

# Bible is America's Favorite Book

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[ ] The Bible is America's favorite book, according to a new survey. It came in first in a Harris Poll of nearly 2,513 adults, but the second choice in the survey was not as clear cut, Reuters reported.

“While the Bible is No. 1 among each of the different demographic groups, there is a large difference in the No. 2 favorite book,” Harris said in a statement announcing the results.

Men chose . Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and women selected Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* as their second-favorite book, according to the online poll. But the second choice for 18- to 31-year-olds was J.K. Rowling's “Harry Potter” series, while 32- to 43-year-olds named Stephen King's *The Stand* and Dan Brown's *Angels & Demons*.

Picks for second-favorite book also varied according to region. *Gone With the Wind* was No. 2 in the Southern and Midwestern states, while easterners chose *The Lord of the Rings* and westerners opted for *The Stand*, Reuters reported.

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# Film Explores Debate Over Origins of Life

The makers of *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, which premieres nationwide today, say scientists who question Darwin's view are being persecuted. The film premieres nationwide today.



[]The debate over intelligent design will hit the big screen today when *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* opens in theaters.

Starring comedian, economist and author Ben Stein, the documentary explores what filmmakers say is discrimination within the academic community against educators and scientists who question evolutionary theories on the origins of life. The film cites several examples.

At George Mason University, biology professor Caroline Crocker said she was forced out for briefly discussing problems with Darwinian theory in her class and for telling students that some scientists believe there is evidence of intelligent design in the cosmos. Astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez was denied tenure at Iowa State University for his affiliation with the intelligent design movement.

"Scientists are supposed to be allowed to follow the evidence wherever it may lead, no matter what the implications are," Stein said in a news release. "Freedom of inquiry has been greatly compromised, and this is not only anti-American, it's anti-science. It's anti- the whole concept of learning."

Produced by Premise Media, the documentary was culled from interviews with more than 150 scientists including both intelligent design supporters such as renowned microbiologist David Berlinski and William Dembski, author of *Design of Life*,

as well as evolution advocates such as biologist Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, and Eugenie Scott, head of the National Center for Science Education.

Last fall, Dawkins and other scientists interviewed for *Expelled*, including biologist PZ Myers, claimed they were misled about the purpose of the documentary. The film was originally titled *Crossroads: The Intersection of Science and Religion*, which interviewees were told would examine “the disconnect/controversy that exists in America between Evolution, Creationism and the Intelligent Design movement,” according to a letter Myers posted online.

“At no time was I given the slightest clue that these people were a creationist front,” Dawkins told *The Guardian* newspaper.

However, Premise Media co-founder Logan Craft said his company never misrepresented its intentions. “When they heard that it wasn't necessarily pro-Darwinian, that's when they decided to make these attacks,” he said. “They all signed releases. They were all paid for their interviews. I think those charges were vacuous.”

*Expelled* has been shown to Christian leaders nationwide in hopes of creating grass-roots support for the documentary. Churches are being encouraged to buy out local theaters when the film opens and use resources posted at to further the debate about intelligent design.

“*Expelled* is a must-see film,” said LIFE Today host James Robison. “Any thoughtful Christian will appreciate the questions asked by the film and find inspiration in the answers that point to the truth.”

But more than advocating for intelligent design, Premise Media CEO Walt Ruloff said he hopes the film will promote greater academic freedom for scientists. In cooperation with the Discovery Institute, an intelligent design think tank, Premise

developed a petition posted at supporting scientists' right to research alternative scientific theories.

“We really are not validating one particular position,” Ruloff said. “What we're really asking for is freedom of speech, and allowing science and students ... to have the freedom to go where they need to go and ask the questions.”

**Adrienne S. Gaines**

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## Revival Fever Breaks Out in Florida

*In Lakeland, Fla., thousands are packing a church every night for the past two weeks looking for a taste of what could be a major spiritual outpouring.*



[ ] Meeting in a converted storefront on a highway in Lakeland, Fla., thousands are packing a church every night for the past two weeks looking for a taste of what could be a major spiritual outpouring.

