

Jesus Is: Find a New Way to Be Human

 **Judah Smith (Thomas Nelson)**

Judah Smith, pastor of The City Church in Kirkland, Wash., contends that our view of Christ defines who we become. In his latest book, Smith takes readers beyond the somber-painting depictions of Jesus (a great leader, a teacher) to show Him as life itself, full of grace and love.

Jeremy Camp Debuts Reckless

Jeremy Camp (EMI)

It's been more than 10 years since Jeremy Camp released his debut album, yet the award-winning artist shows no signs of slowing down. His seventh full-length record, *Reckless*, co-produced by Andy Dodd, hits stores this month, with a title track that has already shot up the radio charts.

Here's a Sample:

Jeremy Camp – Reckless (Official Lyric Video) from jeremy-camp on GodTube.

Heart Breaker

Heart disease is America's No. 1 killer, yet its roots are far more spiritual than most think

Did you know that heart disease kills more Americans each year than all cancers *combined*? In fact, almost 600,000 people in the U.S. die of heart disease each year—that's one in every four deaths.

The risks of heart disease are diverse and well-publicized: diet, exercise, smoking, high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, genetics, age and gender.

But there's another factor that frequently goes unnoticed. And while its impact is great, it's not likely to come up in conversations with your doctor.

What is this often-overlooked risk factor? The status of your spirit.

The link between one's spiritual and physical condition is irrefutable. Verses such as Proverbs 17:22 bear witness to the connection: "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones." Scientific research lines up with these biblical truths, as multiple studies confirm a link between the spirit man and the physical man when it comes to health.

In light of this knowledge, our pursuit of fitness—particularly that of a fit heart—must include an assessment of our spiritual fitness.

When it comes to avoiding heart disease, it's not enough to focus solely on a nutritious diet and adequate exercise. It's not enough to stop smoking and avoid foods that would clog our arteries and shoot our cholesterol level sky high. Yes, these are all vitally important steps to take for the care and well-

being of our bodies. But optimal health requires us to become equally diligent in improving ourselves spiritually.

How can the wholeness we long for in the physical man be hindered by infirmity in the spirit man? Let's examine a few of the most potent spiritual heart breakers.

Twisting Scripture and Testing God

Jesus, at the start of His earthly ministry, was tempted three times by Satan while in the wilderness. In the second temptation, the devil took Jesus to a high point on the temple and enticed Him to jump.

He reasoned, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone'" (Matt. 4:6).

Here, Satan twisted a passage in Psalm 91 in his attempt to trap the Lord. He quoted a passage that speaks of *trusting* God but used it to persuade Jesus to *test* God.

Jesus' simple response, however, brought clarity to the matter. He said, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Matt. 4:7). In this response, Jesus secured the victory for Himself, and He demonstrated how to guard against a serious heart breaker: *Don't test God*.

Jesus was tempted to jump from a dangerous height with the expectation God would rescue Him. Though we aren't likely to find ourselves on the ledge of a skyscraper, the essence of the temptation is common: We test God when we yield to our flesh, believing God will supernaturally spare us from its consequences.

How does this error affect our risk for cardiovascular disease? We know diet plays a major role in heart disease. Some foods protect the heart against coronary artery disease,

and some foods increase the risk. Because of this, we know certain foods should be eaten in moderation or avoided entirely.

But over the years, both in my office and other settings, I've encountered Christians who use the Bible to justify their unhealthy eating habits. One favorite passage they quote is Matthew 15:10-11: "Jesus called the crowd to him and said, 'Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them'" (NIV).

A second favorite passage is Acts 10:13-15: "Then a voice told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.' 'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.' The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean' (NIV).

Let's be clear: Neither of these passages make any connection between diet and disease, nor do they give us license to eat in a manner detrimental to our health.

Likewise, the benefits of exercise, specifically with respect to the heart, are irrefutable. Exercise makes the heart stronger. It improves circulation and lowers blood pressure. The benefits of exercise on the body—and specifically the heart—are too numerous to count.

