

# Two Homeschool Kids Co-Author Two New Christian Kids' Books

Not many book signings include a bounce house with free snow cones and popcorn, but this is no ordinary book signing. This is a party celebrating a book made for kids by kids.

Two of the newest Christian children's book authors are children. They're also siblings.

Meet 10-year-old Izabella and 7-year-old Caleb Titus Cooper, the homeschooled brother-sister duo who wrote one children's book each with their dad, Dr. Caleb Cooper. Dr. Cooper is a firebrand revivalist and pastor of New Hope Revival Church in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. (Yes. That's the town's real name.)

Izabella, the oldest, co-authored *The Power of the Blood of Jesus Christ: God Wants Everyone to Go to Heaven*. Her younger brother co-authored *How Powerful God Is: God Uses Kids, Too!*

In a Facebook post their father says, "Meet these two Holy Ghost Spiritual Sharpshooters! God has raised them up for such a time as this to counteract spiritual darkness. Libraries and bookstores are boldly filled with magic, witchcraft, homosexual and transgender identity books to infect the minds of the next generation. These voices of the next generation will reverberate from sea to shining sea, sending spiritual shockwaves across this great nation."

Before co-authoring these two books with his kids, Dr. Cooper already authored four books, including *Jesus Focused: Awakening Endtime Prophetic Strategy* and *The Call for Strong Godly Leadership*. With the rise of children's books promoting transgender ideology, homosexuality and witchcraft, he sees these two new children's books as a way for his kids to represent "the true voices of the next generation."

While it's clear that Dr. Cooper is a writer and a huge fan of his kids' writing, he emphasizes that he didn't push them to write these books. In 2020, both of Dr. Cooper's kids showed an interest in writing. He describes what happened: "I'm writing, and the kids come in, and my son says, 'Dad, I want to write a book,' and then my daughter too, she goes, 'Yeah, me too, dad! I want to write a book.'"

Instead of shutting the idea down or brushing it aside, Cooper encouraged it and said, "OK! What do you want to write about?"

His son, Caleb Titus, answered, "I want to write about how powerful God is." His daughter, Izabella, answered, "I want to write about the power of the blood of Jesus Christ." Those answers became the titles of the books, and from that small start, Dr. Cooper helped them write both books by capturing their thoughts on his iPad. The kids were involved in everything from the writing to the art direction.

"For my generation, I wanted the cover of my book to be more intense," says Izabella. "It's not just anything little that He did. It's big, and it's intense. So I wanted my cover to be intense and not so cute."

Although Dr. Cooper is proud of them for writing the books, he's more excited about something else. "The phrase that comes to mind immediately is a 'pioneering spirit,'" he says. "There's no real blueprint to this. What do you do with two kids who are feeling stirred? There's no guide. There's no handbook here."

His kids possess a pioneering spirit, but it's easy to see where they got their love for writing. "What inspired me was because I've seen my dad write so many books," says Caleb Titus. "One day, it was a Saturday, I told my dad I wanted to write a book. And he said, 'OK. I'll work with you,' and then that's how I got my book."

Both kids were inspired to write because they saw their dad

writing, but Dr. Cooper gives credit where credit is due – to his wife, Erica.

“She homeschools our children, and invests so much time in them,” he says. “Their ability to articulate and desire to move forward in this is rooted and grounded in her constantly training them up and equipping them daily.”

Erica Cooper describes her kids as “brave and anointed.” “It’s an honor to watch them grow,” she says. “I’ve homeschooled them since they were in preschool.” She continues, “They don’t have a Jr. Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit roars in both of them just like He does in adults.”

In reference to his kids, Dr. Cooper quotes Psalm 127:4-5 (NKJV): “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”

Dr. Cooper and his wife have a quiver with at least two arrows, and it’s clear to see that they’re happy about it. While there isn’t a literal city gate where they can speak with their enemies, there are online bookstores like Amazon where they can share the truth with their enemies and friends alike, and if the Cooper kids share the truth with you in person, along with it, you might get a free snow cone.

You can order these books by visiting . {eoa}

**Rob Vischer** *is a freelance writer for Charisma Media.*

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# Marilyn Hickey: Do You Need to Fall in Love With God All Over Again?

Do you have a passion for the Word of God, or do you need to fall in love with God all over again?

Take heart; *The Passion Translation*, written by Brian Simmons, will bless you. A modern, easy-to-read Bible translation, *The Passion Translation* unlocks the passion of God's heart and expresses His fiery love.

Reading the Bible and understanding the Bible are two different things. Brian, a former missionary linguist and pastor, felt God leading him to a new commission, one that set him on a years-long quest to translate the Bible into a new, dynamic form to impact generations of English speakers. His goal was to help people understand the Bible and the heart of God.

From his radical conversion to Christianity in the early 1970s during the Jesus movement, Brian's passion was to bring the Word to the masses and to be a part of the world harvest. In his career Brian was a missionary to Panama and Colombia, and then he went on to pastor a church in New England. He'd thought his path was set, and then God told him to hand the church over to a younger team. "What now?" he asked the Lord.

"What now" became a 12-year-long commission to create this new Bible translation. Brian admits he doesn't feel worthy to do this work, but he dove in because he felt called to it. "God looks at faithfulness. Obey Him and the reward and fruit will come."

No translation is perfect, but the Spirit of the Lord helped him and two other scholars to create the translation.

Brian explained, “When you communicate from one language to another, you have to move words around. So, every translation is a paraphrase in that you move the sentence structure around to fit the receptor language.” The result is a stirring, dynamic version of ancient Scripture.