Pockets of the Christian community in this area and beyond are buzzing over what could be compared with the early meetings revivalist Rodney Howard-Brown held here 15 years ago at Carpenter's Home Church two miles down the road.

With an almost palpable sense of expectation hanging in the meetings, wild stories of healings have been lighting up the blogosphere, from reports of permanent scars disappearing off bodies to tumors disintegrating in stomachs.

Word of the meetings has spread across the globe via GOD TV's live Web stream, and will air live on the network every night this coming weekend.

If hunger, as in the outpourings in Toronto and Pensacola during the 1990s, is a characteristic of revival, then believers here appear starved. "I'm just here for the presence of the Lord," said one young man last night.

In loud heart-crying worship, one song lyric in particular—"healing is the bread of your children"—has become an anthem of the meetings being held in Lakeland by Todd Bentley, a Canadian revivalist and founder of Fresh Fire Ministries.

The stocky tattooed minister called out various ailments and diseases for several hours last night. Clusters of the more than 1,000 feverish believers responded to his words of knowledge, and later claimed healing.

A young teenaged girl testified the lump on her neck had disappeared. A woman with osteoarthritis of the knees kicked the air and ran across the stage. Several people declared hearing for the first time out of deaf ears.

"We're still hungry," the crowd worshiped, "we're receiving, there's got to be more, got to be more, got to be more."

One five-year-old boy named Corey, accompanied by his parents, wanted prayer for his heart, which was irregular since infancy. His mother said it beat three times faster than normal, "like a washing machine under his skin" to the touch, she said.

As Bentley prayed, the boy swayed softly, eyes closed, eventually drifting into what appeared to be a trance-like state. Several minutes later Bentley asked the boy what he was feeling, but he was unresponsive.

"Are you there? Can you hear me?" Bentley said, snapping his fingers by the boy's ears. "Hello? Hello? Can you hear me?"

The expression on the child's face was as if he had disappeared. A man in the congregation shouted: "He's in heaven! He's getting a new heart!"

Standing behind his son, the boy's father began weeping. "I think he's in heaven," Bentley whispered.

When he finally opened his eyes the boy's mother held him, cried over him, and joyfully reported to the large crowd that her son's heartbeat was now normal. "This is the first time it doesn't beat like that pitter patter!" she said.

The current situation in Lakeland is apparently traceable to April 3, when Todd Bentley says an angel visited him. He was in Lakeland for one of his normal itinerant conferences scheduled from April 2-6.

He said the encounter wrecked his plans. Bentley cancelled his global itinerary and extended the meetings at Stephen Strader's Ignited Church to daily daylong events. He said the meetings would continue at least through the end of April. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli in Lakeland, Fla.**

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# **Trial of Christian Publisher's Slain Workers Postponed**

*Plaintiff lawyers demand judges be replaced, accusing them of bias and obstructing justice.*



[ ] The trial of a group of Muslims accused of murdering three employees of a Christian publishing house in Turkey has been continually delayed.

Lawyers representing the families of the Christians slain last year recently demanded that the three-member bench of judges

hearing the case be replaced, accusing them of being biased, Compass Direct News said.

On April 18, 2007, five young Turkish Muslims entered the Malatya offices of Zirve Publishing and tortured and then slit the throats of Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel, both Turkish Christians who had converted from Islam, and German Christian Tilmann Geske. Compass, which covers persecution of Christians, ranked the savage attack among its top 10 stories of 2007.

Turkish press reported that four of the five young men arrested, all 19 to 20 years of age, admitted during initial interrogations that they were motivated by both "nationalist and religious feelings" as well as protecting Islam from Christian missionaries.

In a demonstration against the Christian publisher more than two years ago, local protesters claimed its publishing and distribution activities constituted "proselytism" among Muslims and should be closed down, Compass reported.

In a TV interview the day after the massacre, one of the men's wives forgave her husband's killers, following the example of Christ who pardoned His murderers and citing Jesus' prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Zirve re-opened last May after being sealed off for more than a month for the police investigation, the Turkish Daily News reported.

Addressing the Malatya Third Criminal Court in late February, plaintiff lawyer Özkan Yücel Soylu declared that the "impartiality and independence" of the court was in jeopardy, as the judges were obstructing justice by withholding evidence and refusing to record the high-profile murder case, Compass reported.

