

# Billy Graham Turns 90

*Thousands of letters from around the world tell the 20th century's most famous preacher how his ministry changed their lives.*



[ ] Billy Graham, whose simple message of salvation through Christ has not changed in more than 50 years, celebrated his 90th birthday on Friday by receiving in his mountainside home thousands of heartwarming letters from around the world.

“I never expected to live this long, and it is hard to believe I have reached the age of 90,” Graham said in a statement. “Every day is a gift from God, no matter how old we are.”

The massive letter-writing tribute to the world-renowned preacher has been an ongoing project of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) for the last several months.

Family and friends who wanted to honor Graham's faithful witness for Christ collected tens of thousands of testimonies by mail and online ( ) from people whose lives have been changed by Graham's ministry.

“Dear Billy,” wrote one person, “I first heard you preach in San Diego in 1958. I went forward that day and began my walk with Jesus Christ. I actually ran down from the bleachers because I didn't want to get there too late! Best decision I've ever made in my lifetime. Today, I would like to wish you a blessed birthday with the presence of our God being with you.”

In another post, a 29-year-old South African evangelist said Graham's books helped disciple him after he accepted Christ 10 years ago. “Today, because the Lord used your ministry to inspire me, I am a full-time evangelist,” he wrote. “Your integrity, love for Jesus and compassion for souls will always motivate me and my wife as we continue winning thousands of young people for Jesus Christ.”

In more than six decades of ministry, Graham has preached to more than 200 million people in person and in 185 countries. He has also prayed with and counseled every American president from Harry Truman to George W. Bush.

Yet friends say Graham's humble faith consistently placed the fame of his potent influence in check. "Billy always encouraged us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought," Cliff Barrows, a longtime friend and co-worker of Graham's, told *Charisma* in the past. "He warned us not to reach up and touch the glory of God."

After Barack Obama won the presidential election, Graham encouraged Christians to pray for the "many challenges" the president-elect faces. "I urge everyone to join me in pledging our support and prayers as [Obama] begins the difficult task ahead," Graham said.

Apolitical attitudes stem from Graham's long-held worldview—one that is charity-based and nondenominational. His wide embrace of both Christians and nonbelievers has not been without criticism, but Graham has always managed to rise above controversies. "It's been in Dad's heart his whole life to see unity in the body of Christ," son Ned Graham told *Charisma* in 2005. "But that has not happened, and it has grieved him and caused him massive internal pain. But he would never criticize or condemn anyone."

Suffering from frail health for years, Graham has spent most of his time in the Ashville, N.C., home where he and his wife, Ruth, raised their five children: Gigi, Anne, Ruth, Franklin and Ned.

Those closest to Graham say his grief over the loss of his wife in 2007 is constant. "I look forward even more to the time when I will be reunited with my wife in heaven, and neither of us will ever experience again the physical aches and pains brought about by age and illness," Graham said.

Graham has participated in ministry board meetings as his health has allowed, ever since handing over BGEA operations in

2000 to his son Franklin, who along with Graham's grandson Will lead evangelistic crusades worldwide. "I am proud of Franklin's leadership ... and the way [he] is showing the love of Christ to a hurting world, and using new technology to share the gospel message," Graham said.

Parkinson's disease has riddled Graham's body with pain and discomfort in recent years, and he has suffered everything from a broken hip to prostate cancer to the installation of a brain shunt.

But Graham said it's important for Christians to remember the pain of their physical bodies is only a temporary burden. "I have discovered that just because we grow weaker physically as we age, it doesn't mean that we must grow weaker spiritually," he said. "In fact, we ought to be growing stronger spiritually because our eyes ought to be on eternity and heaven—on the things that really matter."

Friends and family say Graham's mind is sharp, and he is writing another book about growing older to help people prepare emotionally and spiritually for what he says can be the most fulfilling years of life.

Graham will mark his birthday with a family dinner in North Carolina on Friday night.

**-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli with Sandra Chambers**

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## **R-rated Christian Film Debuted Friday**

*The Christian horror film 'House', which stirred controversy after it received an R rating, released in theaters across the country.*



[ ] The makers of a Christian horror movie which released in

more than 350 theaters across the country Friday are waiting to see whether its unexpected R rating will scare away the audience.

*House*, the movie adaptation of the 2006 Thomas Nelson novel written jointly by Frank Peretti and Ted Dekker, two of Christian publishing's best-selling authors, earned the viewing age restriction from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) for "terror and violence."