But all too often, I encounter folks who justify a sedentary lifestyle with such passages as 1 Timothy 4:8: "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (NKJV).

Satan's bag of tricks never changes. Just as he tempted Jesus to test God, he does the same to us. And the method he uses in the 21st century is the same he employed more than 2,000 years ago with our Savior: taking God's Word out of context and twisting the Scriptures to validate error and lead us into

ruin.

Remember, the devil's desire is our destruction. He would have us justify gluttony and laziness to the detriment of our health, rather than exemplify such heart-healthy virtues as discipline, moderation and self-control.

Simmering in Toxic Emotions

Anger, bitterness and wrath are other heart breakers. These toxic emotions are as harmful as poison, and they have the capacity to destroy our well-being. Both our mental health and our physical health is damaged when we allow negative emotions to take root in our souls, and the cardiovascular system is especially vulnerable.

Once again, scientific evidence lines up with the Word of God in this respect. Extensive medical research has examined the connection between personality and heart disease. The results consistently show that people with bitter dispositions and those prone to outbursts of anger are at significantly higher risk for heart disease, especially heart attack.

Ultimately, this is a spiritual issue. God admonishes us to "let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from [us], with all malice" (Eph. 4:31), and these toxic emotions are a reliable indicator of an unwillingness to forgive.

The Lord would have us purge ourselves of these negative emotions, practice forgiveness and be reconciled with our brothers and sisters. This explains why the next verse in the passage says, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

When you obey God by forgiving others, you release yourself from the harmful bondage of toxic emotions. God blesses your spiritual heart with the joy of reconciliation, and He blesses your physical heart by protecting it from disease.

Believing God Doesn't Care

The false teachers of the early church spread the erroneous message that God was not interested in the physical realm of life, but only the spiritual. Those who believed these lies felt justified committing sins against the body.

Paul countered these false messages with the truth that God is very much concerned about the physical body. In Romans 12:1, he describes our bodies as "living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God."

And in 1 Corinthians, he gives even greater prominence to the body: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (6:19-20).

In many respects, how we live determines whether our hearts are fit or diseased. But it's not easy to modify our lifestyles, especially if we've been living with certain habits and behaviors for many years. This explains why the vast majority of people are unsuccessful at long-term change.

Here's one secret to success: Agree with God!

This may sound simplistic, but it holds the key to victory. If we agree with God that the body *is* a living sacrifice, then we'll be motivated to achieve wholeness in the physical realm of our lives, just so we can offer Him our best. If we agree with God that the body *is* the place where the Holy Spirit resides, then we will think twice before defiling that temple with foods, beverages and substances that do damage to its structure and cripple its foundation.

When we agree with God in our mind, then our actions will follow suit. But if we believe that God is not concerned with the physical realm, then we will never find the fortitude we

need to stick to a healthy lifestyle.

When you fully agree with God that the physical realm is important, then He will give you all the wisdom and strength you need to edify your body, His temple. Then the physical and spiritual needs of your heart will be kept whole.

Kara Davis, M.D., is a board-certified physician of internal medicine and the chief medical officer of Christian Community Health Center in South Holland, Ill.. Her latest book, *Spiritual Secrets to a Healthy Heart (Siloam)*, releases this month.

Dr. Kara Davis explains how your weight loss could be contingent upon your spiritual health. Visit to learn more.

How 10 Minutes Changed a Nation

Though liberals in Canada are stunned by the resurgence in conservative values, Faytene Grasseschi isn't alone in her ability to trace the cultural shift back to a precise moment in time.

On Aug. 23, 2008, after hours of prayer during TheCRY gathering on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, the crowd of more than 1,000 had grown tired from the heat. Grasseschi picked up the microphone and spoke a question the Holy Spirit had whispered

in her ear moments earlier: "Could 10 minutes change a nation?"

