

# Forgiveness...the way Jesus Lived it

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In a world where the ugliness of rage and retaliation are the driving story line, *Unconditional?* offers the beauty, reconciliation, and total restoration of forgiveness the way Jesus taught us to live it.

*Unconditional?* by Brian Zahnd

[click here to purchase](#)

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## A Word for Everyone

**Stumped on which Bible version is best for you or your family? Here's your guide to the latest Word(s) on the street.**

There's no time like the present to begin a Bible reading plan or to ramp up an already established study routine. But where do you start? How do you navigate today's sea of Bible offerings? Here's a sampling of recently released Bibles and Bible resources, each offering you or someone in your family a unique way to go deeper in understanding God's Word.


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# Writing off Depression and Suicide

With reports of teen suicide and bullying on the rise, the  nonprofit ministry My Broken Palace (MBP) is creatively helping youth suffering from suicidal thoughts, self-injury, bullying and depression. Inspired by Psalm 34:18—"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"—this organization brings hope to teens using music, writing, painting and video on its Web community.

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## Revival in Women's Prisons

The Holy Spirit is on the move in prisons, and He's  targeting the wounded hearts of women inmates. According to Daughters of Destiny, more than 20,000 inmates attended the prison ministry's evangelism events last year, with more than 7,500 making decisions for Christ.

"In the past, 7 to 10 percent of the inmates at a facility might attend our meetings. Now we're seeing 30 to 90 percent," says Annie Goebel of Daughters of Destiny.

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## They'll Put You to Sleep

A pillow can offer more than just comfort; it can deliver a  message of hope. For the last two years One Touch Awakening

has been distributing pillowcases, snuggle pillows and insecticide-treated mosquito nets to people around the world. A prayer team prays over each individual pillowcase and mosquito net, asking God to comfort the recipients and give them a renewed spirit as they rest their heads at night.

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## The Mission Field Next Door

Did you know you don't have to fly to the other side of the  world to go on a missions trip? Try traveling across the street next time—it's cheaper *and* you might affect just as much change. So says Nashville, Tenn.-based My Own Backyard ministry, which is redefining the concept of missions work.

The group equips volunteers to make a difference in their own cities through everything from monthly block parties to mentoring young people to creating "action days" for churches and groups to go out and serve their communities.

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## Prison Food Never Tasted This Good

Prison Food Never Tasted This GoodThe America's  Chef Competition, part of the 14th America's Food and Beverage Show and Conference held in Miami, included two special competitors late last year: Florida state prison inmates Terry Garrish and Lance Wissinger.

As part of the faith-based Bridges of America work release/therapy program, these men, who have since been released, completed rigorous culinary instruction and were entered in this prestigious tournament. Their entry is a noted milestone, as this is the first time that inmates have competed.

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## Making Ministry Fashionable


Sometimes changing the world begins after changing the  clothes in your own closet.

Lindsay Giambattista, founder of Taylor's Closet (TC) clothing store in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., started by giving her extra clothing to at-risk teen girls when she was 14. She then began gathering outfits from friends and family, and soon she had an entire store full of merchandise. From there, Giambattista acquired a building and launched a full-scale ministry boutique.

TC is no ordinary thrift store, however. Giambattista's boutique has made designer clothing available to young women and girls who would not be able to purchase such items for free.

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## Placing Genocide Center Stage

Imagine if your child were abducted from school and forced  into a life of slavery that included raising other children

groomed to become soldiers. This scene isn't just a nightmare for Filder Akech—it was her reality.

Ugandan rebels kidnapped Filder when she was 9 from her schoolyard, and for a year and a half, she cared for children born in the bush and forced to fight. Eventually, Filder escaped and now studies at a school in a village set up by Watoto, a holistic care program that serves abandoned and vulnerable children and women in Uganda.

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## **Feedback January 2011**

### **Stay Debt-Free For The Holidays!**

Getting into the spirit of the holiday season is no reason to go into debt (“No More Plastic Holidays!” by Amie Streater, November). Retailers and charge-card companies pull out all the stops in an effort to make people think that buying gifts is what gives holiday seasons their meaning. Debt-free gift-giving, however, will warm one's heart far more than the shock of a higher charge-card statement to begin the brand-new year.

