


Ed's Story: Identity and Humility

In the poignant, beautifully filmed Ed's Story film series,  author and former Calvary Church pastor Ed Dobson offers hope as he reflects on living with Lou Gehrig's disease. Having retired from the pulpit due to the sickness, Dobson discusses issues of identity, humility and forgiveness on the two newest releases of this seven-part series.

Monkey Business



The famous Scopes Monkey Trial, a courtroom battle over the teaching of evolution that secured a small Tennessee town a much-misrepresented footnote in history, is the backdrop for *Alleged*, starring Nathan West (*Miracle*) and Ashley Johnson (*The Help*).

Sometimes God Says 'Stay'

Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. —**Exodus 40:36-37**

Charisma Online



win a copy!

If your life is crumbling

... then you *really* need to read Riva Tims' new book, *When It All Falls Apart*. Win a copy at fallsapart.charismamag.com.



Know your charismatic roots

Why do most churches today incorporate a Pentecostal style of worship? What's the fastest-growing part of the global church today? Why are there so many different types of charismatics? Watch charismatic historian Vinson Synan answer these and other questions at synan.charismamag.com.



cost of being messianic

As Messianic Jews living in Israel, the Ortiz family were victims of a terrorist attack yet blamed for the same bombing that almost claimed their son's life (see p. 56). Find out how you can pray for Israel's Messianic community at messianic.charismamag.com.



how to squash a global disease

Malaria doesn't affect many people in the U.S., but the mosquito-borne disease still kills 2,000 children every day globally. Visit malaria.charismamag.com to discover how you can join the movement to wipe out malaria across the world.



Never Give Up

Christians often become weary in the face of adversity and persecution. Some give up their faith in Christ altogether. Go to relentless.charismamag.com to find out how God can give you power to stand through whatever attacks the enemy sends your way.



Rekindle the fire

Get practical advice from Christian relationship counselor Doug Weiss as he shares how a couple can rekindle the love in their relationship at rekindle.charismamag.com.

Feedback

"Your December issue made our Christmas so special in celebrating our Savior's birth."

–Joe and Jeanie Perez

REDISCOVERING CHRISTMAS

I've been completely inspired by Peter Bertolero's "Rediscovering the Beauty of Christmas" (December), as I really wish to celebrate the true essence of Christmas. I will

not be buying Christmas presents this year. The focus will be on giving to the needs of the poorer community. I also found "Decoding a Christmas Carol" fascinating, as I had always wondered how this song originated.

Lynsey Griffin, via email

I hope Christian worship and celebrations are more than just traditions. Over the years there has been too much change; history has been lost. Unfortunately, "tradition" in many ways has caused changes far removed from the origins of Scripture. The beauty of Christmas isn't in symbols and elements of celebrations, but in the result and understanding of prophecy.

Betty Sharon Thompson, San Antonio

Your December issue made our Christmas so special in celebrating our Savior's birth. One of the best—if not *the* best—issues we've received in nearly 30 years of subscribing. Thank you!

Joe and Jeanie Perez, Fenton, Mich.

THE BREAD AND THE WINE

Referencing Stephen Mansfield and David Holland's "So Help Us, God" (November), I was astounded that they would consider as strange the Catholic Church's belief that in holy communion the bread and wine become the "body and blood" of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They apparently do not consider literally the words of Jesus: "This is my body; this is my blood." As to the authors' claim of "bias" against Pentecostals, there also seems to be a great deal of it

against Catholics. They are our Christian siblings; like us, some are sheep and some are goats, but God loves us all.


Frances Hesterman, Sand Springs, Okla.

DON'T BE SLACK ON SIN

“Out, But Not Disqualified” by Richie Hughes (November), is very troubling, as it appears to claim that God condones homosexuality. God says homosexuality is a sin, and sin destroys us. Even though God accepts us as we are, He loves us too much to leave us in a destructive lifestyle. Thank God that, when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, His Holy Spirit begins to transform our lives into His likeness.

Lucille Brown, Los Alamos, N.M.

Will the Next BIG Revival Occur Outside the Church?

God is moving outside the walls of the church, but have we become so “religious” that we’ve failed to notice? 

One of the biggest dangers Christians face is thinking inside the proverbial religious box. When we talk about “a great move of God” or “revival” we often contextualize it inside a church building.

Even when we take it “to the streets” it still looks a lot like it does inside the church walls. We speak to people using the same language and pray for them just like we do in church, except that the setting has changed.

If people are not interested in experiencing it inside the church, then why would they want to experience it outside the church? Trying to invoke a move of God this way does not recognize how God is already moving in people's lives apart from traditional church activities.

