

Irreplaceable

Focus on the Family

With a divorce occurring every 13 seconds in the United States, Focus on the Family is aiming to stem the tide with its new documentary *Irreplaceable*.

Landing in theaters one night only (May 6), the movie examines why humans yearn to be part of a family against the modern cultural backdrop that has not only eroded the family unit but redefined it. *Irreplaceable* follows Tim Sisarich, executive director of New Zealand's Focus on the Family, around the world as he explores the answer to a critical question: "What is family—and does it still matter in today's society?"

Using linear logic, Sisarich tackles how we've devalued families in sexuality, marriage, parenting and other arenas—all of which are interlinked. By proving that weakened families lead to weaker societies, *Irreplaceable* illustrates how God's original blueprint for the family is still supreme. Yet the film's power isn't just in showing how God's design for families can reduce poverty, decrease violence and combat injustice; it's in poignantly depicting how family can heal the heart. And despite culture's undermining of families, *Irreplaceable* offers hope that we can find our way back to God's plan. —*Felicia Abraham*

Deep Relief Now: Healed,

Free, Whole

Dennis Clark and Dr. Jen Clark (Destiny Image)

Learn how to stop medicating personal pain and find real relief with a lifestyle adjustment that will break the destructive cycle that first wounded you.

The Power of Hope

Dutch Sheets (Charisma House)

Best-selling author Dutch Sheets teaches you how to tap into the often underestimated and overlooked power of hope in God, who can get you through any trouble and help you rise above every disappointment.

A Life of Miracles

Don Schulze (Tyndale Momentum)

When God told Don Schulze to leave his career and his comfortable life to travel the country and world with his family, he wasn't sure he'd heard God right. But when he said yes, a miraculous adventure followed—full of dramatic rescues, just-in-time provisions, amazing miracles of healing and God's surprising answers to everyday prayers.

People, Pigs and Principalities

Don Dickerman (Charisma House)

The spirit realm is normal—angels and demons are all around us, whether we're aware of it or not. The true stories in this book will inspire you to become more aware of God's supernatural world.

Sovereign

Michael W. Smith (Sparrow Records)

Smitty is back with a new studio album, *Sovereign*. The single "You Won't Let Go" has already garnered great reviews, and the worshipful project, which features Kari Jobe, is sure to live up to the high standards set by Smith's previous 20-plus albums.

Will Floods Expand Revival in

Mozambique?

Iris Global, led by Rolland and Heidi Baker, is best known for bringing a tidal wave of Jesus' love to transform one of the world's poorest nations, Mozambique.

Since launching there in 1995, the ministry has expanded to include almost 40 bases worldwide. Yet after months of torrential rains caused severe flooding throughout Mozambique in March—including the area surrounding Iris' ministry base in Pemba—once again Iris became a beacon of light during a dark storm, much as it was in 2000 when spiritual revival followed the devastation left by cyclones and catastrophic floods.

“We are rebuilding and repairing as fast as we can,” Rolland Baker says. “In the midst of difficulty, we pray that many people will turn to God, who is mighty to save.”

Indeed, despite sparse water and electricity, spreading sewage and transportation difficulties, Iris teams have ventured out to nearby villages to meet immediate needs, often with miraculous provision.

“It's one house at a time,” adds Heidi Baker. “But it's not hard for God. He's alive and He cares about these people.”

Want to help Iris Global? Here's how.

If you'd like to help Iris Global share the love of Christ in tangible ways around the world—including helping to rebuild Mozambique—we make it easy through our CHARISMA CARES initiative. You can send your tax-deductible gift for Iris Global to Charisma Cares, 600 Rinehart Road, Lake Mary, FL 32746 or give online at . We'll forward 100 percent of your gift to the ministry.

Are You Investing in Heaven?

Most of us invest in our future. We plan, save and strategize to be debt-free and to have something for our retirement years. Yet not many people even consider investing in eternity. The retirement years are few, but eternity is a long time. It would be prudent to have an eternal perspective and invest in our lives beyond this temporal existence.

The most important investment we can make in heaven is to bring people with us. We can take nothing with us when we die—except for other souls. Jesus stated that if a man has one hundred sheep and one goes astray, He will go after the one and rejoice much when the one is found (Matt. 18:12). Jesus went on to explain in verse 14, “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (KJV). He was showing the importance of one soul that is saved—how precious that one soul is to God.

