

Americans More Prayerful, Biblically Literate Than Europeans

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[] A new poll shows that Americans are more prayerful and biblically literate than citizens of other Christian-populated European nations reported Reuters.

Two-thirds of American respondents said they had read from the Bible over the last 12 months while only 20 percent to 38 percent of Poll: Two-thirds of American respondents said they had read the Bible over the last 12 months while only 20 to 38 percent of European participants said they'd read the Bible in the last year. s from the other eight countries—Britain, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Russia, Italy, Spain and Poland—reported reading the Bible over the last year.

According to the study, conducted by GFK Eurisko research group for the Catholic Biblical Federation, nearly all Americans (93 percent) said they had a Bible at home, compared to the French who were the least likely to have a Bible at home (48 percent).

Reuters reports that Americans also prayed far more than members in other countries. Most Americans prayed (87 percent), while the French prayed the least (49 percent).

Chinese Christian Bookstore Owner Re-arrested

A bookstore owner in Beijing has been re-arrested for publishing Bibles and Christian literature after he had been released in January due to "insufficient evidence."



[] A bookstore owner in Beijing has been re-arrested for publishing Bibles and Christian literature after he had been released in January due to "insufficient evidence," according to Compass News Direct.

Shi Weihang, a 37-year-old father of two, was re-arrested March 19 and has been held without any family visits allowed, according to his wife, Zhang Jing. Shi was first arrested on Nov. 28, 2007, and held until Jan. 4.

His wife said she had received no word on her husband's condition, and had been prohibited from bringing him any food or change of clothing since his re-arrest. Zhang said she was "very concerned" about her husband's health, because he has diabetes.

According to Compass News, the arrest of Shi appears to be part of a crackdown on religious groups that the government fears could raise dissident voices during the Olympic Games set to begin in August.

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[Chinese House Church Leader Released](#)

Yoko Ono Sues Producers of 'Expelled'

The former wife of Beatles legend John Lennon, has filed a lawsuit against the makers of 'Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed', disputing the film's use and critique of Lennon's song "Imagine."



[] Yoko Ono, the former wife of Beatles legend John Lennon, has filed a lawsuit against the producers of *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, challenging the film's use and critique of her late husband's song "Imagine."

The film, a documentary starring Ben Stein, which claims that proponents of intelligent design are being cut out of the scientific community, plays 15 seconds of the song while showing the lyrics on-screen and criticizes its message to end religion. Premise Media, which produced *Expelled*, claims its use of the clip is protected under fair use.

"The fair use doctrine is a well established principle that gives the public the right to freely use portions of copyrighted materials for the purposes of commentary and criticism," said Logan Craft, executive producer and chairman of Premise Media. "While some may not like what we have to say or how we say it, we have the free speech right to do so."

Box office numbers continued to be strong for *Expelled* despite the criticisms. The film, which has tapped into the Christian retail channel for promotions, finished at No. 13 in its second weekend, taking in more than \$1.3 million, according to . It has brought in a total of \$ million so far.

Thousands Convened to Repent

On Saturday, thousands convened in Washington, D.C., and in 116 satellite venues nationwide for four hours of worship, prayer and personal repentance.



[] Thousands convened Saturday on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for four hours of worship, prayer and personal repentance.

Hosted by Arizona pastor Walt Kallestad and his daughter, Shawn-Marie Cole, the ReignDown event was broadcast live on God TV and on the Internet, and was simulcast to 116 satellite venues nationwide. "We need to cry out and repent, to turn from our wicked lives," Cole told the crowd.

The event was the result of a vision in which Cole saw "seas of people, crying out to [God], saying, 'Lord, we need you.'" Christian musician Michael W. Smith led worship times, which were interspersed with prayers of repentance and Scripture readings by Kallestad, Cole and Cindy Jacobs, co-founder of Generals International with her husband, Mike. "I believe God wants to change my life tonight," Jacobs told the crowd. "We've got to first remove what's in our own eyes."

Participants were led in repenting of such issues as racial division and spiritual apathy, and were encouraged to seek God about individual concerns. Prayer tents were stationed throughout the Mall for people to seek personal prayer ministry.

