

Spirit-Filled Power Couple Opens Up About How Faith Healed the Pain of Their Past

Actor, comedian and producer David Mann and award-winning gospel singer Tamela Mann have been a powerhouse duo in the film, television and music world over the last decade. Now, on the heels of the release of their first duet album and memoir, *Us Against the World*, the couple is sharing intimate details about their childhood and how they overcame the baggage each brought into their marriage in a new short film from I Am Second.

“We don’t have a perfect marriage—it’s a work in progress—but what we do have to give is hope. If we can make it through—if God’s grace can get us through—it can help anybody,” said David.

Controversial Pastor Hired to Lead the Late Eddie Long’s Congregation

An Atlanta-area black megachurch led by the late Bishop Eddie Long has announced it has chosen a new leader, plucked from another black megachurch, as its pastor.

The Rev. Jamal-Harrison Bryant, pastor of Empowerment Temple in Baltimore, will move to Lithonia, Ga., to assume the position of senior pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist

Church. He will also be shifting from an African Methodist Episcopal congregation to one affiliated with a Baptist network.

“Rev. Dr. Jamal-Harrison Bryant embodies the rare balance of spiritual gifts and practical educational experiences that connects pastoral leadership and discipleship teaching with prophetic preaching and courageous social action,” New Birth said in a news release on Monday (Nov. 19).

The transition comes months after Long’s first successor resigned after serving for about a year and a half. Bishop Stephen A. Davis said in June that he would return to serving the branch of New Birth in Birmingham, Ala.

Long died in January 2017 at age 63 after fighting health issues for several months. When he became pastor of the church in 1987, it had about 300 members. Its membership reached more than 25,000. When the church announced Davis’ departure in June, the membership had dropped to slightly more than 10,000, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

“One of the big difficulty with churches that have had nationally significant pastors is precisely the problem of continuity,” said the Rev. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, professor of African-American studies and sociology at Colby College.

And the issue of succession, no matter the prominence or the size of the church, becomes an “incredibly painful problem” when a pastor dies.

“Even though pastors are professional, it is like losing a family member,” she said, and a successor often winds up preaching with “some kind of enshrined shadow or ghost sitting or standing over the person.”

Bryant started his Baltimore church in 2000 with 43 members and, according to its website, now has more than 10,000. It is affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, an

historic black denomination that celebrated its bicentennial in 2016.

Bishop Frank M. Reid, who is in charge of the African Methodist Episcopal Church's ecumenical affairs, said a shift of a megachurch pastor from an AME-affiliated congregation to New Birth would be a new dynamic that would have to be worked out between the pastor and the leader of the former AME district where the pastor was previously located.

"We would have to ask Jamal, 'Are you leaving the denomination or are you maintaining your ties with the AME Church or are you turning in your ordination papers?'" Reid said. "But that would be between him and the bishop of the district."

Gilkes said the AME Church, which includes bishops, is organized differently from Baptist churches, which traditionally recognize only the offices of pastor and deacon. But Long became a bishop of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, a 24-year-old network of churches, in the 1990s.

Both Long and Bryant encountered controversy even as they watched their congregations grow under their leadership.

Long faced suits, settled in 2012, from young men who accused him of using money and gifts to coerce them into sexual relationships. In 2011, Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa concluded a three-year probe of six ministries including New Birth and found that Long's staffers declined to respond to most of their questions, including the amount of the senior pastor's salary.

Bryant and his ex-wife, Gizelle Bryant, who later became a star in "Real Housewives of the Potomac," divorced in 2009 after he had an extramarital affair. In 2015, he announced a run for Congress only to end his campaign eight days later.

New Birth said Bryant's first Sunday as "senior pastor elect"

will be Dec. 9. {eoa}

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Zephaniah 2 Prophecy Fulfilled? 'We Could Be on the Brink of All-Out War'

As rockets rain down on Israel, Derek and Sharon Gilbert of Skywatch TV see an Old Testament prophecy coming to pass.

"Gather together, yes, gather together, O shameless nation, before the decree takes effect," Sharon reads from Zephaniah 2.