*Haven Swess,  
via e-mail*

### **Stormy Weather**

James W. Goll's testimony is awesome (“When You Have Done All”; October). I can relate to his story of pain and holding steadfast to faith. I lost my mother, my youngest sister and my best friend all within a year and a half. My sister suffered from cancer, but it did not cause her faith to waiver. Jesus' name was the last name she uttered. One must

continue to look to God and trust in Him regardless of the type of "weather" a storm brings.

*Sheila Church,  
via e-mail*

This was a wonderful testimony from James W. Goll that will give hope to many. There is no magical formula or doctrine for Christian living. Saints do get sick, saints do die, saints do suffer, and God is in control. We can't just speak problems away. God has a higher purpose, and His ways are not ours. American Christianity needs to rethink its understanding of Scripture.

*name withheld*

### **Is 'Labeling' Going Too Far?**

I am confused by the article "Terms of Offense" by Eitan Shishkoff (October). He states that Jews, who believe in Christ as the Messiah, are to be called "Messianic Jews" and not Christians. Aren't all Jewish people Messianic Jews? Isn't the belief in the eventual coming of the Messiah a basic and fundamental part of traditional Judaism? Shishkoff makes the statement, "We are a curiosity because we tear down the wall between Jews and Jesus erected by both church and synagogue." Really? It seems to me that what you are doing is building a wall of distinction that identifies Messianic Jews as something "curiously" special, set apart and perhaps set above mere Christians. It is this requirement for special "labeling" that is so very divisive to the church today. When Jesus Christ called His disciples, He did not differentiate between classes, races, labels or occupations. If the end times are near, shouldn't we as believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah try to find more ways to come together rather than trying to

invent ways to separate us?

*Art Handy,  
Tybee Island, Ga.*

If it is true that Jews do not want to be called Christians, I do not blame them one bit. When I look back at all of what has been done in the name of Christianity, I don't particularly want to be called one either. If I understand correctly, to be a Christian means being like Christ. I am a member of the body of Christ and I just don't understand the lack of love shown by many so-called Christians. People who are Christians need to live and act like Christ in word and thought and deed.

*Velma Harding,  
Coffeyville, Kan.*

### **More Substance, Please**

It seems that this recent "dumbing down" of our spiritual heritage leaves believers less informed and subsequently less empowered to counteract ungodly forces of the culture. If helping people become "fully devoted followers of Christ" is the goal, then isn't providing full knowledge of spiritual gifts a practical step in that process? Having an intimate awareness of the Holy Spirit and yet refusing to share that with one's own congregants seems a bit like sending troops out to battle without adequate armor and arsenal.

*Darla Haas,  
Little Rock, Ark.*

### **My Turn**

As a pastor, I too am frustrated and embarrassed by the hypocrisies, inconsistencies and fabrications of the charismatic movement, as Greg Surratt pointed out ("How to Be Charismatic Without Being Crazy"; November). After pastoring

for 27 years, I can share my own horror stories of embarrassing moments watching people act and minister in bizarre ways, claiming it was the Lord. My greatest concern is that somehow I become an apologist for doing church “the crazy way” or be seen as one who is simply anchored to the old way of doing things. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just as I would affirm that Greg is not trying to corral the Holy Spirit, I am not trying to advocate for a three-ring circus either.

I think Greg has fallen into the ditch many a philosopher has found by analyzing the landscape accurately but answering it with faulty solutions. Critique is somewhat easy because human nature can always “pick at specks” in others’ eyes or even the church’s practices. The hard part is a solution. The word crazy, for example, is a slippery concept. Most of the times God moved in Scripture supernaturally tended to look crazy to the natural mind.

I too, like Greg, have been disillusioned by much of the charismatic silliness. I have pondered on more occasions than I can count just how edgy and crazy a church should be. I believe that one of the greatest mistakes pastors make in our current era is to embrace the trendy and not see the eternal. It is easier to rest a ministry on management theory with occasional Scripture sprinkled in than it is to rest it on the whole counsel of God. No pastor wants to be “seeker-alienating.” No pastor likes seeing people walk out the door. However, every pastor needs to remember that this is God’s house, and He needs to be the most comfortable person there.

*Kevin R. Baird,  
Charleston, S.C.*