"Most of the people here [seeking prayer] are Christians, but they're tormented [by] divorce, mental conditions, husbands leaving," said Sarah Townsend, an intercessor from Alexandria, Minn., who was one of at least 60 prayer counselors on hand at the event. "The body of Christ is sick."

Actor and evangelist Stephen Baldwin and Rep. Trent Franks of

Arizona were among the event's special guests. Both men said their purpose for attending was simply to call the nation—and the church—back to God. “More than anyone else, the body of Christ needs to turn its heart back to the Lord,” Baldwin told *Charisma*.

“When you look at the messages and the media—‘your best life now’—there really isn't a message of following Christ and counting the cost of repentance. The gospel has become this other thing. There will be a revival, and there will be a movement of the Spirit that reminds everyone of that,” he said.

Jacobs said she believes ReignDown is a continuation of a holiness revival that began last fall. “We've been praying for another holiness movement, and we're in it,” she said. “The presence of God is going to visit us so much, He's going to clean us up—a supernatural sanctification of holiness.”

At the close of the event, Jacobs prayed that God would rain down His healing power: “We speak creative miracles—be healed in Jesus' name. Get up out of wheelchairs, blind eyes be opened. ... AIDS, leave ... schizophrenia, leave. ... bipolar disorder, go.”

Kallestad, senior pastor of Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Ariz., said testimonies were flooding in from people worldwide who watched the event on God TV. He said there were reports of healings and other miracles. “People got out of wheelchairs,” Kallestad said. “We were told by God TV that they never had such a real-time response. God was just so good.”

ReignDown is one of several prayer events being organized this year. On the same day as ReignDown, roughly 6,000 intercessors prayed at state Supreme Court buildings across the United States, and a team including Jacobs and Lou Engle, founder of TheCall and the Justice House of Prayer, prayed at the U.S. Supreme Court building. Thursday, May 1, marks the National Day of Prayer, and the Global Day of Prayer is being held May 11. In August, Christians are expected to again gather in Washington, D.C., for TheCall.

Engle said in a season “of such crisis,” God is mobilizing solemn assemblies that impact different segments of the church. TheCall will be hosting another prayer event on the National Mall on Aug. 16. “We’re going after the national sins,” Engle said. “We are coming believing that abortion’s going to end and the greatest adoption movement of the church is coming.”

A Web site, , has been established to continue ReignDown’s mission of calling people to repentance and faith in Christ. “We believe God’s message to the church is repentance,” Kallestad said. “The reason He’s doing that is there’s no revival without repentance. Nothing happens without His dealing with the log in our own eyes.” –**Adrienne S. Gaines**

Casting Crowns, Mark Hall Wins Big at Doves

Casting Crowns collected seven trophies Wednesday at the 39th Annual Gospel Music Association Dove Awards. The group will be featured as the cover story in the June issue of 'Charisma.'



[] Casting Crowns and lead vocalist and songwriter Mark Hall collected seven trophies Wednesday at the 39th Annual Gospel Music Association (GMA) Dove Awards, including Song of the Year and Pop/Contemporary Recorded Song of the Year for “East to West.”

Hall's participation on the multi-artist worship project *Glory Revealed* brought him individual honors for Special Event Album of the Year as well as Inspirational Recorded Song of the Year for “By His Wounds,” the Associated Press (AP) reported.

Casting Crowns also had four nominations and won three: Group

of the Year, Pop/Contemporary Album of the Year for *The Altar and the Door* and Pop/Contemporary Recorded Song of the Year for "East to West."

"I'm so thankful just to get to be part of the songs," said Hall, who led all nominees with six nominations.

Charisma recently sat down with the group for our June cover story. During the interview band members discussed how they balanced thriving youth ministries, their successful singing careers and family. *Charisma's* June issue featuring Casting Crowns will hit news stands May 26.

TobyMac won Artist of the Year and took home Doves for Rock/Contemporary Album of the Year for *Portable Sounds* and short-form video for "Boomin."

"Are you kidding? This is crazy, man. I thought I was Mr. Pre-Televised awards," joked TobyMac, who also won Artist of the Year in 1996 as a member of dc Talk, the AP reported. "God has been faithful time and again to surround me with people that sharpen me and that make me better."

For the third consecutive time, Chris Tomlin won Male Vocalist of the Year and Natalie Grant was awarded Female Vocalist of the Year. Brandon Heath won New Artist of the Year, while Cindy Morgan nabbed the Songwriter of the Year award-her eighth Dove trophy.