"We don't know what decree that is, but it seems to imply something geopolitical," she says, then continues with the Scripture.

"'For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation.' Israel now lives in Ashkelon. That means that there's war there," Sharon says.

Watch the video to see more.

Is the 4th Horseman of the Apocalypse Riding Now?

The fourth horseman of the apocalypse may be riding right now, with recent epidemics and outbreaks as chief evidence.

One example is the African swine flu that's infiltrated China. Sharon Gilbert, host of SciFriday on the PTL Network, says pigs and birds can contract illnesses from one another, and when the disease returns to the pig, it can be transmitted to humans.

"I think we're going to see more and more diseases that are zoonotic, and that means that they can jump from animals to humans," Gilbert says.

And when people go from country to country, the risk for an outbreak increases.

"The influx of people that are coming to the United States, they're bringing more than just a need for jobs, guns in some cases, knives, but they're also bringing their belief system, they're bringing spirits that may be attached to their families, and they're bringing diseases," Gilbert says.

The fourth horseman of the apocalypse carries disease.

"I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:8, NIV).

Watch the video to see more.

Famed Wrestler, Reality Star Rejects Voodoo in Favor of Jesus

Cameras continually follow members of the Women's Wrestling Division of WWE on the E! reality series *Total Divas*. While many people watch the show expecting wild interactions from the reality stars, one episode had a surprising declaration of faith. On the season eight premiere, which aired in September, one wrestler stood up for her faith in Jesus by refusing to engage with voodoo and psychic practices.

In the episode, the WWE clan travels to New Orleans, Louisiana for the annual Wrestle Mania. While in the historic city, Paige, an injured wrestler, wants to seek healing for her bum neck by listening to the words of a psychic and checking out the prolific voodoo culture in the city. Yet Trinity, another wrestler, stands in opposition to this because of her faith in Jesus.

In the buildup to a Wrestle Mania event, the women take moments of their free time to explore the bustling city by going alligator observing and hitting the streets of the French Quarter. Viewers can see that Paige struggles with not being able to wrestle in the heavily anticipated match. While on a swamp tour she tells her pals about her desire to investigate the voodoo and occult aspects of New Orleans to see if it could help her heal from her injury. Trinity, shaking her head, responds by saying, "don't start with that... I don't want no spirits, no demons, no ghosts ... if it ain't God or Jesus, I don't want nothing to do with it."

As the episode progresses, Paige urges that this desire comes in part with her “last resort” mentality to gain clarity on her injury and the future with the company, which echoes her, “there’s no harm in trying” attitude. In her interviews about the exchanges, Trinity adopts an empathetic attitude towards Paige’s injury but never falters in her opinion that engaging with the dark realm is not worthwhile. Still, Paige tries to get Trinity to engage with a psychic on the streets, but Trinity responds again by putting her confidence in Jesus. {eoa}

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4 ‘American Idol’ Alumni Who Praise Jesus Through Their Music

When *American Idol* first premiered in 2002, many aspiring artists saw this as their golden ticket into the music industry. After auditioning for a panel of celebrity judges, contestants earn their way through the ranks of many hopefuls by perfecting their music craft and giving it their best shot. However, there can only be one winner on this reality show, and as such, many contestants are sent home. Despite this, some noteworthy artists you might know and love today took what they learned from the show and paid it forward by honoring God with their unique vocal talents.

1. Lauren Daigle

Daigle tried out for *American Idol* for the first time at age

17. She made it pretty far on “Hollywood Week” before being sent home. Daigle tried out an additional two times for the show, making it to the Las Vegas rounds, but explains the Holy Spirit’s prodding during this time. “During this time, I asked the Lord to come meet me in the middle of the performances. It didn’t matter that I was potentially singing in front of millions of viewers because it felt empty.” She continued, “without His presence, there was no joy in the process. This is when the Lord taught me about the importance of worship and how fulfilling it is to lift up His name. I left *American Idol* with a great experience under my belt.”