During the court proceeding, Soylu objected to the court's refusal to grant access to the killers' computer records, photographs from the autopsies and crime scene and security

camera films from one suspect's hospital room, Compass reported.

However, the fourth trial hearing against the Turks scheduled for March was postponed until April 14 after court clerks mysteriously failed to file the plaintiff lawyers' request to replace the judges, Compass reported.

Meanwhile, the murder of a Christian bookseller has been featured in a controversial Turkish TV series.

In one episode of *The Valley of the Wolves*, a young man—posing as a panhandler—enters a Christian bookstore, approaches a clerk or owner and holds out a coin, Asia News reported. The young man then fires a gun, instantly killing the bookstore worker.

The show continues with the discovery of a printing press that publishes gospel materials with a cover identical to the books commonly provided to Christians who attend churches in Turkey, Asia News reported.—**Eric Tiansay for Christian Retailing**

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## People 'More Interested' in Spiritual Matters

*With 11 Christian titles on the 'The New York Times' best-sellers lists, some are suggesting that people are more interested in spiritual matters.*



[ ] Christians have been encouraged to take heart from the *The New York Times* best-sellers lists.

With 11 Christian titles on the newspaper's various lists in the April 20 report, it seems that “people are more interested in spiritual things now than ever,” observed Thomas Nelson

President and CEO Michael Hyatt in his From Where I sit blog.

The apparent rise in interest in spiritual issues is “good news for Christian publishers and for Christian retailers,” he wrote. “Despite what we hear through the media, we should take heart. This is a moment in time that I believe is very significant and very unique.”

Among the titles making *the Times* lists Hyatt referenced are *Dead Heat* by Joel C. Rosenberg, *Mistaken Identity* by Don and Susie Van Ryn, and *Newell*, Colleen and Whitney Cerak, with Mark Tabb and *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Don Piper and Cecil Murphey.

Hyatt also referenced the inclusion on the lists of other “spiritual books” that some would not consider evangelical, including *Christ the Lord: The Road to Cana* by former best-selling vampire novelist Anne Rice.

Hyatt's post prompted a response from Rice, who wrote that everywhere she traveled to promote her new book, she found “believers. We are not a post-Christian nation, not by any means and anyone who thinks so is simply out of touch. People care passionately about their faith and how it informs their lives and their every decision.”

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## Christian Publications Barred From Saying “Allah”™

A Catholic newspaper and evangelical church have filed lawsuits against the Malaysian government, which argues that a Christian newspaper using the term “Allah” could confuse Muslims.



[ ] Catholic newspaper and an evangelical church have filed

lawsuits against the Malaysian government after authorities ruled against use of the word "Allah" in Christian publications.

*The Herald*, a 13-year-old Catholic weekly, sued the government in December for prohibiting it from using the word "Allah" to refer to God, Compass Direct News reported. The government had argued that use of the term might cause confusion among Muslims, who make up about 60 percent of Malaysia's population, Compass said.

The government had threatened the *Herald* with closure or revocation of its printing permit. But following protests by the Christian community, the *Herald's* printing permit was renewed just two days prior to expiration.

The Rev. Lawrence Andrew, the editor of the paper, said that the *Herald* was still using the word "Allah" as the case was waiting to be heard in court.

"It is difficult to understand why the government says that the word 'Allah'—when used by non-Muslims—will confuse Muslims," Andrew said. "All publications irrespective of religion or ideology are scrutinized. It is a way of monitoring peace in the nation."

The Evangelical Church of Borneo (ECB) in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah has also sued the government for prohibiting the import of Christian educational materials for children containing the word "Allah." Authorities withheld two other titles the church was trying to import, Compass reported. An out-of-court settlement has failed, and ECB is proceeding with the case.

Meanwhile, the government recently confiscated English-language Christian children's books with illustrations of prophets as well as books that use the word "Allah," according to the Malaysian online news agency .

The illustrations were deemed offensive to Muslims since Islam, which shares some prophets in common with Christianity,

prohibits the portrayal of prophets, Compass reported.

