

Christians Pray for 'New China' on Anniversary of Historic Massacre



Twenty years after the Chinese government-run People's Liberation Army opened-fire on thousands of unarmed student protestors and allowed armored tanks to roll over the crowds, killing hundreds, Christians are praying for a "new" China to emerge that respects democracy and religious freedom.

Tonight Christian leaders from the U.S. and China are gathering in Washington, D.C., for a prayer service aimed at remembering the victims of the June 4, 1989, massacre.

Video of President Obama's Cairo Speech

[NaxZPiiKyMw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaxZPiiKyMw)

Mainline Churches Face

Intensified 'Gay' Debates This Summer

✘ The role of gays in church life promises to be debated hotly this summer in the nation's mainline Protestant denominations. The conflict, which comes as states wage legal fights over same-sex marriage, could well influence whether some of the denominations remain intact or splinter into smaller factions. In some churches, the hard-fought court battles over civil marriage for gay and lesbian couples run parallel to religious struggles that are strikingly similar and often just as heated.

An example of this has been in California, where last week the issue of same-sex marriage influenced separate decisions by the state's Supreme Court and a regional diocese of the Episcopal Church USA.

My Destiny is Fulfilled at His Feet

✘ The power of choice that God has given to every person cannot be overestimated. How dramatically our right to choose affects the course of our lives! Naomi's choice to return to Bethlehem-Judah would ultimately result in her personal restoration. Ruth's choice to follow Naomi and serve Naomi's God brought her to a wonderful destiny.

Orpah's name means "stiff-necked or skull." The decision Orpah made to stay in Moab reflected the inflexible, unyielding character described by her name and resulted in her death in

obscurity—she was never heard of again. Such is the end of stiff-necked people. It is better to have a harnessed heart than a stiff neck.

Ruth's name means "friend." She proved her friendship to Naomi and to God by her willingness to leave all she held dear to follow Naomi and serve her God. This beauty of character is to be revealed throughout the rest of the narrative as Ruth gains a reputation in the whole city of Bethlehem-Judah as a virtuous woman.

Ruth's treatise was a sevenfold declaration that revealed her heart's determination. The key words in Ruth's treatise were "I will." These two words expressed the intent of her heart and formed the basis of her decision. As we observe Orpah's tearful decision not to follow Naomi, we understand that Ruth's choice was not based on emotion or sentiment, but on a decision of her will.

Decision itself is exhilarating and refreshing. Some people never know the joys and delights of walking with God because they do not choose to make decisions in favor of God, His Word and His ways. Decisive people are seldom the subject of continued despair; they are steadfastly minded. As we decide to follow God's will, our decision will have wonderful results in our lives, as Ruth's did.

The treatise of "I wills" made by Ruth consisted of seven elements: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16-17, KJV).

This last "I will," though not explicitly expressed, is understood, for Ruth was declaring in essence, "I will seal this treatise with a covenant. The Lord do so to me and more also if ought but death part thee and me."

Ruth's resolve is a classic for all of literature. As an expression of love and loyalty, these words cannot be surpassed. Here is supreme devotion; here is love to the uttermost, not only passionately expressed, but as history declares, determinedly fulfilled. The beauty of its form and the utter devotion of a genuine and self-conquering love has made Ruth's vow one that never shall be forgotten. The secret of such love and loyalty is kinship in the matters of the soul and of eternity. There can be no true love, no lasting loyalty, without this kinship of soul and spirit.

Ruth's vow has stamped itself indelibly on the heart of the church. Believers throughout history have followed her example in choosing to live, and die, for God alone. How many have gained their courage to face martyrdom from reading the testimony of Ruth!

Like Ruth, we should resolve to pursue God to the end, casting our lot with the separated, sanctified people of God, cleaving to the eternal God of the Bible. Like Ruth we should enter God's field and be willing to serve. Like Ruth, we should abandon ourselves to our glorious, heavenly "Boaz," and stay at His feet until morning.