She repeated this question again and again, sensing a powerful faith rising from the crowd. The movement continued to build, and a few hours later, during a time of praying blessings over national leaders, Grasseschi says something happened.

"We felt something shift. We didn't know what had happened, but we knew we were in a historic moment of prayer that was changing our nation," she says.

A few weeks later, the prayer leader was on a plane and opened a national Canadian newspaper. She was amazed, she says, as her eyes fell upon a national political graph that showed a significant political shift had taken place on the exact same day as TheCRY event.

As Grasseschi and thousands of young Christians had cried out to God for mercy, favor, wisdom and the spirit of life to hit Canada, as well as blessing upon Israel, the national polls shifted sharply in favor of the party that more strongly supported biblical values—even though none of the people gathered at TheCRY that day had prayed for a particular party.

After many years of socially liberal trends in the Parliament of Canada, an astounding turnaround began to happen. Following the elections in October that year, more than 40 percent of the members of Parliament were estimated to be professing believers in Jesus Christ, according to analytics done by the National House of Prayer.

Since this shift, Canada continues to make strides toward a return to biblical values. Parliament passed legislation to combat human trafficking. The government has offered national repentance for historical atrocities. The most pro-life caucus in decades continues to emerge. Current prime minister Stephen Harper is an evangelical and known for his conservative values and positions. In addition, Canada is currently considered

among the top supporters of Israel in the world.

Why You Should Be Ready for Change That Brings a God-Sized Future

Dr. Vance Havner was a traveling preacher whose straight talk, laced with humor, would often empty a church rather than fill it. A prophet to Christians before the prophetic movement as well as a prolific author, he wrote such classics as *Repent or Else!*, *It is Time* and *Home Before Dark*.

I had the privilege of hosting Dr. Havner in 1976 in my Alabama church. He was a peculiar man! He never owned or drove a car, and he loved bananas and corn flakes after the night services. Dr. Havner was actually the preacher to coin the now-famous phrase, "The church is a hospital of sinners and not a museum for saints."

I remember one story he told. He and his wife were traveling by bus (remember, no car) to a speaking engagement. The bus made a rest stop at a country store and gas station. There was an old woman sitting in front of the store entrance. She was dressed like something out of the 1900s. Dr. Havner's wife said, "Look at that lady. She doesn't have a clue about all the changes going on in our world." Dr. Havner replied, "For God's sake, don't tell her!"

That story resonated in my spirit then and still does today! In spite of all the positives that change has brought across the years, change can be uncomfortable and even frightening. For a God-sized future you must move off the porch of the past

into the destiny God intended.

When I was young, Mama would always get us new shoes at Easter. These new shoes felt tight and uncomfortable. My old shoes were “broken in” and easy to wear. There was something comfortable about those shoes I had gotten used to that made me not want to change. What I tended to ignore was the worn-out sole that no longer helped me to not slip and hurt myself, or the worn-out places in the leather that allowed water to come into the shoe.

Also, old shoes take on an odor that everyone can smell but the owner. I was at “The Ramp” for the men’s meeting and worship was hot and heavy. It was crowded but Karen Wheaton and Damon Thompson had graciously made a front seat available to me. Some of the younger men came up front and were dancing and jumping. One of them took off his Nikes, and the odor emptied my whole row. He needed new shoes and did not notice it.

Just like old shoes, clothes and diapers stink if they are not changed! Life can grow stale, sour and odorous without change. I want to help you put on some new faith shoes and move you to a God-sized future.

Life, business, technology and church can be like those old shoes. Nothing is wrong with them until they are worn out and become the wrong size and fit for the future. Sadly the church is often the last to embrace necessary change. Honestly, when computers came out one of our older elders opposed it because it would lead to “the mark of the beast.” Of course, Satan can use technology—and he certainly will—but so can the church.