The Contemporary Gospel Album of the Year award went to Israel & New Breed for *A Deeper Level*, while Ricky Skaggs and The Whites collected Bluegrass Album of the Year for *Salt of the Earth*.

The evening's performers included *American Idol* alum Phil Stacey, Chris Sligh and Mandisa with Amy Grant in a musical tribute to Michael W. Smith, the AP reported. Switchfoot played "This Is Home," a song from the soundtrack of *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, scheduled to open in theaters May 16.

Closing out GMA Music Week, the awards, held at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, was broadcast live for the first time on XM Satellite radio and on the Gospel Music Channel.—**Eric Tiansey**

Photo Credit:

Americans Say Churches Do Enough for Poor

New poll shows that two-thirds of Americans believe their churches are doing enough to help the poor in their communities. Yet current census and economic data do not support this.



[] A new poll shows that two-thirds of Americans believe their churches are doing enough to help the poor in their communities.

The survey of more than 2,800 adults comes at a time when the United States Census Bureau statistics shows consistent increases in the numbers of Americans living in poverty.

The national poverty level increased from 11.7 percent in 2001 to 13.3 percent in 2005. In addition, increased usage of food stamps indicates a rising level of poverty in the country.

“These results, when combined with current census and economic data, expose a discrepancy between Christians who believe they are doing enough and the reality that Christians are just scratching the surface in our communities,” said Steve Haas, vice president for church relations at World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization.

Chinese Christian Bookstore Manager Released

The house church leader jailed since last August for receiving three tons of Bibles was recently released, after a court determined that there was not sufficient evidence of wrongdoing.



[] A Chinese house church leader jailed since last August for receiving three tons of Bibles was recently released, according to China Aid Association (CAA).

Zhou Heng was recuperating at home after a court determined on Feb. 19 that there was not sufficient evidence of wrongdoing. Heng is also the manager of Yayi Christian Book Room, a registered bookstore that sells Christian-related books published legally inside China. His bookstore was shut down after his Aug. 31 arrest for possession of 5,184 copies of illegally published Bibles.

The Bibles were reportedly donated by South Korean churches and were intended for local believers. However, the Chinese government only allows officially sanctioned churches to print and distribute a limited number of Bibles each year.

If convicted of the charges, Heng would have received a 15-year prison sentence. According to CAA, Heng has been beaten in prison severely by other inmates and prison guards.

In a letter obtained by CAA, Heng said he wanted to thank “all sisters, brothers, and friends in China, America, Europe and all around the world ... for the care and prayers for me during the time I was arrested and put into prison.”

'Expelled' Has 'Robust' Opening

'Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed' finished at No. 9 in its opening weekend. The documentary-style film took in \$3.2 million from 1,052 theaters to crack the top 10.



[] *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* finished at No. 9 in its opening weekend, according to . The documentary-style film, which challenges Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and tapped into the Christian retail channel to help promote the launch, took in \$3.2 million from 1,052 theaters to crack the top 10.

Premise Media Corporation-the film producers-hired Motive Entertainment, which handled much of the grass-roots marketing of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ*, to reach out to faith-based communities.

Hosted and co-written by comedian, economist and author Ben Stein, *Expelled*-which generated media attention for its controversial topic-received mixed reviews.

"*Expelled...* fared better than prerelease tracking had signaled," *The Los Angeles Times* observed. "Its opening was robust for a documentary, though it was far from the Michael Moore-type blockbuster the producers had been hoping for. ... But it could dwarf forecasts with even a fraction of the faith-based crowd that turned *The Passion of The Christ* into a cultural phenomenon in 2004."

With production and marketing budgets in the single-digit millions, *Expelled* had the widest documentary release ever, the *Times* reported.

Gary Weyel, marketing and communications strategist for The Parable Group, told *Christian Retailing* that Parable “has been working with our stores to help promote the film.”

Motive Entertainment sent all 190 Parable stores resource materials designed for students, teachers, pastors, youth leaders and organizations to help build awareness, said Weyel, noting that the resource kits included a leader's guide, poster, flier and video trailer.