Daigle came back to her hometown in Louisiana to lead worship, and the rest is history. Currently Daigle’s most recent album, *Look Up Child*, has also given her the opportunity to share her heart for the Lord on national TV by performing on the daytime show *Ellen*. The talk-show host was a judge on one of Daigle’s *Idol* stints and welcomed her with open arms on stage. Daigle also performed songs from the new album on *The Tonight Show* with Jimmy Fallon. *Look Up Child*’s acclaim has also spread its way into the secular community.

2. Mandisa

Mandisa was a frontrunner on season five of *American Idol*, ending in the ninth spot. While on *Idol*, Mandisa experienced some negativity when Simon Cowell made some snide remarks about the gospel singer’s weight. She didn’t give in to anger but instead forgave him. Mandisa noted her words in the forgiving exchange with Cowell, “I want you to know that I have forgiven you. You don’t need someone to apologize in order to forgive somebody. I figured that if Jesus could die so that all of my sins could be forgiven, I could certainly extend that same grace to you.” Simon Cowell was “humbled” by her kind response. Since her *Idol* days, Mandisa has released a book, *Idoleyes*, and multiple albums that feature songs with other popular Christian artists like TobyMac and Britt Nicole.

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‘Black Panther’ Actress Shares the Encounter With God That Changed Her Life

This year, Marvel’s *Black Panther* smashed records, grossing over \$700 million domestically. Among the cast of the movie is Letitia Wright, who played Princess Shuri, the tech-savvy sister of Wakandan King/ Black Panther, T’Cahalla (Chadwick Boseman). In a recent interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, Wright revealed that she came out of a dark period of life by relying on God.

Wright grew up in the U.K. and fostered a love for acting from an early age, often handing her resume to casting agents directly. Through her teenage years and early 20s, she experienced some good casting traction, landing TV roles on *Holby City* and *Top Boy* in the United Kingdom. Yet, as her professional accolades kept increasing, Wright began to sink into a depression.

Wright went to a Bible study in 2015, and God got ahold of her heart, rescuing her from depression and redirecting her energy to healing. *The Hollywood Reporter* notes, “immersing herself in Christianity, she found her equilibrium. Acting, she could take or leave; she turned down a film with Nicole Kidman to focus on her rehabilitative journey.” Wright commented, “I wrapped it up and was done with it, happy to do anything that was more chilled, but that’s not the way God had it with me.”

After landing a small role on Steven Spielberg's *Ready Player One*, Wright starred in her breakout role in *Black Panther*. With her mind focused on God, Wright cultivated an attitude of positivity on set that let her light shine through to the cast and crew. Chadwick Boseman said of Wright, "I just enjoy having her around. Her joy, her spunk, it gave us all something. It gave us all a little piece of, I guess, the inspiration for the movie that we needed."

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Startling Stats Show Witches, Pagans Outnumber PSUSA Members

You might think it's just of "hocus pocus," but to some, these belief systems are as genuine as day and night. With Halloween mere weeks away, it's an appropriate time to draw attention to the real-life growing number of people claiming to be witches and things of the like. New statistics show that people self-identifying as witches, Wiccans and pagans are drastically climbing.

Before we delve into the growing numbers, let's unpack each system of belief.

Witchcraft: Communication with the devil or the use of sorcery or magic

*Galatians warns that witchcraft is "an act of the flesh" (see Gal. 5:19-20). Isaiah notes that there's an emptiness in

witchcraft practices, stating, “they have no light of dawn” (Isa. 8:20, NIV).

Wicca: According to , Wicca is a belief system informed by “pre-Christian traditions originating in Ireland, Scotland and Wales,” that promotes “free thought and will of the individual, and encourages learning and an understanding of the earth and nature.”

Some witches reject Wicca practices because they consider them “a new age less-than-perfect reinvention of witchcraft.”

Paganism: Eclectic, “anything goes” worship of whatever gods or non-traditional belief system anyone so desires to worship, usually without Christian or biblical values.

Occultism: is “the belief in occult powers and bringing them under human control, usual through occult means (e.g., occult rituals or witchcraft).”

Some Wiccan pagans are New Age *and* adopt some form of occultism.