Starring Michael Madsen, the film follows two young couples that face their fears and hidden secrets as they spend a night trapped in a remote guesthouse with a killer. The promotional poster features a pentagram with the writing, "The wages of sin is death."

The release has sparked debate among fans of the authors and industry professionals. The trailer available at [has](#) prompted scores of postings, with some criticizing the film for being too dark and others arguing that it strongly presents a biblical message.

Christian retailers like Darren Kehrer, manager of The Carpenter's Son, a Parable store, in Lafayette, Ind., suspect that the R rating could have a dampening effect on its reception. "My guess is that it will (have an impact)," he said. "People will see the R rating and I think that will prevent some people (from seeing it)."

Dekker said that he had mixed feelings about the MPAA decision, which had left everyone "scratching their heads." However, keeping younger audiences from seeing the film in theaters should produce strong sales when it is released on DVD. No date has yet been set for that.

*House* was "wholly redemptive," Dekker said. The poster featured a pentagram seen in the film and was "a clear indictment of the evil in the house," he said. "There's no power in the symbol alone, but I'm sure some will find it offensive so this concerns me somewhat." –**Christian Retailing**

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# Pastor Says Prayer Stopped Gay Marriage

*Voters in California, Arizona and Florida passed amendments to their state constitutions defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman.*



[] Every ballot measure banning gay marriage passed in Tuesday's general election, and a pastor from Southern California believes prayer and fasting was what catapulted his state's Proposition 8 across the finish line.

"This is a pretty massive statement of what can happen when pastors stand up and good people stand up to be counted," said San Diego-based Skyline Church Pastor Jim Garlow, who helped mobilize thousands of conservative voters statewide. "California is a pretty unlikely place to have gay marriage stopped, considering what we faced against Hollywood and the media here."

Hailed as a major victory for proponents of traditional marriage California's Proposition 8, by far the most-watched ballot in the nation, passed 52 to 48 percent, effectively reversing a state Supreme Court decision earlier this year that legalized gay marriage.

Depending on legal proceedings, Proposition 8 could nullify thousands of gay marriages performed in the state since June. "It goes to the courts," Garlow said. "We say yes, nullify [the gay marriages]. They say no."

Maggie Gallagher, president of National Organization for Marriage, said in a statement that Californians of every creed, color and party were united in rebuking four judges who tried to impose their marriage values on the whole state.

"This vote," she said, "like earlier votes in Wisconsin, Oregon and Michigan, affirms that when it comes to marriage there is no such thing as a blue state or a red state."

More than 60 percent of voters in Florida passed Amendment 2 while 56 percent of voters in Arizona passed Proposition 102—both of which amend their state constitutions to outlaw gay marriage, even though same-sex marriage was against the law in both states before Tuesday's election.

Tony Perkins, president of the Washington-based Family Research Council, told *Charisma* that conservative voters in the presidential election appeared to be more concerned with the economy than with moral issues. "It's interesting that of the three states that passed marriage amendments, two of those three states—California and Florida—voted for Barack Obama," he noted. "Clearly those [voters] are not in line with his social policies."

Exit polling revealed a huge majority of African-American voters, many of them drawn to the voting booth by Obama's candidacy, voted for Proposition 8.

"The marriage issue transcends race and class," said Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Woman for America. "The principles of the [conservative] movement that we champion are good for everyone."

Noting that the black and Latino vote was critical for passing Proposition 8, California pastor Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, said the ballot measure was a perfect example of the power churches have when they work across ethnic lines.

"Here's what this election demonstrates—white evangelicals by themselves cannot win elections," Rodriguez said. "White evangelicals by themselves cannot preserve a biblical worldview or a biblical agenda within American political and public policy arena. It is impossible. 2008 said it is over."

Garlow said mobilizing conservatives to create a groundswell

of support for Proposition 8 was not easy, since gay rights activists allegedly used intimidation tactics before Election Day in an attempt to disrupt public support for the measure.

He described cars displaying "Yes on 8" stickers being keyed and vandalized, protect-marriage advocates being physically assaulted and even a pastor who publicly supported the measure threatened with death.

"We executed what we're told was the largest grassroots movement ever," he said. "We likely had around 70,000 people helping to get out the vote on Tuesday."

Alan Chambers, president of Florida-based Exodus International, attributed the success of the amendments to Christians at the grassroots level. Though he lives in Orlando, he said he was most intimately involved with helping to pass California's highly contentious Proposition 8. "I think that we have [the Church] to thank," he said, "for championing the cause of marriage."