We shouldn’t be afraid of these temporal changes, because the Lord, the Bible, sound doctrine and the Good News of Christ are unchanging. These are the basis of our faith. Yet our method of communication and our culture change. We cannot afford to be an eight-track church in an iPod world! God’s

mighty movements have always resulted in massive shifts in how we “do” church! God’s transformational power in individuals always begins with life-altering change.

Change for change’s sake can be our enemy, but God-given change is our only hope! We need to embrace change rather than fear it. We need to stop fretting over lesser things and move forward into the God-sized future awaiting you. It’s time to receive a renewed vision for your life. The church must move forward and begin to take the lead in our culture. After 32 years at Abba’s House and 45 years as a pastor, I am ready for change that brings transformation renewal.

Finally, change must include a welcome to the Holy Spirit’s power, gifts, revelation and joy! To that end I send this message to all who long to see God move in power today!

Adapted from *A God-Sized Future* by Ron Phillips, ., copyright 2012, published by Charisma House. Sharing relevant stories from personal experiences and the Bible, the author challenges you to move out of your *comfort* zone and shows you how to: determine the right time for change, allow God to initiate change, and harness super change through a Spirit-controlled mind, and a life of radical obedience. To order your copy click on this link:



PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 12/31/2012

This week welcome the Holy Spirit to have His will and way in you. Thank the Lord that He is able to execute all that is needed in your life and that when you yield to His perfect will He will perfect that which concerns you. Thank Him for a God-sized future and declare that you will embrace it without fear. Ask God to help you stay focused on His Word and His way as you journey through the coming year. Continue to pray for

our troops, their families and those spreading the gospel around the world. Remember Israel and pray that it fulfill all that God desires. Pray that the church would lead in repentance and prayer for revival at home and abroad. Lift up our leaders and pray that they seek God for wisdom and direction. Matt. 6:9-13

Celebrate Jesus by Capturing the True Spirit of Christmas

I stood back and gazed at our work—this year’s Christmas decorations gracing our condo living room. “Looks like Christmas!” I declared to my husband, Terry. He was my partner in assembling the small tree adorned with white lights and tinsel, the silk balsam wreaths with plaid bows and the tiny crèche that lined our fireplace mantel.

Terry grinned, admitting, “Looks like the men’s shirt department at Christmas to me!”

Only two days ago we had been out shopping for decorations that would capture Christmas. The decorations from the men’s shirt department in our favorite store at the mall had somehow grabbed our attention, so of course that became our model.

Terry was right. In our efforts to capture Christmas from what we’d seen at the mall, we had succeeded only in capturing the men’s shirt department! The only thing missing were 12 dozen shirts!

Where was Christmas? Why hadn’t we captured it? That night we prayed, “Lord, show us how to capture Christmas in our home.” It was a simple prayer, but we earnestly wanted to know!

The next morning was Saturday, our day to sleep in. We were rudely awakened by the ringing of our phone. Little did we know that this would lead to the answer to our prayer from the night before.

It was Eleanor, a widow who lived in the apartment across the way. "Can you stop by with two cups of sugar? I ran out and cannot leave the place because I am baking."

As I reached Eleanor's condo, I noticed that her door was ajar. Through the crack I saw people moving about! *What was this?* Eleanor often kept to herself. Some people I recognized from our building, while others I recognized as her niece and brother and sister-in-law. But some were outright strangers—men and women of all ages.

From where I stood in the doorway, I could hear the clinking of china cups. The smell of rich, dark coffee wafted through the door crack and hit my nostrils. Soon my mouth was watering. The aroma of cinnamon candles burning and bread baking filled me with a warm, tingly comfort.

Eleanor met me in her entryway. With a backdrop of lively chattering people and upbeat Christmas music, Eleanor wiped her hands on her red plaid apron and announced to me, "Welcome! Come one, come all!" *Whoa! Had Eleanor turned party animal?*

Once inside her tiny kitchen, I learned that for years Eleanor and her late husband, Henry, had opened their home each Saturday in December up through Christmas Eve to neighbors and relatives, and invited strangers from the assisted-living homes and shelters—their way of celebrating Jesus' birthday. Eleanor was committed to continuing the tradition.