Adapted from the book *From Our Hearts to Yours*, copyright 2008, published by Charisma House. This book is a compilation of articles written by strong women of God that will cause you to see how much God really loves you, and empowers you to become a better mother, wife, woman and friend. To order a copy click on this link:

Global Donations Up

✘ **May 20, 2009** – According to the study by Hudson Institute's Center for Global Prosperity (CGP), church donations to international relief organizations based in the U.S. jumped 17 percent from 2006 to 2007, with 74 percent of American congregations giving toward global aid agencies. The average church gave \$11,960, and more than a quarter of those gave directly to programs in other countries for a combined \$3.3 billion. Other means of church giving included short-term mission or service trips (34 percent of all congregations did this), as well as long-term development projects (30 percent) that contributed more than \$1.4 billion to aid countries.

IRS Backs Pastors

✘ The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) ruled last week that a group of ministers gathered for a series of public policy conferences surrounding 2006's election season did not break any rules that would have put their churches at risk of losing nonprofit status.

Though based on a complaint filed against the Houston-based nonprofit Niemoller Foundation, the IRS decision has larger implications for every local minister, as it indicates that pastors cannot be penalized for speaking out or taking political action on moral issues-and encouraging their congregations to do likewise. Besides endorsing a specific political candidate or using ministry funds to support a

political cause, pastors are free to become politically active “on behalf of moral values,” the IRS stated.

“Not only do pastors and churches have freedom, but now they know about it,” said Kelly Shackelford, chief counsel of Liberty Legal Institute, which represented Niemoller to the *Dallas Morning News*.

In 2005, Niemoller spent \$1.2 million hosting a series of closed-door “Pastors’ Policy Briefings” for the Texas Restoration Project, a network of evangelical pastors involved in getting their congregations to the polls to vote for biblical values. The meetings included a handful of politicians, including conservative-minded Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who was up for re-election.

The Texas Freedom Network, a liberal group that fights against church-state connections, filed the complaint based on a specific 2006 conference, alleging that the event was a masked effort to get pastors to endorse Perry.

“This ruling is disappointing because it will embolden wealthy special interests who want to funnel money into nonprofits as a backdoor way to drag churches into partisan campaigns,” said Texas Freedom Network spokesman Dan Quinn reports the *Washington Times*. “We continue to think that using faith as a political weapon is sleazy, regardless of whether the IRS agrees that Niemoller violated its tax-exempt status.”

The IRS directed its decision specifically to Niemoller, which also funded a similar campaign in Florida to support the state’s amendment to ban same-sex marriage. But most conservative groups are trumpeting the verdict as a win for pastors and churches nationwide.

“This liberal attempt to intimidate pastors has backfired,” Shackelford told the *Dallas Morning News* newspaper. “It’s [their] nightmare—they accidentally caused the IRS to put it in writing. ... It’s more than just a win because, thanks to the IRS letter, pastors now know they have the freedom to act as we always believed they had.”

Web Site Counters 'Angels and Demons'

✘ **May 15, 2009**-- Just two days before *Angels and Demons*, the sequel to the blockbuster film *The Da Vinci Code*, hit theaters Friday, Westminster Theological Seminary launched a Web site www.thetruthaboutangelsanddemons.com designed to juxtapose the film's facts from its fiction.

The 2005 *Da Vinci Code* film, which claimed Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered a child with her, left many Christians and non-Christians questioning the existence of God and wondering whether the Bible could be trusted. Bible scholars expect director Ron Howard's adaptation of Dan Brown's 2000 novel *Angels and Demons* to have similar results.

New Hampshire Governor's Statement on Same-Sex Marriage Legislation

Gov. John Lynch released the following statement today regarding same-sex legislation in New Hampshire:

"The gay marriage debate in New Hampshire has been filled with

passion and emotion on all sides.