The Rev. Hermen Shastri, general secretary of the Council of Churches Malaysia (CCM), questioned how the books could be offensive to Muslims when they were not meant for them. Shastri urged the government to take immediate action to stop such seizures, Compass reported.

The Malaysian government also recently banned 11 books, including Don Richardson's *Secrets of the Koran*, for misrepresenting Islam by linking it to terrorism and the mistreatment of women, Assist News Service reported.

The Malaysian Internal Security Ministry issued the ban in January based on the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984, which requires all print media in the country to obtain a license and abide by its strict regulations.

In another example of the government curbing religious freedoms, a customs officer confiscated 32 Bibles from a citizen returning from a trip to the Philippines Jan. 28, according to .

Juliana Nichols produced a letter from her parish priest stating the English Bibles were meant for use in her church, but the customs officer told her the texts needed to be cleared with authorities, Compass reported.

Sunni Islam is the official religion in Malaysia, where there is growing pressure for the Asian nation to become more Islamic and introduce harsher Islamic laws, according to the latest edition of *Operation World*. Ethnic Malay Muslims make up about 60 percent of the 27 million people.

In April 2005, Prime Minister Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi declared that copies of the Malay-language Bible must have the words "Not for Muslims" printed on the front, and could be distributed only in churches and Christian bookshops, according to the International Religious Freedom Report. **—Eric Tiansay for Christian Retailing**

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# Copeland Requests an IRS Audit

*Earlier this week, Kenneth Copeland Ministries said the Senate Finance Committee should request an IRS audit in order to retain any financial records from the church.*



[ ] Sen. Charles Grassley's "most appropriate" course of action for obtaining information into the financial history of Kenneth Copeland Ministries (KCM) is to use procedural channels that exist between Congress and the Internal Revenue Service, stated a letter sent earlier this week to the IRS by attorneys at KCM requesting a church tax inquiry.

After the 90-day inquiry, the letter stated, "[KCM] is confident ... the IRS will conclude that it is unnecessary to pursue a church tax examination."

In a letter written earlier this month to the two top-ranking senators on the Senate Finance Committee, KCM expressed its concern over Grassley's investigation possibly infringing on the ministry's First Amendment rights. It also noted that the senator's probe targeted six televangelists who all "share a common theology."

Grassley has repeatedly denied insinuations that his problem is with theology. In addition, the finance committee's chairman, Sen. Max Baucus, joined Grassley's investigation last month, helping to alter any public perception that Grassley was acting unilaterally.

"This ought to clear up any misunderstanding about our interest and the committee's role," Grassley said last month. "We have an obligation to oversee how the tax laws are working for both tax-exempt organizations and taxpayers."

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# Unchurched Prefer Cathedral-style Rather Than Modern Buildings

*Unchurched Americans prefer cathedral-style churches to contemporary church structures by a ratio of 2 to 1, according to a new survey.*



[ ] Unchurched Americans prefer cathedral-style church buildings to contemporary church structures by a ratio of 2 to 1, according to a new survey conducted by LifeWay Research for the Cornerstone Knowledge Network (CKN).

The survey, which included 1,684 unchurched adults, provided participants with the choice between four photos of different church exteriors. The most traditional and Gothic options were by far the most popular choices.

“We may have been designing buildings based on what we think the unchurched would prefer,” said Jim Couchenour, director of CKN. “While multi-use space is the most efficient, we need to ask, ‘Are there ways to dress up that big rectangular box in ways that would be more appealing to the unchurched?’”

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**Rabbi**

**Rejects**

# Hagee's Help With Restoring Israel

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, claimed John Hagee's group Christians United for Israel "advances their [own] theology." Hagee said, "we do not seek to tell Israelis what to do."



[ ] At the annual convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Cincinnati, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the head of the Union for Reform Judaism, claimed John Hagee's group Christians United for Israel (CUFI) "advances their theology at the expense of Israel's security and well-being."

Yoffie said the political agenda of CUFI would ultimately imperil the embattled state reports the *Jerusalem Post*.

"Their vision of Israel rejects a two-state solution, rejects the possibility of a democratic Israel, and supports the permanent occupation of all Arab lands now controlled by Israel. If implemented, in fact, these views would mean disaster for Israel."