Chambers cautioned Christians to not gloat in victory nor neglect their ministry to the gay communities that opposed Proposition 8. "It's a measure that I backed ... but I hope that we as compassionate conservative Christians ... will remember that there are broken hearts [in the gay community] and we in the Church should be the first ones to go and help mend those broken hearts through Jesus Christ."

In late September, thousands of Christians joined Garlow on a statewide 40-day fast leading up to the vote on Proposition 8. He said he also held conference calls, with as many as 3,000 pastors on the line at once. "I don't take credit for any of this," he said. "The foundation of this all was prayer."

Last Saturday at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, Garlow and more than 30,000 others joined Lou Engle of TheCall for 12 hours of fasting and intense prayer. He said around 4:30 p.m., during a two-hour block of prayer that he was assigned to lead, "something broke in the heavenlies."

“We knew right then that we had the victory,” he said, referring to Proposition 8.

On the day after the measure was passed, thousands of gay rights activists in California protested in the streets of Hollywood. In addition, lawsuits were immediately filed with California’s high court on behalf of same-sex couples arguing that the new amendment to the constitution was really a “revision” that should have required legislative approval before going before voters. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

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## A Historic Election

*By Steve Strang*



Congratulations to Barack Obama on his historic election as the first African-American president of the United States. I had the privilege of meeting him last June. He is a very likable person who seems reasonable. Let's pray that he governs from the center and not from the far left.

I supported Sen. John McCain mainly because of his stands on the pro-life issue and the issue of traditional marriage. To me these issues are more important than economic concerns, immigration problems, environmental policy and so on. I believe reasonable people can disagree on those subjects, but there are a few fundamental issues that we as believers must have strong convictions about.

Otherwise, however, I was a reluctant supporter of McCain. I didn't understand the purpose of many of his policies or why he seemed so distant from conservative Christians. It wasn't until he named Sarah Palin as his running mate that his candidacy excited conservative Christians like me.

The Bible tells us to pray for those in authority. We have an

opportunity now to live out our faith by praying for our new president. Pray that he will have a change of heart on many of the foundational issues. My colleague Lee Grady sent out an article today titled "10 Ways to Pray for Barack Obama," which you can read by clicking [here](#).

We have seen some former presidents change while they were in office, rise to the occasion and become great leaders. We have also survived liberal and mediocre presidents who didn't, such as advancing conservative values Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter.

And we have seen in the last year that having a self-professed "evangelical Christian" in the White House may have helped a little, but it did not do a lot to change the moral character of our country. In fact, though I personally admire President Bush and thank God for his strong leadership on the war against terror, I, like many Americans, have been disappointed in him in many ways. Undoubtedly his unpopularity contributed to McCain's defeat.

This year, with everything that's happening politically, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for any Republican to beat almost any Democrat. I have no doubt that Hillary Clinton would have won over Mitt Romney—or Mike Huckabee, whom I supported. People in America obviously want a change. The scary thing for those of us who believe the Bible and want conservative values is that the change may move the country too far to the left politically and morally.

Thankfully the marriage amendments that were on the ballots in Arizona, Florida and California all passed. Here in Florida a proposed amendment to the state constitution must receive 60 percent of the vote to pass—which is the highest percentage requirement in the nation. These amendments were clearly based on a moral issue—the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman—and we can thank God our prayers were answered. I think the fact that all three amendments passed

shows that voters just want a change in the White House rather than that our country as a whole is shifting toward the left.

To continue reading the Strang Report, [click here](#).

African-Americans can be proud of this historic moment. As I have written before, I think it's time for an African-American to be in the White House. I have worked hard for racial reconciliation throughout my entire adult life, and I will continue to do so.

I regret that in the heat of the political battle some who read my Strang Report felt I was insensitive to the feelings of African-Americans. I regret using the unfortunate term "so-called Christians" when speaking of those who disagree with me. I apologize to anyone I offended.

At the very longest, Obama will be president for only eight years. At the end of his term or terms in office, those of us who believe in Christ will still be brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of who is leading our country and what policies are in place.

I hope this election is a wake-up call for the body of Christ. Though "conservative Christians" did play a part in the political process, often those who get involved are people who are simply conservative politically—not necessarily born again. In fact, many of the activists are so strident in their views that they do not help the cause of Christ.

We really need to see people changing in this country on a personal level. You and I may not influence the halls of Congress, but we do influence people in our families, our workplaces and our churches.