It takes effort to share the gospel with others, and many times there is opposition to our witness. It is easier for us as Christians to read our Bibles, go to church and then do little else. But God wants us to have His perspective and try to influence as many people as possible in order for them to come into the kingdom.

God desires to bless people, and it is up to us to open our mouths and share the way of salvation. Jesus told us in Mark 16:15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This is not a suggestion but a command. As Charles W. Spurgeon said, “Soulwinning is the chief business of the Christian; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every true believer.”

It is interesting that as people get close to death, it is usually easier to talk to them about the afterlife. It is an unfortunate fact that many times it takes a tragedy, severe illness or some other catastrophic event to be able to have a conversation with someone about God and the afterlife. I suppose many people think any discussion about God will cramp their lifestyle, so the conversation is put off until they are faced with something serious.

Usually people will make some preparations for death. We may prepare a will or set up a trust fund. We carefully consider our final plans, visit with our families and say all the important things we need to say to our loved ones. Some people desire to see a priest or person of the cloth when they are on their deathbeds.

If a person does not know Jesus, I have observed there is usually an overwhelming fear that comes over them as they approach death—and they should be glad it does, as this fear places them in a position to listen and be open to the truth (Job 33:15-22). Jude 23 tells us, “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” That is the only time some are willing to talk about and listen to the way to heaven.

But if we are already a Christian, then we know we are ready to leave this life. We have peace with God in our hearts because we are trusting in Him. As Christians, we have full assurance of our salvation and our eternal destiny (Is. 51:6; Acts 17:31; Heb. 5:9; 1 John 2:25).

The one thing a Christian normally desires more than anything else before they pass on is to be certain their families are also Christians. The rich man came to realize when he arrived in hell that his brothers needed to repent of their sins or they too would end up in that horrible place of torment (Luke 16:30). He was concerned for them and didn't want them to suffer as he was suffering.

But we cannot force God's love and forgiveness upon anyone. We can only share His plan of salvation, and each person must decide for themselves. We need to pray that people will discover the truth before it's too late—like it was for the rich man in hell. When we arrive in heaven and see those whom we helped influence to see the light and accept the Lord, it will be a most valued reward.

As Christians, do we have an eternal perspective? Are we concerned about those who do not know the way of salvation? Are we doing things that will count for eternity? Will we choose to live for God, or will we choose to live for ourselves? We are not giving up anything of value to live for God, and He even rewards us if we do. It is not a loss but much gain.

It is actually scriptural for us to desire the rewards God promises. Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount that we will obtain rewards (Luke 6:23). But as Charles H. Spurgeon wrote, "At the mention of the word reward, some will prick up their ears and mutter, 'Legality.' Yet the reward we speak of is not of debt, but of grace. It is not enjoyed with the proud conceit of merit, but with the grateful delight of humility."

David Shibley writes, "Every now and then I run across people who will say, 'Well, I'm not doing this for rewards. It will be reward enough just to be in heaven.' This misses the whole point—and it's bad theology. Heaven is not a reward; it is part of our redemption gift package when we come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Further, to place little value on what heaven says has great value insults the very Lord who offers these rewards."

The Bible states there are many rewards given in heaven to those who were obedient on the earth:

- Psalm 19:11: "And in keeping of them [commandments] there is great reward."

- Psalm 62:12: "For thou renderest to every man according to his work."
- Proverbs 11:18: "But to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward."
- Proverbs 13:13: "But he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded."
- Jeremiah 31:16: "For thy work shall be rewarded."
- Hosea 4:9: "And I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings."
- Matthew 5:11-12: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you ... for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."
- Matthew 6:1, 4: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. ... And thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."
- Matthew 16:27: "And then he shall reward every man according to his works."
- Mark 9:41: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."
- Luke 14:13-14: "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."
- 1 Corinthians 3:8: "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."
- Colossians 3:24: "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."
- Hebrews 11:6: "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
- Revelation 11:18: "Thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name."
- Revelation 22:12: "And my reward is with me, to give

every man according as his work shall be.”