“By providing some simple tools to help stores reach out to their community, we hope to both promote the film and provide a link to the local store for any related product sales in the future,” he said.—**Eric Tiansay**

Christians Summoned to Day of Repentance

Dubbed ReignDown USA, the three-hour prayer meeting will be held April 26 at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Organizers believe it could lead to a national revival.



[] Christians across the U.S. are being summoned to a time of prayer and repentance this weekend for what organizers believe could lead to a national revival.

ReignDown USA (), a three-hour prayer meeting, will be held April 26 at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and in satellite venues in 31 states. Participants will worship, pray and repent of their own sins.

“We're not pointing out the speck in our brothers' or sisters' eyes, but we are dealing with the log in our own, and we're ...

saying, 'Start with me first, Lord,'" said Shawn-Marie Cole, who is organizing the event with her father, Walt Kallestad, senior pastor of 10,000-member Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Ariz. Cole, a homemaker with two young children, said the idea for ReignDown was birthed from a vision she received in 2005.

"It was gathering the body of Christ together in unity, humbly coming before our Lord, seeking His face and ... asking for Him to be placed back in the center of our lives and our nation," she said. Although 2008 is an election season, Cole said ReignDown would have no agenda beyond personal repentance. "We're just going to worship, and as we hear what the Lord is saying, someone will get up and read Scriptures," she said. The prayer meeting will be broadcast on television and carried live on the Internet.

Representatives from ministries such as Prayer Watch International (PWI) will be on hand to pray with participants.

"We can't point our finger at a nation and say you're not holy if we're not holy," said Cindy Jacobs, co-founder of Generals International with her husband, Mike, and a ReignDown supporter. "It's about holiness. It's about being a pure bride. It's a time to come back to the centrality of the cross. No personalities, just the cross."

Although there have been many corporate prayer events emphasizing repentance on behalf of the nation, "This is just repentance, and it's our repentance," said Phil Munsey, pastor of the Life Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., and a ReignDown supporter.

"The qualification to say something that day is to be willing to repent—not for the nation, not for anyone else, but personal repentance," he said. "I feel that we can't get past that. Until we do this, there's really nothing else we can do to have any influence on this country."

Prayer leader Bjørn Pedersen, founder of Arizona-based PWI, said a year before Cole told him her vision he began to feel

that God was going to move in North America. He believes revival comes as a result of the repentance. "But it's up to our country how we respond, and that depends on the church," he said.

Cole said in her vision she saw miracles happening as a result of the prayer and repentance. "It was an unprecedented move of God that took place and swept the entire nation," she said. "But it didn't just happen here, it ended up rippling and affecting other nations."

Kallestad said Christians in the Philippines, Haiti, Canada, Germany and various parts of Africa have agreed to join in prayer for the U.S. on April 26. He said there are no plans to make ReignDown an annual event or to duplicate the efforts of ministries such as the Global Day of Prayer or the National Day of Prayer.

"What we are calling for is that the body would come united," he said. "It doesn't matter if you're charismatic or non. What we are saying is we need to come together as a body of Christ, and we need to simultaneously stand together in unity. There are no speakers; there's no draw. We are just coming to hear the Lord." **–Adrienne S. Gaines**

Lakeland Revival Intensifies

Twice daily meetings in Lakeland, Fla., move into fourth straight week of revival. Starting Apr. 24, the meetings are being moved to Auburndale Life Church about 10 miles from Lakeland.



[] Thousands of people longing for a physical or spiritual touch from God are flocking to central Florida for ongoing

revival meetings that some have dubbed the "Lakeland Healing Outpouring."

The services, which are being broadcast live daily on GOD TV to millions of potential viewers, reveal the excitement radiating from this area of the Sunshine State, prompting some people to jump on planes and fly in from across the country and even from abroad.

Todd Bentley, the 32-year-old Canadian healing evangelist with a boyish grin responsible for the meetings, reported on Friday that people's faith alone has healed them even while they were booking their flights online or boarding planes bound for Lakeland, a city of about 90,000 between Orlando and Tampa along Interstate 4.

The 700-seat sanctuary of host pastor Stephen Strader's Ignited Church can no longer contain the crowds. More than 1,000 worshipers stood inches apart at Friday night's service, jamming every aisle and altar area. Their bodies rocked back and forth, and their faces wore peace-filled, lovesick and euphoric expressions.