I'm concerned about some of the prophecies that came out during this election. Earlier this year several "well-known" prophets were predicting that Rudy Giuliani would be president. More recently several were predicting, although

quietly, that McCain would win against all odds, as Harry Truman did in 1948. I received an e-mail a few hours after the election from one who had issued such a prophecy, apologizing for the error and saying he is going to take a time of reflection to pray about what God is saying.

I recognize that all prophets "see through a glass darkly," and it's human nature to project upon the Almighty the things we want. Maybe it's also human nature to have "wishful thinking." But when we confuse it with hearing from the Lord, it's not good.

I have been amazed at the number of responses I've received to the Strang Report, especially to some of the things I have "cut and pasted" from other sources. This morning I received quite a few e-mails that I thought would interest you. One is "Understanding the Psychology of Post-Election Distress Syndrome" by Dwight Bain, a nationally certified counselor whom I have known for several years. You can read his article below.

My friend Mat Staver, who was very active in helping to get the marriage amendment passed in Florida, issued a press release sharing his values on rebuilding the base and advancing conservative values. [Click here](#) to read his comments. He believes the passage of all three marriage amendments shows that conservative values still matter.

James Pinkerton, whom I enjoy watching on Fox News, wrote a short but insightful analysis of why McCain lost, which seemed to ring true as I read it. [Click here](#) to read the analysis.

Finally, former Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, whom I supported strongly during the primaries, sent out an e-mail titled "We Will Be Back In Strength." [Click here](#) to read his comments, which include the following: "Politics is not an event but a process. Sometimes we lose the events, but it never gives the right to stop being faithful to our principles

that enlisted us in the process. We shall live to fight another day.”

As always, we welcome your comments on the blog. Please forward this to your family and friends, and ask them to sign up for the Strang Report.

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## **Understanding the Psychology of Post-Election Distress Syndrome**

*By Dwight Bain, Nationally Certified Counselor*

A major election leads to major change—psychologically, that is. No matter who wins an election, the unexpected emotional let down or explosive reaction after the ballots are counted can be overwhelming to many, especially the aged or over-involved who can be set up for crushing amounts of what I call **. or Post-Election Distress Syndrome.**

This election has likely been the most stressful of any during our lifetime because of numbing news fatigue and continual media over-exposure, yet the real problems are yet to come. Personal anxiety, professional panic and poorly thought out decisions are on the horizon regardless of your political persuasion.

Why such a gloomy projection?

It's based on how this election process has been so overwhelming much of the time with months of negative news, never ending data to process and confusing choices to make on complex issues while partisan experts are shouting every half-hour on news/talk stations that we are all doomed if their candidate doesn't win. Not to mention the huge challenge on who is trust-worthy, since you often don't know who will say something inappropriate on YouTube and crash their

credibility, leaving you feeling very alone to make some major decisions without leaders who lacked the strength of character to stand on their convictions instead of popular opinion polls.

### Mountain top experiences guarantee the next step is always the valley

Think of a major campaign like climbing a major mountain range. You prepare for years and climb for months to finally reach the top. Once there the view is great. You take some pictures, but you can't stay on a mountain top, so no matter which way you head, it's down in any direction. After the mountain top comes the valley, which is a normal part of life. The danger is that for many people the downward slide is so unexpected. Most actual mountain climbing accidents happen on the way down, and I project that there will be millions of people who are unprepared for the emotional upheaval they are about to experience after the election is over.

Everyone will feel some degree of emotional let down once the issues have been decided and the acceptance speeches are given. That's normal, however for some the removal of posters, signs, balloons and banners will lead to a free fall of depressing emotions. If someone has been a 'news junkie' the last few months it will be especially stressful. Those feelings of distress will come out in one of two ways.

### Two possible reactions to post-election distress

#### **1) Anger –**

Which can lead to violence and impulsive decisions. People who feel violated by the election process will often turn to dumping volcanic levels of anger at someone or something to find relief for the pressure inside. This can lead to devastating decisions, impulsive rage or using the wrong words in front of the wrong people and losing credibility or worse a job. This can happen in men or women, young or old, but is

most commonly seen in more extroverted personalities and it tends to blow up and blow out fast.

## **2) Apathy –**

This is a more dangerous reaction, since it can lead from distress to the early stages of depression. Stuffing emotions inside is like burying them alive and they just keep building up, yet instead of blowing up and out, they blow in. This leads a person to feel emotionally numb, and often can cause an individual to commit a series of very quiet, yet very harmful self-destructive acts. Eating for comfort, drinking to numb the pain, hooking up with the wrong partner to try and forget about the election or just refusing to answer the phone, closing the mini-blinds and checking out on life like a hermit hiding in a dark cave.