Perhaps one of the greatest rewards we could be given in heaven will be time allowed with Jesus. To be able to walk and talk with Him would be the most precious gift of all.

Could it be that the more time we spend with Him in prayer here, the more time we will have with Him in heaven? It is not that we could ever earn it, but the Bible does say, “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). In addition, Galatians 6:7 says, “For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

If we sow time with Jesus here, will we reap more time with Him in heaven? Just a thought!

Bill Wiese is the New York Times *best-selling* author of 23 Minutes in Hell and his new book, What Happens When I Die? He speaks internationally and has appeared on numerous TV and radio shows. He and his wife, Annette, live in Southern California.

How do we keep an eternal perspective during our time on earth? Watch Francis Chan talk about it at .

Have We Put the Blood of Jesus on Trial?

One night in a church service, a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God’s call and accepted

Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past involving alcohol, drugs and prostitution. But the change in her was evident.

As time went on, she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. The relationship grew, and they began to make wedding plans.

This is when the problems began.

You see, about half of the church did not think a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As people made their arguments, tensions increased and the meeting began to get completely out of hand.

The young woman became very upset about all the things brought up about her past. As she began to cry, the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife-to-be.

He said, "My fiancée's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So does it wash away sin or not?"

The whole church began to weep as they realized they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the gospel. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse another person completely, then it cannot cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus—end of case!

Here in the season of Easter, we think often of that blood. But do we really know what it means? Do we understand the height and length and depth and breadth of it? Let's pause and consider this.

We Are Washed

Jesus' blood did more than just cover our sins so we might be in good standing with God. It completely carried them away—and quite far, according to the psalmist: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12).

One of the most significant events in history is Jesus' death on the cross. Without it mankind would be hopelessly lost. The cross remains a symbol of where Christ shed His blood to redeem us. Every Christian should often remember its importance and power. Volumes have been written on the subject, yet we have but scratched the surface of the significance of Calvary's cross.

Here's one of the main reasons for its significance: Jesus was different from the Old Testament sacrifices, whose blood shielded mankind's sin from God's sight. As the writer of Hebrews said, “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). Only Christ's sinless blood could do that. Only Jesus “washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1:5).

The Greek word translated *washed* means “to bathe the whole person.” It is, indeed, a powerful word. It suggests a complete washing. When we are cleansed by Christ's blood, sins are reckoned as if they never happened. This may be why some Christians appear much more joyful than others—they no longer carry the guilt and condemnation of their sin, for they understand what the blood of Jesus has done to make them free.

This is why the young man in the story I told you was grieved. He knew the blood of Christ had completely cleansed—covered in

full—the past of his beloved.

What's more, the blood of Jesus allows us to boldly enter God's presence. We read in the book of Hebrews, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). Imagine that! A person can come with confidence, assurance and even boldness into God's presence, knowing she will be received because her sins no longer separate her from God. No longer do we have to feel God disapproves of us. That fear is now out of the way so we can fellowship with our Creator.

We Now Love

Should we be tempted to believe we have done nothing worthy of death and therefore have no need of a Savior, we should look again at what God expects of us. He asks but two things: to love Him and others. Follow this carefully. The moment we offend or hurt someone, we have violated God's laws and become worthy of death.

James confirms this when he says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:8-10). Even those who willingly choose to avoid people are breaking the commandment to love others.

Our world is messed up not because God wants it that way and has willed it to be so but because of the breaking of these two commandments.

Think for a moment about how people treat one another. Better yet, think about how you relate to those around you. How many people have had a bad day because you were having a bad day? How many times have you said or done something you knew would

hurt another person? This is what creates the havoc in our world.

You may think, *Sure, I could have been nicer and kinder here or there, but it really wasn't that big of a deal. I didn't kill anybody.*

The degree of our sin makes no difference. We are still not excused. It's the trillions of "not so bad" acts that have led to more offensive behavior and a world that's in terrible shape.

Sadly, we blame God instead of ourselves. Why, we ask, does He allow bad things to happen? But God is not the one who has broken covenant; we are. As Proverbs 19:3 says, "The foolishness of a man twists his way, and his heart frets against the Lord."