Meanwhile, Hagee pledged \$6 million to Israeli causes on Sunday. He made the announcement as he joined Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of Israel's hard-line opposition Likud Party, at a rally in support of Jerusalem remaining united and under Jewish control.

"We do not seek to tell Israelis what to do," he told the *Post*. "When it comes to the issue of land for peace, it is true that I and other Christian Zionists have grown skeptical after watching the results of the withdrawal from South Lebanon and Gaza, but CUFI's philosophy has been that Israelis—and they alone—have the right to make existential decisions about land and peace."

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# Network Formed to Plant Churches in U.S.

*Founded by Rice Broocks, ICE-CAP seeks to address declining U.S. church attendance among young adults. The group of pastors have teamed up to launch a church-planting movement.*



[ ] A group of charismatic pastors has teamed up to launch a church-planting movement whose goal is to expand God's kingdom through evangelism and prayer.

The International Center for Evangelism, Church-Planting and Prayer (ICE-CAP) launched last summer in Nashville, Tenn., as an extension of Every Nation, an international network comprising more than 400 churches in 50 countries.

The organization was formed in response to declining U.S. church attendance, specifically among young adults, said ICE-CAP founder Rice Broocks, pastor of Bethel World Outreach Center in Nashville.

“You have this growing concern that the rate of people becoming Christians in America is not even keeping up with the population growth” said Broocks, who with pastors Steve Murrell and Phil Bonasso co-founded Every Nation in 1994 under the name Morning Star International. “I see a lot of church planting around the world but, when we come back to America, churches, according to statistics, are closing more than opening.

He noted that The Barna Group released a study last year showing church attendance declining, most prevalently among 16- to 29-year-olds. The report revealed that this age group

tended to be “more skeptical of, and resistant to, Christianity” than the same demographic a decade earlier.

Broocks also noted the “4 percent theory” put forward by Ron Luce, founder of Texas-based Teen Mania Ministries and a proponent of the view that only 4 percent of today's children will become “Bible-believing” adults. In comparison, Broocks said, 65 percent of the World War II generation, 35 percent of the baby boomer generation and 17 percent of the current millennial generation are considered “Bible-believing.”

“Think about all the things that took place under the watch of the baby boomer generation—abortion, prayer taken out of schools,” Broocks said. “Think about what America's going to be like when this '4 percent generation' takes over. If we don't do something within the next five years, what is America going to look like?”

Hoping to play a part in changing those statistics, Broocks teamed up with author and pastor Larry Tomczak, who once headed People of Destiny International. Renamed Sovereign Grace Ministries in 2003, it's a pioneering church-planting movement that has established more than 60 churches in the U.S. and abroad.

Broocks also brought on board Dale Evrlist, author and pastor of New Song Christian Fellowship in Brentwood, Tenn.

The team united to form ICE-CAP with a goal to contribute to world evangelism, beginning at home. “We've all planted a lot of churches, but the key for us is not about my church or Dale's church succeeding,” Broocks said. “A key phrase for us is that 'it's going to take the whole church to reach the whole world.'”

It also takes leaders, stressed ICE-CAP director Tomczak. “A strong percentage of people in churches are not sharing their faith and have never led anybody to Christ,” Tomczak said. “A lot of people are apologetic, fearful; they don't know how to

present the gospel.”

With that in mind, ICE-CAP launched its Leadership Training Institute in October. More than 80 students converged in its first semester to learn about leadership through evangelism and prayer. Currently, the institute is wrapping up its second semester.

The group is also connecting with religious leaders nationwide to help develop strategies for church planting. But without evangelism rooted in relationship, little will change, Tomczak said. “Things have become too institutional, mechanical,” he explained. “We've got to get back to the relational aspect, and that's critical in reaching this next generation. There's been a real disconnect there.”

Tomczak said ICE-CAP is following a simple, foolproof model. “Our model for evangelism is Jesus,” he said. “We've got to get out into the marketplace, into the highways and byways, and do like Jesus did—love people, engage people, befriend people, find ways to serve people.” —**Suzy A. Richardson**