marriages. As the love of many grows cold, we see deeper political divisions, more violent racial divisions and widespread rioting and killing in our streets.

When we cease to believe in God, something else will fill the God-shaped void. The decline of Christianity in our culture has produced a moral and spiritual “hollowing-out” of society.

All the other social ills we face stem from the decline of Christian influence in the world.

In an April 2021 podcast, two men—a devout Muslim and a prominent secular Jew—had an amazing conversation about Christianity. The Muslim said, “I am longing for more Americans to rediscover Christianity, and to be more Christian, even though I don’t believe in Christianity myself.” The secular Jew agreed, saying that he was alarmed by the decline of Christianity in America. “I very much worry about what’s going to happen to America,” he said. “To me, an unchurched America is a much scarier America.” Imagine that! A devout Muslim and a secular Jew are worried about the decline of Christianity—and they agree that America needs Christian revival! That’s a wake-up call for you and me.

In Luke 18:8, Jesus asks, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” Demographic researcher George Barna has conducted nationwide surveys showing how worldly beliefs have infected the Christian church. He found that *only 17% of church-going Christians hold a biblical worldview!* Barna defines a “biblical worldview” as a belief that the Bible is totally accurate in all of its principles, a belief that we cannot earn our way to heaven through good works, a belief that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth, a belief that Satan is a real being (and not merely a symbol), and a belief that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator and ruler of the world.

Only 17% of self-described Christians agree with those Bible-based statements. Clearly, we in the church have allowed worldly ideas to infect our beliefs. Biblical faith is in decline. As a result, our society is in a state of chaos, conflict and disarray.

But here’s the good news: Decline is not inevitable. Decline is a choice—and so is restoration. You and I must make the wise and godly choice. This is the time to choose faith and

courage.

Hope for This Present Crisis is a biblical blueprint for living confident, godly lives in a time of moral confusion. As the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:13, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.” I wrote *Hope for This Present Crisis* to encourage you to boldly live out your Christian faith in these perilous post-Christian times.

Empowered by Praise

In September 2021, Charisma House released the 20th anniversary edition of *Empowered by Praise: Experiencing God’s Presence and Power When You Give Him Glory*. I wrote the book to reveal the blessings of authentic worship in our lives.

God deserves our praise, and our praise honors Him. But did you know that praising God changes us and enriches our lives? Praise is the primary means by which we invite the Lord to establish His presence, purpose and authority in every aspect of our lives.

The world has changed greatly in the 20 years since *Empowered by Praise* was first published, but the reality of God’s nature—and the reality of our need to praise Him—never changes. God has not changed since time began. He’s the same yesterday, today and forever. He created us to know Him, to worship Him and to give Him praise. We were made to experience His majesty and to glorify Him.

If King David were here today, he’d shout to us, “Clap your hands! Make a joyful noise with musical instruments! Shout praises to the Most High, the almighty God!” To Western minds, David’s exuberant praise seems over the top. We American Christians believe in worship, but let’s not get too emotional!

I was born in Egypt, so I am (like David) a man of the Middle

East. I understand his emotional makeup. In the Middle East, you don't greet a friend with a casual hello. You greet him with excitement and an embrace! Why? Because your friend is important to you, and you want to express your feelings out loud.

How much more, then, would a Middle Easterner like David want to express his emotions upon encountering the Lord Most High! And so should we.

It's a tragedy that all too many believers have never been taught the importance of praise. Giving God the praise He deserves is vital to our spiritual growth. When we neglect to praise Him, we bottle up the power of God and prevent that power from flowing through our lives.

Praising God leads to the enjoyment of God's presence in our lives. As C. S. Lewis rightly observed, "In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him." Praise prepares us to receive blessings from God. Praise produces spiritual growth and development. Praise is the great engine that unleashes His power in our lives.

I wrote *Empowered by Praise* to reveal the empowering adventure of a life of praise to God. I pray that this book will motivate and inspire you to truly enjoy God as you praise and glorify Him.