We Live Well

Some people serve God out of fear. They are not as concerned with going to heaven as they are with staying out of hell. Yet to them the responsibilities involved in a covenant relationship with God seem staggering, and they think it impossible to live a righteous life before God.

What they don't realize is that goodness requires a relationship with God. Christians are "supposed" to be good people to be a part of God's kingdom. But those who discover just how hard it is to be good should not cancel themselves out of any hope of truly pleasing God.

Only God can empower us to live right before Him. Even salvation comes only by God's grace. It can't be earned, bought or inherited from our parents, as the Bible proclaims: "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling

the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

The issue of our goodness coming from God is further clarified in that God extends salvation only on the basis of Jesus' blood. Forgiveness of sin is not arbitrary. It's not God saying, "OK, since I'm God, I'll just forget what you've done because I know you are sorry." God's forgiveness is always based on Jesus having already paid the price for our sin with His blood, as Ephesians 2:13 says: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Once again, this atonement is made possible through the substitutionary blood of Christ shed in His substitutionary death on the cross. So then, we have access to God through Jesus, but that access is granted only on the basis of Christ's blood. If Christ had died in another manner, such as by hanging or drowning, salvation would have been incomplete because His death did not save us—His blood did!

Numerous verses in Scripture make it clear that only blood can atone for sin. Only by the blood of Jesus can we come to God.

Paul wrote, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:19-20).

It is easy to think works and good deeds will get us into God's good graces. But again, the Scriptures are straightforward about this: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

This, of course, doesn't mean there is nothing to do but sit back and wait for Jesus to come. On the contrary, there is much work to be done in this present world—work to do for

God's kingdom, but not work to do in order to be saved.

Am I saying we can live any way we please because salvation is granted apart from personal righteousness? Not at all. Paul addresses this question quite plainly in his letter to Titus. After affirming salvation is apart from works (Titus 3:5) and then further affirming we are justified by nothing other than grace (v. 7), Paul states that "those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men" (v. 8).

The free gift of salvation and God's incredible grace must never be seen as an open door to sin. Should anyone ask why, the answer is simple: Sin diminishes joy, peace, happiness, security, authority and boldness before God's throne. It further opens doors to the influence of demons and ruins a person's testimony.

We Live Free

We were never meant to continue to live in sin after receiving God's saving grace. But unfortunately, while we are in this life, we are susceptible to sin. John assures us that the blood of Jesus is not good for only one cleansing but has the power to keep us clean: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). And, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (v. 9).

Again, John was not saying that a believer, now freed from sin, should continue practicing sin. There is a clear difference between living in sin and occasionally falling into it. There is a difference between practicing sin and being troubled by it.

Some believe a person can be freed from sin in such a way that

he or she will never sin again. The Bible does not teach the attainment of sinless perfection. Rather, it teaches freedom from the power of sin, which means that a person is no longer forced to do it: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

After you have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, sin becomes a matter of choice. You can reject the power of the indwelling Christ and choose to sin, or you can call upon the righteousness that is in Jesus and experience His help in overcoming sin. You are no longer obligated to do wrong by the "law of sin." (See Romans 7:14-25.)

Jesus is the solution. We read in 1 John 2:1-2, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

I want to continue to emphasize that the righteousness required of us is not administered or controlled by the Law, and it is not accomplished without God's help. The good news of the gospel is not only that Christ died for sinners but also that He came to take up residence in the life of a believer. This and only this is what makes real righteousness possible.

The life of Christ in us gives the strength to do what we cannot do by ourselves. The measure of the work of Jesus on the cross is meant to become a measurable work in us. Of all the truths of God's Word, this is one of the most misunderstood and neglected. For some reason, we gravitate to the Law or to works to make us righteous rather than to Christ, and in the process we miss God's grace and power.

My brothers and sisters, may it not be so. In this Easter season, may we understand and appropriate the full power of

the blood of Christ shed at Calvary over us, in us and through us so that we walk in the freedom, love and strength God intends for us.

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Watch evangelist Reinhard Bonnke teach on what it truly means to be marked by the blood of Jesus at

The Illusion of More

Harris III (Destiny Image)

Professional illusionist Harris III suggests the constant desire for more is only a façade and reveals how to “trick” your mind into believing by faith.