The best choice after an election is completed is **Acceptance**. It's over and now it's time to move on with whatever leaders and issues the majority of voters selected. You can't change the outcome of an election, but you can freak yourself out with fears about the future apocalypse predicted by many. Don't do that! Life will go on, and your world will continue. God is bigger than any politician and isn't in a panic, so trust in heaven's agenda and not that of Washington and you'll immediately find a deeper level of peace.

***What happens in your house is way more important than what happens in the White House*** since you can't control what political leaders do, but you can control you. Let this journey off of the political 'mountain' be one of a growing sense of perspective as you remember that after the valley there will be another mountain to climb. There will be another day to vote on national issues and when the dust settles your life will usually be about as good as you choose to make it. This approach takes the power to control your mood away from the politicians or the media, so you can build a better life without losing sleep or energy from the dangers of post-election distress syndrome.

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**About the author-** Dwight Bain is dedicated to helping people achieve greater results. He is a Nationally Certified Counselor, Certified Life Coach and Certified Family Law Mediator in practice since 1984 with a primary focus on solving crisis events and managing major change. He is a member of the National Speakers Association and partners with media, major corporations and non-profit organizations to make a positive difference in our culture. Access more counseling and coaching resources designed to save you time by solving stressful situations by visiting his counseling blog with over 150 complimentary articles and special reports at

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## Leaders Say Pray for Obama

*Church leaders congratulated Barack Obama on his historic victory and urged believers to intercede for the 44th U.S. president.*



[ ] Church leaders are encouraging Christians to pray in the wake of a historic election that gave the U.S. its first African-American president.

Despite strong objections from conservative Christian leaders and 74 percent of the white evangelical vote going to Republican Sen. John McCain, Democratic candidate Barack Obama sailed to victory Tuesday night, winning 349 electoral votes compared with 163 for McCain.

In a statement released Wednesday, Bishop T.D. Jakes congratulated "President-elect Barack Hussein Obama" with "sincere thanks," saying the former Illinois senator's historic campaign "encouraged, validated and gave inspiration to not only the people of the United States of America, but to the people of our world."

The Dallas megachurch pastor also thanked McCain for fighting "the good fight until the very end." He said, "The world needs Sen. McCain and I am hopeful that he will stay vigilant and active in public service."

After the election results were announced, church leaders began issuing calls to pray for the president-elect. "The Bible clearly states that the leaders should pray for persons who are in authority, so whether we voted for president-elect Obama or not, we must pray for him," said the Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell, a longtime friend of President Bush's who threw his support behind Obama earlier this year. "Our disagreement with the leaders in charge does not give us a license to not pray for them."

Saying no president can govern without God's guidance, Bishop Harry Jackson, co-author of *Personal Faith, Public Policy* and a McCain supporter, encouraged Christians to work with Obama. "I choose to believe that in 2009 we will take a step closer to fulfilling Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream and seeing a great spiritual awakening in our land," said Jackson, who leads a charismatic congregation in Maryland. "I will personally commit myself to making Barack Obama the most successful president in history by backing him with my prayers, support and service to our nation. I pray that every believer will do the same."

Aglow International President Jane Hansen Hoyt echoed that sentiment, congratulating Obama and committing to pray for him and his family. "As a worldwide women's ministry with thousands of members across the U.S., we are praying for two crucial issues he will face that, we believe, will have an effect on our nation for generations: support for the nation of Israel, and the appointment of U.S. Supreme Court justices," Hansen Hoyt said in a statement Wednesday. "May he make those decisions with wisdom and a desire to seek righteousness."

Colorado pastor Dutch Sheets agreed that Christians should intercede for government leaders, but said they should pray that "God will turn their heart and ... keep us moving as a nation toward reformation and awakening."

Before the election, Sheets urged Christians to pray that the pro-life candidate would win, and he believes McCain would have prevailed had there been enough prayer. He said Obama's win would set the pro-life agenda back and could lead to "huge" judgment on America. "There's no way to get around it. It's just going to happen," Sheets said. "You don't invite 20 or 30 more years of abortion, you don't invite that in without judgment. But at the same time, we have to regroup, figure out what God's strategy is and move forward with that."