Since that day, I have come to understand the way to capture Christmas in our home. It begins with The Way, Himself, our celebrating Him first in our hearts (see John 14:6). The decorations will follow.

This Christmas, you are invited to join Terry and me in the celebration of Jesus' birthday. Break out the balsam and the wreaths and whatever is festive. Celebrate alone, with another or with a group. But be sure to celebrate Jesus and His birth in your hearts. You can't help but capture Christmas in your home as a result!

Do it, making merry in honor of Jesus—the real light of the world (see John 8:12). After all, He is the One who has cut through the depths of darkness, bringing us hope for all eternity.

Happy birthday, Jesus! Joy to the world and Merry Christmas to you, in Him!

Thank the Lord that through Him, especially in this season of celebrating His birth, that all heaven and earth rejoice.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 12/24/2012

Celebrate Christ in your heart this week and take some quiet time to praise and worship Him. As the year winds down, reflect on what has been and thank the Lord for His great faithfulness in the midst of it. Remember those who have suffered losses through natural disasters, war, crime, financial provision or broken relationships. Ask God what you can do to bless them in His Name. Continue to pray for Israel and our troops, as well as President Obama and those working with him to overcome the nation's challenges. John 8:12; 1 Tim. 2:1-4

To enrich your prayer life and learn how to strategically pray with power by using appropriate Scriptures, we recommend the following sources by Apostle John Eckhardt: Prayers that Rout Demons, Prayers that Bring Healing, Prayers that Release Heaven on Earth and Prayers that Break Curses. To order any or all of these click here.

Live Before You Die

Daniel Kolenda (Passio)

No quest is more important than the existential journey to discover life's purpose. It's why best-selling books such as Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* resonate so strongly with a broad spectrum of people; these works attest to an innate longing for a deeper meaning.

Now, Daniel Kolenda, an evangelist and president of Christ for All Nations, helps readers discover God's will for their individual lives.

Though Kolenda discusses God's standard will for all Christians, he gives in-depth teaching to help readers discover God's unique will for each of us.

Kolenda notes in his introduction, "Your role is to advance a cause greater than yourself." Yet throughout the book, he assures readers that seeking God's will is not a self-centered act, but one that is intended to further God's eternal purposes—through our impacting others.

Using various Bible stories, Kolenda tackles the most poignant questions about finding God's will, including: How do I discover God's will? What are the enemies of God's will? And, of course: How do I *understand* God's will for my life?

Kolenda wisely integrates scriptural examples throughout his work, covering Bible patriarchs such as David and Moses as well as the nation of Israel. He uses their pursuit in finding God's will to illustrate that difficulties are to be expected.

Overall, readers will appreciate the wisdom that Kolenda dispenses in addition to his solid foundation in Scripture. He succeeds in clearing up confusion and dispelling myths about a topic often shrouded in confusion. As a result, readers will be inspired to persist along the path of knowing their calling—whether that involves a career change or simply a transformation of the heart.

Why Is God So Mad at Me?

Pat Schatzline (Charisma House)

Many people—Christians included—believe that God is angry at them, and as a result they live below the level of favor and opportunity He intends for them. Pat Schatzline uncovers the truth, revealing a heavenly Father who is madly in love with His children.

The Utter Relief of Holiness

John Eldredge (FaithWords)

We all want to overcome the problems that plague us. In his latest book, John Eldredge reveals how holiness isn't just a command given to please God, but also the healing key to unlocking a life of exhilarating freedom from anger, immorality or habitual sin.

Who Do You Think You Are?

Mark Driscoll (Thomas Nelson)

At the center of heartache and struggle for many Christians is a lack of understanding their true identity in Jesus. Pastor Mark Driscoll explains what it means to be Christ's very own.