“My personal views on the subject of marriage have been shaped by my own experience, tradition and upbringing. But as Governor of New Hampshire, I recognize that I have a responsibility to consider this issue through a broader lens.

“In the past weeks and months, I have spoken with lawmakers, religious leaders and citizens. My office has received thousands of phone calls, letters and emails. I have studied our current marriage and civil union laws, the laws of other states, the bills recently passed by the legislature and our history and traditions.

“Two years ago, we passed civil unions legislation here in New Hampshire. That law gave same-sex couples in civil unions the same rights and protections as marriage. And in typical New Hampshire fashion, the people of this state embraced civil unions and agreed we needed to continue our tradition of opposing discrimination.

“At its core, HB 436 simply changes the term ‘civil union’ to ‘civil marriage.’ Given the cultural, historical and religious significance of the word marriage, this is a meaningful change.

“I have heard, and I understand, the very real feelings of same-sex couples that a separate system is not an equal system. That a civil law that differentiates between their committed relationships and those of heterosexual couples undermines both their dignity and the legitimacy of their families.

“I have also heard, and I understand, the concerns of our citizens who have equally deep feelings and genuine religious beliefs about marriage. They fear that this legislation would interfere with the ability of religious groups to freely practice their faiths.

“Throughout history, our society’s views of civil rights have constantly evolved and expanded. New Hampshire’s great tradition has always been to come down on the side of individual liberties and protections.

“That is what I believe we must do today.

“But following that tradition means we must act to protect both the liberty of same-sex couples and religious liberty. In their current form, I do not believe these bills accomplish those goals.

“The Legislature took an important step by clearly differentiating between civil and religious marriage, and protecting religious groups from having to participate in marriage ceremonies that violate their fundamental religious beliefs.

“But the role of marriage in many faiths extends beyond the actual marriage ceremony.

“I have examined the laws of other states, including Vermont and Connecticut, which have recently passed same-sex marriage laws. Both go further in protecting religious institutions than the current New Hampshire legislation.

“This morning, I met with House and Senate leaders, and the sponsors of this legislation, and gave them language that will provide additional protections to religious institutions.

“This new language will provide the strongest and clearest protections for religious institutions and associations, and for the individuals working with such institutions. It will make clear that they cannot be forced to act in ways that violate their deeply held religious principles.

“If the legislature passes this language, I will sign the same-sex marriage bill into law. If the legislature doesn’t pass these provisions, I will veto it.

"We can and must treat both same-sex couples and people of certain religious traditions with respect and dignity.

"I believe this proposed language will accomplish both of these goals and I urge the legislature to pass it.

Below is the language Gov. Lynch has proposed for the same Sex legislation.

#

I. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a religious organization, association, or society, or any individual who is managed, directed, or supervised by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association or society, or any nonprofit institution or organization operated, supervised or controlled by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association or society, shall not be required to provide services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods or privileges to an individual if such request for such services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods or privileges is related to the solemnization of a marriage, the celebration of a marriage, or the promotion of marriage through religious counseling, programs, courses, retreats, or housing designated for married individuals, and such solemnization, celebration, or promotion of marriage is in violation of their religious beliefs and faith. Any refusal to provide services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods or privileges in accordance with this section shall not create any civil claim or cause of action or result in any state action to penalize or withhold benefits from such religious organization, association or society, or any individual who is managed, directed, or supervised by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association or society, or any nonprofit institution or organization operated, supervised or controlled by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association or society.

II. The marriage laws of this state shall not be construed to affect the ability of a fraternal benefit society to determine the admission of members pursuant to RSA 418:5, and shall not require a fraternal benefit society that has been established and is operating for charitable and educational purposes and which is operated, supervised or controlled by or in connection with a religious organization to provide insurance benefits to any person if to do so would violate the fraternal benefit society's free exercise of religion as guaranteed by the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States and part 1, article 5 of the Constitution of New Hampshire

III. Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed or construed to limit the protections and exemptions provided to religious organizations under RSA § 354-A:18.