Several Christian leaders called Obama's election a wake-up call for conservatives, who had lost the faith of the American people. "I think it's very clear that the economy drove this election," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. "I think Barack Obama does have a mandate from the majority of Americans to address the economy and even our international standing. What he does not have a mandate for, which I think is quite clear, is to implement radical social policies."

He noted that marriage amendments passed in all three states where it was on the ballot, which he said is proof that Americans are still largely social conservatives. "These marriage amendments on the ballots passed; I think they should be a warning to President-elect Obama and the expanded

Democratic majority in Congress that if they try to overreach and take this as a mandate for their radical social policies, the American public is going to push back," Perkins said.

Exit polls showed that black and Hispanic voters, who supported Obama by significant majorities, were critical in passing marriage amendments in Arizona, Florida and California. The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Leadership Conference, said that support for traditional marriage proves that minority voters are socially conservative and that white evangelicals cannot win elections or preserve a biblical worldview on their own.

"Unless you form a coalition that looks like the kingdom of God where blacks and Latinos and Asians are at the table and not in a token position but in co-leadership positions, we will never win again in respect to our social conservative biblical values," said Rodriguez, whose organization represents 15 million Hispanic evangelicals.

"The success of [California's marriage amendment] speaks accolades," he continued. "We worked across the table—all the different colors and tribes saying there's no way [gay marriage will be tolerated]. I think the microcosm of the model forged in California should be emulated throughout the country. So we need to reach out and we're doing that."

Both Caldwell and the Rev. Joel Hunter, a Florida pastor who prayed during the Democratic National Convention, said Obama has become more conservative in his views on abortion in recent months, and they believe evangelicals will have access to the White House in an Obama administration.

"He absolutely will include us in the conversations," Hunter said. "President-elect Obama is someone who governs with an orientation toward consensus. He likes to hear different voices. He likes to have a different perspectives and viewpoints. So we have reasonable assurance that the evangelical community would have a place in those conversations. He's initiated outreach toward many evangelical

leaders during his campaign so I think he'll stay consistently open after his inauguration."

Although he's not sure how it may happen, Sheets believes Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin may yet become president one day, as he declared publicly before the election.

"Time will tell, but I still believe she has a huge destiny on her for this nation," Sheets said. "I'm a little taken back by the way this has happened. It obviously causes me to back up a little bit, but if someone backed me in a corner right now and said, 'Do you still think she will be president?' I'd say yes." – **Adrienne S. Gaines with reporting by Felicia Mann and Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

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## Witchcraft, Prayers for Obama

*A pastor from Nairobi, Kenya, warned Christians in the U.S. on Monday about villagers in Kenya worshipping snakes and offering animal sacrifices on behalf of Barack Obama.*



[ ] As millions of evangelicals cast their votes in today's U.S. presidential election, a pastor from Nairobi, Kenya, is warning Christians to at all costs avert a Barack Obama presidency.

"I'm really worried," said the Rev. Mbijiwe Mwenda, founding pastor of Nairobi-based Glory Cathedral Church. "If something goes wrong in America, the rest of the world goes wrong."

Mwenda, author of *America: Fear No Evil*, told *Charisma* that Americans are unwise to disregard Obama's ancestral ties to Muslim and other non-Christian elements of the Luo people—the Kenyan tribe his father belonged to.

He said in addition to tremendous Islamic support for Obama in Africa and worldwide, local pagans in western Kenya are sacrificing goats in a bid to see Obama gain the White House.

The pro-Obama sentiment is so strong in Kenya among Muslims that on Sunday, a native Kenyan pastor pleaded with U.S. Christians in an e-mail to pray for his safety. The veteran evangelist said he's been threatened with violence by local Muslims who told him if Obama doesn't win they would hold Christians, especially missionaries with ties to the U.S., responsible.

Mwenda said traditional pagan practices often mix with biblical teachings and create a syncretistic Christianity in the villages from which Obama's family comes from. "That's why Christians can go to the mountain to sacrifice," he said.

"All the hype in Kenya about Obama [centers on] the village of Kogelo, out far in the western part of the state, where Obama's father lived," Mwenda said. "Out there, Luo practice a lot of witchcraft and really do communicate with the spirit world. Luo cults worship a snake named Omweri," he said, referring to a legendary python in the area.

Amid the area's looming witchcraft activity one prominent leader, a self-professed Pentecostal, believes God is on Obama's side. Bishop Washington Ogonyo Ngedede, a church network leader in East Africa and a member of Luo, told Fox News that his church is engaged in "spiritual warfare" on behalf of Obama, and hopes the young African-American will avert "evil plots" in the spiritual realm to ultimately be victorious on Tuesday.