These new numbers give insight into the American belief landscape. According to Quartz, “From 1990 to 2008, Trinity College in Connecticut ran three large, detailed religion surveys. Those have shown that Wicca grew tremendously over this period. From an estimated 8,000 Wiccans in 1990, they found there were about 340,000 practitioners in 2008. They also estimated there were around 340,000 pagans in 2008.”
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Kari Jobe: Kingdom-Minded People Work in the White House

Christian music artist Kari Jobe recently joined a group of worship leaders for a special meeting at the White House, and she posted some profound thoughts about the kingdom of God being seen on earth and the urgent need for prayer for America's leaders.

The Christian artists, including Tauren Wells and Danny Gokey, were invited to a "Faith Briefing" which was held to show what the Trump administration is doing in the area of faith-based projects.

Jobe posted about the visit on Instagram, calling it an honor.

"Cody and I were honored to be invited," she said. "As I stepped foot into the White House, I had to just take a moment and take it all in. I was thinking through how many great men and women have served and led in that house, have come to visit that house, have changed history inside that house. The thing that moved me the most though was the peace I felt. It wasn't chaotic, it wasn't heavy ... it was peaceful. It's a home. I thought that was special."

She pointed out some of the faith-based initiatives the White House is working on.

"In the faith briefing, we heard from a few government leaders about incredible things that are going on behind the scenes that media and news never talk about. Projects to rescue victims of human trafficking, rehabilitate former inmates, take care of foster children, help neighborhoods and communities that are falling apart, help rebuild cities after tragedy ... just to name a few."

Jobe said her focus for attending the meeting was related to the kingdom of God, not political discourse.

“I sat there with tears in my eyes because these beautiful people get up daily and go to work in a governmental facility and think about people; you and me,” she explained. “They pray and seek God for wisdom for people. It all seemed beyond politics—it was kingdom. I realized there are some kingdom-minded people who work in the White House, and that was extremely encouraging. I don’t engage in political jargon and conversations—but I do engage when the Holy Spirit puts a burden to pray or do whatever He has spoken and obey Him. I was moved and reminded to pray every day for our leaders and government.” {eoa}

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Lysa TerKeurst: Why I Chose to Keep My Husband’s Affair Private

“So I’ve been through a lot, a lot of physical trauma, emotional trauma and, and, and honestly spiritual trauma as well,” Lysa TerKeurst says.

In June 2017, TerKeurst shocked followers of her blog and ministry with the news her husband had an affair. A few months later, she revealed further devastating news: She had cancer.

“These things were really some of my worst fears. And I had to look them straight in the face and not just look at them, but

walk to them and walk through them. And it was very painful.”

She chronicled her journey in *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way*, a raw, honest look at what happens when life brutally beats you down.

But it also captures the goodness of God and demonstrates how He works together all things for the good of those who love Him. TerKeurst knows this because of how the Lord used her 2016 release, *Uninvited*, to minister to her in the depths of her pain.

“At first, it almost seemed like a cruel joke that I would write a book on rejection thinking I had healed and was now going to help other people learn how to use the book’s principles, principles to heal from past rejections,” TerKeurst shares with *Charisma*.

“And then all the sudden, I got the news in the middle of final edits for that book that I was actually going to be walking through the worst rejection of my life. And so at first, it just felt like the timing of this was very cruel, and I really wrestled, and I remember sitting on my bed one day with the pages of the rough draft version of *Uninvited* before me, spread out all over my bed. And I was just weeping. And I was saying, ‘Why God, why would you let me write this book?’

“It was really as if I had written the book the year before that I would desperately need in that moment. And I thought, ‘This is not an act of cruelty by God. This is an act of absolute divine mercy,’ because He’s had me studying about his compassion, His mercy and His healing power. When it comes to rejection, He had me studying for two years before I would walk through the deepest rejection of my life,” TerKeurst says. “I was keeping what we were going through private, but God did some miraculous things to allow me to talk about rejection without having to reveal the present hurt that I was

in.”

Listen to the podcast for the full interview.