Never Give Up

Have you ever wondered why nonbelievers display such an intense hatred for Jesus and His followers? What is it about our faith in God's infallible Word that triggers such hostility among the unsaved? The answer may be simpler than you think.

The gospel tells us that we are lost in our sin, and there is no way to save ourselves through good works. Salvation is a free gift of God's grace, and we can only obtain salvation

through faith, not works. That message is a problem for nonbelievers. The natural mind says, "I admit I'm not perfect, but I'm a good person. God will accept me. I don't need a Savior."

I wrote *Never Give Up: Holding Fast to Biblical Truth in Times of Danger and Despair* as an urgent warning. The truth of the gospel is in great danger. Biblical truth is under assault. Christians are hated and persecuted for clinging to the true faith found in the Bible.

Tragically, many in the church, out of a desire to be accepted by this dying world, have begun to compromise and abandon biblical truth. Many preachers now preach a message of human goodness instead of the gospel of forgiveness and redemption from sin. Many preachers now preach a message of positive thinking instead of the blood-stained cross and the empty tomb. Many preachers now preach a message of social justice and political propaganda instead of justification by grace through faith.

But God calls His people to reaffirm the faith of the Bible. He calls us to stand firm and to never give up on His truth. That's why the apostle Paul, near the end of his life, pleaded with Timothy, "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

Don't ever grow weary of upholding God's truth. Regardless of opposition, persecution, suffering or personal cost, guard the truth of the gospel. *Never give up.*

Is the End Near?

I wrote *Is the End Near?: What Jesus Told Us About the Last Days* to answer your questions about the End Times by comparing the prophetic words of Jesus with current trends and events. My goal in this book is to encourage you as you look forward

to the Lord's return.

On the heels of the global pandemic, we now see rising inflation, spiraling fuel prices, increasing scarcity and the growing specter of famine. We see Russia invading Ukraine and China threatening Taiwan—and both Russia and China figure prominently in Bible prophecy. Around the world, nations are spending billions to enlarge their nuclear arsenals. Fires, floods, plagues and other natural disasters are on the rise. Both inside and outside the church, people are wondering: Are we witnessing the end of the world?

A recent edition of *The Nation* ominously declared, "The End of the World Is Closer Than It Seems." And the campus newspaper of the University of Chicago recently published the headline, "Is This the End of the World?" The story reported on the university's famed "Doomsday Clock" which illustrates the current scientific assessment of the extinction threat to the human race. The experts concluded that the threat to humanity has never been greater than right now.

I didn't write *Is the End Near?* to frighten you, but to embolden you with assurances from the Lord Himself. Jesus told us about certain events that would come upon the world before His return. If you are a genuine follower of Christ, you can face the future without fear. Why? Because God is in control of this world—and He is in control of your life.

God's timetable never moves forward or backward with changing events. His Word is a reliable and reassuring guide to the future. Jesus has told us what to expect in the days before His return, and He has told us not to be anxious or afraid.

The world wonders if there is any hope for the future. But you and I know that our only hope is in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. If your faith is firmly anchored in Him, neither war nor plague nor runaway inflation can shake your confidence. We know that the Lord Jesus will return to take us home to

heaven. Because we love Him and trust in Him, we eagerly await His return.

I have written these four books so that you can be ready to meet the Lord Jesus when He comes for us. He may return a thousand years from now—or before you finish reading this sentence. When He comes, make sure He finds you watching, waiting and working to expand His kingdom.

Dr. Michael Youssef was born in Egypt before coming to the United States and fulfilling a childhood dream of becoming an American citizen. He holds degrees from Moore College in Sydney and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and holds a doctorate in social anthropology from Emory University in Atlanta. Dr. Youssef has authored over 40 books, including *Saving Christianity*, *When the Crosses Are Gone* and his latest release, *Is the End Near?* He and his wife, Elizabeth, reside in Atlanta.