In 2006, Ogonyo appeared on the welcoming committee alongside Kenya's current prime minister and Luo tribe celebrity, Raila Odinga, to help welcome Obama to Kenya, according to Fox News. Observers later criticized Obama's trip to Kenya to publicly appear with Odinga—**who has been described as a Marxist.**

Mwenda said that of the 45 or so tribes in Kenya, Luo is the third largest. He described its long bitter history and

claimed that Odinga manipulated his way into power earlier this year by quietly inciting class warfare among his fellow Luo tribesmen when he fell short of the votes needed to become president. It took an internationally brokered deal that gave Odinga the premiership in order to quell violent outbreaks across Kenya.

Mwenda, who was in Baltimore on Monday warning Americans about Obama right up to Election Day, believes spiritual forces are at work this election cycle and that only Christians praying will turn the course of current events.

“In western Kenya, when goats are sacrificed, it’s to a demonic principality,” he said. “Once spiritual entities are offered a sacrifice, they’re bound to act on its behalf. It’s not just a show; it’s real.”

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## Prayer Day for Persecuted Church

*The international prayer day comes on the heels of attacks against Christians in India and Iraq.*



[] Christians from around the world are expected to unite in prayer Sunday for the 100 million believers who are being persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Considered one of the largest global prayer campaigns, the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church is designed to both raise awareness about religious liberty abuses and support persecuted believers through intercession.

“The International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church presents a tremendous opportunity for millions of people to

make a difference in the lives of those being persecuted for their faith in countries like North Korea, Iran, Iraq, China, India and many more," said Carl Moeller, president and chief executive officer of Open Doors USA, which has sponsored the annual prayer day since 1996. The California-based organization also supports persecuted Christians through literature distribution, leadership training and advocacy.

"Persecuted believers have asked us who live in freedom to pray for them—always their No. 1 request," he added. "And on Nov. 9 we have the opportunity to collectively lift our petitions to the Lord on their behalf."

During this year's prayer effort, Open Doors is also raising funds to supply Bibles for children in regions where persecution is common. "This year's focus is really on future generations of Christians in these countries ... by providing Bibles as a tangible symbol that they're not forgotten and they're being prayed for," Moeller said.

The day of prayer for persecuted believers comes on the heels of attacks against Christians in India and Iraq, where thousands have fled as militants have bombed their homes and churches. In India, at least 60 people have been killed in the violence that began in late August, while in Iraq more than a dozen people were murdered in the month of October.

Both of those nations were listed in Open Doors' 2008 World Watch List, which names the 50 leading violators of religious liberty. Topping the list for the sixth consecutive year was North Korea, where thousands of Christians have been beaten and put into political prison camps because of their faith. Open Doors reported that the U.N. human rights investigator Vitit Muntarbhorn said the North Korean government is using public executions to intimidate citizens into compliance and is blocking long-distance calls to spread the news about rising food shortages in the nation.

In Iran, the government is considering a bill that would make leaving Islam punishable by death. Christians and other minority religions say persecution has increased markedly

since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president of Iran in 2005, according to Compass Direct.

Moeller said Christians are being encouraged to pray not only for a curb in violent attacks and religious liberty abuses, but also that the church would be strengthened in the midst of suffering. "Let's pray for the things that the persecuted church asks for," he said. "They don't ask that persecution would be eliminated, but mostly they ask us to pray that they would endure to the end. And I think that is an inspiration—it's an inspirational message. Regardless of how bad it can be, God is willing and able to meet us in the midst of that."

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## **Minister Survives 2 Suicide Attempts, Stabbing**

*After surviving two suicide attempts and a near fatal stabbing, John F.*

*Wheeler now tells young people there is nothing that God can't bring them through.*



[ ] When John F. Wheeler tells young people, "No matter what you've been through, God can bring you out," he knows what he's talking about.

The 24-year-old great-grandson of Bishop C.H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), said he rebelled as a teenager, doing drugs, joining a gang and even serving time in prison. But the Memphis, Tenn., native says he realized God loved him when, after his brother's death in 2003, his two suicide attempts failed. "First, I took 53 prescription pills and nothing happened," Wheeler says. "The next time I snorted an unimagineable amount of cocaine, popped more pills, and to be sure I would die I turned on the gas in my apartment and

went to sleep. I was disappointed that I couldn't die."

It took two more years and a near-fatal stabbing in his lung to prompt him to call on Jesus.