The cars parked outside were also inches apart, with every grassy parcel of land on bordering properties used for overflow. During worship, song lyrics on PowerPoint were replaced with a warning to drivers parked at a nearby store that their cars would be "towed immediately."

"We are all shocked that each night a minimum of 60 percent [are] first time [visitors]," Strader said yesterday.

Fire marshals locked the church doors at last night's meeting, forcing 400 people to remain in front of the church. The crowd watched the service on a large TV, and more than 200 waited until midnight for Bentley to come out and pray for them, Strader said.

John Arnott, who pastored the historic revival ignited at his Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in 1994, wrote in a letter last week to Bentley: "Todd, you need to keep going in

these meetings as long as the Lord is moving. I feel that this is a prophetic sign that another wave of revival is coming to North America.”

John Kilpatrick, who pastored Brownsville Assembly during the Pensacola Revival of the 1990s, told *Charisma* today that he wants to visit Lakeland as soon as possible in order to encourage Bentley. “It saddened me that many weren’t willing to at least come and check things out,” he said of his early meetings with revivalist Steve Hill. “I made a vow before God that if revival ever broke out again, no matter where it was, that I’d at least go.”

Kilpatrick added that revival is not something that can be controlled and that people hungry for God need to simply ask Him to touch them. “I feel in my spirit very strongly that there’s another wave of the Holy Spirit coming, a tidal wave of the glory of God,” he said, stifling his sobs on the phone. “I’m sorry, there’s nothing like the presence of God. It has ruined me for life.”

Wendy Alec, co-founder of GOD TV, just released a prophecy to Bentley in which she said God has called what’s happening in Lakeland “just a warm-up party” that would eventually go global.

After long periods of worship, Bentley invites to the stage all those with testimonies, much like the late healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman did in her meetings.

At Friday night’s meeting, the mother of a 6-year-old girl said her daughter broke her elbow about two weeks ago and was healed after a word of knowledge from Bentley. The little girl told the crowd: “Jesus came out of heaven and touched my elbow.” The girl’s before-and-after X-rays are posted on YouTube.

Amber, a thin 15-year-old girl born with scoliosis, said she was healed and could now carry her schoolbooks as well as bend over and touch the floor, which she did publicly during the meeting. One man said he was healed of Hepatitis C. An elderly

woman said she went to the doctor for confirmation first before telling the crowd she was healed of glaucoma.

Others on Friday night said they were healed of rheumatoid arthritis, panic attacks, ruptured discs, deafness, post traumatic stress disorder, cancer, leukemia and emphysema.

After a half hour of testimonials Bentley asked the crowd "to give the Lord the glory." For at least 40 minutes people continually cried the words "holy" and "glory" in a chorus.

Some worshipers fell to the floor weeping. From behind his keyboard, a blonde-locked worship leader named Roy Fields led the procession, his face beaming heavenward.

"What is happening is so much bigger than anyone in this building," Bentley said from the stage where he was kneeling. "I hear the angels joining in. ... The Holy Spirit is taking over."

Bentley, who looks more like a gang leader than the founder of a Christian ministry, came to Lakeland on April 2 and has shown no sign of leaving since an angel, he said, visited him the day after he arrived.

Prophetic minister Bob Jones told Bentley he believed the angel's name was "Winds of Change"—the same angel, Jones said, that visited healing evangelist William Branham in the 1940s.

Aside from heavily reverential moments of worship, services can turn comical, as Bentley listens to accounts of healings and becomes filled with anticipation. He asked one woman on Friday, "Why are you here?" and after she responded, "I have a tumor on my rib," he cried: "Good! That's good!"

One man brought his small son to Bentley, saying the youngster was in need of a kidney. "Where does it hurt, boy?" Bentley asked before praying for the child and seeing him fall out.

The boy lay motionless on the platform, and his father bent over him, pressing his forehead to his son's. "I feel he's in

some kind of vision or something," Bentley told the crowd. When the boy got up five minutes later he said bright angels had come to him and "put their hands on me."

The meetings have been extended due to swelling crowds. Bentley announced Friday the revival would continue daily through at least May 4. He also said he believes the same revival will hit Kansas City, Mo., next. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli in Lakeland, Fla.**