The New Testament church was different. They had an advantage. The fact that they had no buildings or traditions to protect provided them with a wide-open field of thinking. They were able to see the world in a whole new light, one that exposed the closed-mindedness of the Jewish ideas regarding the work of God among the gentile people.

Like those first-century Jewish leaders, Christians today can become extremely closed-minded about God's activity outside our circles. After a span of 2,000 years, we seem to believe that God thinks like us, acts like us, votes like us, talks like us and enjoys hanging with us.

This was especially true with Paul until Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus. That one conversation with Jesus obliterated every preconceived idea and paradigm Paul ever had. Nothing was the same for him after that. He had to reconstruct his entire religious, social, cultural and political worldviews.

Mental deconstruction is usually harder than construction. This is why it was about 14 years between Paul's conversion and the time he and Barnabas were sent out in Acts 13. He needed time to rethink everything.

After completing his first missionary journey—one that saw more gentiles coming to Christ than Jews—Paul chose Silas and went out again (see Acts 16). With some experience under his belt, Paul and his entourage traversed the length of Asia Minor, crossed over to Macedonia and started the Grecian campaign.

At Mars Hill, Paul presented a remarkable and brilliant

perspective on the move of God outside the walls of the church. What he said would stun anyone who believes that God moves only in certain ways, with certain people (like us) and in certain places.

Paul said that God had been revealing Himself in various ways with various cultures from the beginning; that God loves all human beings and is active in bringing them into a relationship with Him through various means (see Acts 17:22-31).

While walking the streets of Athens, Paul saw many idols that the Greeks worshipped. Among them was a statue dedicated to "The Unknown God." The Athenians knew there was a God out there who couldn't be named yet deserved to be worshipped. Regarding this God and their worship, Paul said, "Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23).

Paul affirms that the Athenians had been ignorantly worshipping the God of the Jews—Yahweh. They simply had not known His name and did not have the full revelation of His ways and desires for mankind.

It didn't mean they were in covenant with God. It didn't mean they were born again. But it did testify to the fact that God was working in their hearts, having placed in them a desire to know Him.

Paul discerned God's work in that culture and aligned his message with the move of God. He spoke to the Athenians in relevant ways.

Like Paul, we must have an open mind and look outside our religious box to see where God is going.

What I see God doing in the culture is exciting. More and more people are looking for what's real. Slick productions are being replaced by reality TV. People value participation. They

would rather watch a YouTube video than TV.


People want to connect with each other. The global community is getting smaller as technology drives everything from the economy to the uprisings of the so-called Arab Spring.

Do you see God in all this?

Christians today can become closed-minded about God's activity outside our circles.

Nicki Pfeifer is co-founder with her husband, Mark, of Open Door Ministries in Chillicothe, Ohio (opendoorohio.com), where they serve as senior pastors. They are also the founders of Mark and Nicki Pfeifer Ministries (markandnicki.com).

Five Minutes With ... Randall E. Howard

The Church of God of Prophecy's general overseer addresses the denomination's leadership transition, future growth—and how to distinguish between COGOP and COG 

CHARISMA: Last year the Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) celebrated its 125th anniversary. That's quite a milestone. What have been some key turning points along the way?

Howard: COGOP was family-led for many years through the Tomlinson family—we appreciate A.J. and his son, M.A. Tomlinson. The translation of leadership away from the family was a clear transition of this church's ministry, vision and focus. It went to the core of our identity and really began to

refocus our ministry's identity toward gospel spreading, kingdom building, church planting and outreach. It was probably the healthiest thing that has happened to this organization in the last 50 years.

CHARISMA: What do you see for the denomination going forward?

Life After Death

Three years ago Riva Tims lived through a high-profile scandal that ended her marriage, stripped her of a thriving ministry and left her with virtually no income. Last fall her ex-husband, Zachery Tims, was found dead in a New York hotel room. Now Riva opens up about the details of her journey—and how God has brought her new life.

The roar of the engine at 30,000 feet couldn't silence the noise inside Riva Tims' head as she flew to New York City last fall. It had been less than 24 hours since she'd learned that Zachery Tims, her ex-husband and the pastor of an 8,000-member church in the Orlando, Fla.-area had been found dead in his hotel room.

How is this happening? Maybe there's been a mistake. Maybe it isn't true. I'm not ready to lose him yet.

It just didn't settle with her, even while she held her children's trembling bodies as they cried upon hearing the news. Inside, she held on to a faint hope that maybe this was all a sick joke. But as she stood in the cold morgue and stared at a picture of the lifeless body of the 42-year-old father of her four children, it finally hit her, as if part of

her had also just died.

The Purpose of a Thorn in the Flesh

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh. **-2 Corinthians 12:7**

Faith to Move Into Action

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. **-Hebrews 11:29**