IV. Repeal. RSA 457-A, relative to civil unions, is repealed effective January 1, 2011, except that no new civil unions shall be established after January 1, 2010.

How can I really know God's presence in my life?

We are creatures of desire. We move and decide on the basis of desire. Desire is our inescapable motivation.

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate the one and love the other; you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (NLT).

Good News in Tough Times continued...

KENN RENNER The number of real estate agents in the Austin, Texas, area has shrunk 30 percent since last year, reflecting a decrease in average monthly home sales in 2008 of more than 50 percent, according to Realtor Kenn Renner. However, after seeing his sales double the first two months over the same period last year, the head of Renner Realty is aiming for a 50 to 65 percent increase in 2009—he hopes to reach \$20 million. Symbolizing his optimism is the early March listing of an \$800,000 home that sold in four days, prompting the seller to remark, “This is a God thing.” “We surrender the whole business to Him,” says Renner, a member of Glory House Christian Center. “With the power of prayer and our model of doing things—people are looking for that. They want encouragement.” Though an independent agent for 25 years, Renner says last fall God directed him to become an affiliate of Keller Williams Realty. The Austin-based franchiser is now the nation’s third-largest residential real estate firm. Renner liked the priorities of co-founder/chairman Gary Keller: God first, followed by family and then business. “As a stereotype, [business owners] put business first,” Renner says. “It’s proven that God first is more biblical.” Though not a direct beneficiary of the federal stimulus bill, Renner says one provision of federal legislation adopted in February helped boost his business. The bill changed what had been a \$7,500 no-interest loan to an \$8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers. The provision didn’t attract much attention from the news media—or Renner, until God told him to send out postcards to his tenants directing them to call him about federal housing assistance. “God said, ‘Get the word out,’”

Renner recalls. "Nearly everybody who calls me has no idea about the \$8,000 credit. Part of it is revealing what's already there. It's really being aware of the signs of the times. It's a pretty exciting time." Another step he took recently was adding a note to his Web site that for every home sale, Renner Realty donates \$360 to Fullness in Christ Ministries, a Texas ministry founded by charismatic pastor Ras Robinson. That sum helps educate a child in Peru or the Philippines for a year. "It's one of the ways I'm letting people know this is a Christian business," Renner says.

DENNIS FEDORUK The current downturn is the third Dennis Fedoruk has weathered since he started The Brainy Baby Co. in 1995. However, thanks to increased direct-to-consumer products, his company's sales more than doubled the first two months of 2009. Although he doesn't expect that to continue, Fedoruk still forecasts an increase of 20 to 30 percent for the year. "There's a certain amount of an evergreen nature to our business," says the president of Brainy Baby, which produces videos, books and other products for toddlers. "It is children's education; we have 4.5 million new babies every year; and people will spend money on educational products for their children." Aside from such customary factors boosting sales, Fedoruk sees God's signature written all over a healthy 2009. He talks about the phone ringing and bringing unexpected business or word of distribution into another country. Brainy Baby items can now be found in some 200 nations through sales outlets or video downloads. Although the company's products are aimed at general markets, Brainy Baby is working on a faith-based line for release later this year. The new items will be one way the company can acknowledge the Father behind its prosperity. "God never fails," says Fedoruk, who attends a nondenominational, charismatic church in a suburb of Atlanta. "I believe He is behind everything we do. We never worry; we just practice Matthew 6:33 ['But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you'] and go about God's business." Although he believes a

stream of negative media reports has magnified the public's gloomy outlook, the executive says God has been teaching him to remain steady in today's recessionary environment. Acknowledging that he could constantly worry if he let his mind "go wild," Fedoruk says God has assured him that if he stays on the course He set without turning right or left, things will be all right. "If you're doing what God tells you to do, you're definitely beating a different drum," he says of bucking the trend. "As believers, we know that. We're not always beating the drum of popularity, but if you just stay focused on what you're doing, God will see you through."