"God, what are you trying to tell me?" Wheeler said he asked, according to the *Commercial Appeal*. "I was tired of playing life-and-death games. God had a message for me that He was good."

But today he is an ordained COGIC minister and plans to attend Central Bible College in Springfield, Mo. He hopes to one day open a home for troubled, homeless youth. —**Valerie G. Lowe**

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## Atheists Evangelize Commuters

*A group of atheists launched a successful campaign aimed at encouraging London commuters to disbelieve in God.*



[ ] A 28-year-old comedy writer in London, who launched an advertising campaign earlier this year to counter religious ads on the side of London's buses, has raised enough money to place atheistic posters on 30 of London's buses beginning in January. They will read: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

According to the Associated Press (AP), Ariane Sherine was motivated to publicize her godless worldview after visiting the Web site of a Christian ad earlier this year that allegedly claimed that nonbelievers would spend an eternity in torment in hell.

"I thought it would be a really positive thing to counter that by putting forward a much happier and more upbeat advert, saying, 'Don't worry, you're not going to hell,'" Sherine told

the AP.

Sherine's campaign drew the support of the British Humanist Association as well as best-selling atheist author Richard Dawkins, who told the AP that the campaign to put alternative slogans on buses would "make people think—and thinking is anathema to religion."

According to the AP, few Christians appeared threatened or offended by the atheist's campaign. Jenny Ellis, spirituality and discipleship officer for the Methodist Church, said it would be "a good thing if it gets people to engage with the deepest questions of life."

A religious think tank called Theos even donated money to the effort, believing it would backfire on the atheist's agenda, since people concerned about the collapsing of the global economy and other serious issues won't find much comfort in being told to "not worry."

"Stunts like this demonstrate how militant atheists are often great adverts for Christianity," said Theos director Paul Woolley, according to the AP.

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## **Radical Hindus Still Threatening Christians in India with Death**

*Two months of violence against Christians in India is drawing international attention and calls for government intervention.*



[ ] Two months after bloody anti-Christian attacks broke out in India's eastern state of Orissa fearful local Protestant and Catholic villagers told the Associated Press (AP) they're

still repeatedly threatened by Hindu extremists to abandon Christianity and convert to Hinduism.

Although the All India Christian Council (AICC) reports that violence has subsided in Orissa since Oct. 14, fear among Christians is still palpable. According to the AP, on a nearly daily basis the unrest has continued: a house burned; a carload of people beaten; a soldier hacked to death.

A pastor in Orissa, who for security reasons asked to remain anonymous, told *Charisma* that 40,000 Christians in Orissa are hiding out in forests, unable to return to their villages, and thousands more are staying in refugee camps. "If they return to their villages, they have to become Hindus," he said. "Otherwise they will be chased away or killed."

Some international observers have implied that India's government is not doing enough to protect its minority Christian population in Orissa.

Last week, addressing a crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square for his weekly blessing, *Pope Benedict XVI* singled out the governments of India and Iraq to protect its minority Christians suffering persecution.

"They are not asking for privileges, but desire only to be able to continue to live in their country together with their fellow citizens," the pope said, according to Reuters. "[I] call the attention of the international community [to this tragedy]...where Christians are victims of intolerance and cruel violence."

Sources inside India representing the AICC recently told *Charisma* that rural-based police are ignoring India's Supreme Court mandate to register all complaints and are turning away Christians attempting to report cases of violence perpetrated by Hindu extremists.

The violence against Christians erupted in Orissa on Aug. 24, a day after Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati, Kandhamal district leader of the militant nationalist group Vishwa Hindu Parishad

(VHP), was gunned down with four of his comrades.

Maoist rebels took responsibility for the assassinations but Hindu radicals blamed Christians for the attack and used the killing to incite violence against them. The violence has continued unabated since then, with dozens of Christians killed, hundreds of churches destroyed and thousands of Christians' homes burned.

The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that in Orissa's Kandhamal district, militants gang-raped a nun, stripped the priest naked and beat him brutally.

The violence remains most severe in Orissa, but the attacks have spread to several other states, including Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Observers say the attacks stem from the recent rise of Hindu nationalist movements, including the militant Bajrang Dal and VHP, which want to see India maintain a Hindu identity.

Bridget S. Kustin, representing the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, said Christians should urge their representatives in Congress to support resolutions that condemn the anti-Christian violence in India and call on India's government to intervene.

"India is invested in its international image, so pressure coming from abroad will have an impact," Kustin said. "[Christians] can make sure there is continual international pressure."