The experience of working on this translation blessed Brian. His observation is an encouragement to all of us: “Our faith level rises in difficulties and joys. The Word of God is true no matter what is happening around us.” {eoa}

**Marilyn Hickey** *founded Marilyn Hickey Ministries more than 45 years ago with God’s vision to cover the earth with the Word. Marilyn co-hosts a daily television program, Today with Marilyn & Sarah, reaching a potential viewing audience of over 2 billion households worldwide. Marilyn communicates deep biblical truths in a way that is understandable and practical for everyday life.*

**Sarah Bowling** *is on a mission to connect everyone with the heart of God while loving those who are overlooked, excluded and ignored. Led by Holy Spirit and anchored in the Word, Sarah seeks to inspire all to know the unconditional and transformational love of God in our daily lives. A Bible teacher, author, international speaker and global humanitarian, Sarah also co-hosts a daily television program, Today with Marilyn & Sarah.*

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# The Greatest Comfort in the Midst of Life's Storms

At one time or another, all of us have experienced a setback or endured a significant loss. Maybe that's where you are today; perhaps you've lost a job, a relationship, or even someone or something you love.

If so, I want to encourage you with Matthew 5:4. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (NIV).

I used to think this was odd. I wondered, *How can we be blessed if we are mourning?* Then God helped me understand that our times of pain are actually perfect opportunities to receive and experience His supernatural comfort.

In fact, having a problem is one of the best places to begin again. Why? Because God's comfort goes far beyond any ordinary kind of comfort. He is the only One who can carry you through the pain and help you to actually become a better, more powerful person than you were before.

With God's help, we can look at our pain as an opportunity. I believe we can have an attitude that says, "This may be tough right now, *but I will never give up.* I'm really hurting, but I'm going to bounce back!"

## **Decide to Drive the Bus**

I remember a conversation I had with a woman who told me, "Joyce, life has just thrown me under the bus." Almost without thinking, I responded, "My life used to be the same way, but I decided to *drive* the bus."

I wasn't trying to be flippant or insensitive to her hardship – I wanted to help her. So I explained that when things go

wrong, the enemy wants us to spend the rest of our lives under the bus, feeling sorry for ourselves. But God's plan is for us to bounce back, get in the driver's seat, then go pick up other hurting people who are under the bus.

I'm not saying we shouldn't grieve after a loss or tragedy, but we just don't want to get stuck there.

### **From the Pit to the Palace**

Just look at the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37–50. As a young man, Joseph had great dreams for his life. But his older brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, and he was taken to Egypt. But Joseph refused to give up. He found great favor with his master, Potiphar, and was eventually put in charge of his entire household.

Years later, when Joseph was falsely accused of trying to seduce Potiphar's wife, he was thrown in jail. But he still didn't give up. And eventually, when the time was right, the Lord gave Joseph an opportunity to interpret a dream for Pharaoh, who then promoted him to be the highest official in Egypt!

Joseph literally went from the pit to the palace. And when a famine struck the land, the Lord used Joseph to save his family and the entire house of Israel.

Romans 8:28 says, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV). When we refuse to give up, the greatest tragedy of our life can actually turn out to be one of the greatest blessings.

Some of my greatest victories have come out of difficult times when I had to press through and seek God for His help and comfort. I'm grateful that I didn't give up during those times because I wouldn't have the privilege of helping people the way I do today.

I know it's not easy, but I want you to see that your attitude and response to the problems you face can make all the difference for you and so many others.

### **The Source of ALL Comfort**

When you are hurting, run to God – “the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3, NIV). Spend time in His Word, talk to Him in prayer, and choose to worship Him even when you don't feel like it.

The Lord will often use others to comfort us. But even those people who are extremely close to us cannot give us everything we need all the time. When we expect others to do for us what only God can do, we have our expectations in the wrong place, and we will be disappointed. However, the Bible says those who put their hope in the Lord will *never* be disappointed (Isa. 49:23).

Psalms 34:18 says, “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted” (NIV). He sees every hurt, every injustice and every disappointment. If we let Him, He will take the bad things that happen and work them out for our good.

Be determined to never, ever give up on God. He's the only One who can take your pain and turn it into a blessing in every storm in your life. {eoa}

**Joyce Meyer** is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 135 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *The Power of Thank You (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

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# You Won't See Miraculous Healings Until You Accept This Truth

Growing up, I had one primary prayer request: my mother's healing from her emotional illness.

As early as I can remember, this request topped every prayer list I ever made. It was the subject of every spoken and unspoken prayer request in church and Sunday school, the thing Grandma and I prayed for each time I spent the weekend with her, and what Dad prayed for every night.

With this much prayer going up on her behalf, I knew one day God might just get fed up with hearing her name and answer our prayers so we'd all move on to something else.

## **Only God**

Dad said doctors were trying to help Mom, but only God could heal her. He told me I needed to pray for her. I kept praying, but it seemed her issues got worse instead of better.

When I left for college, I told myself I was done praying for Mom, but somehow she still found her way to the top of my prayer list.

During the first few months I was away from home, Dad told me that Mom had gotten so bad she would not go out of the house. Yvonne, a woman from a church in another city where Mom and Dad attended more than 15 years before, called Mom out of the blue.

## **Jesus Heals**

“There is a Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship Meeting tonight,” Yvonne said. “I’ll be at your house by 6:30 p.m. to pick you up.”

Miraculously Mom agreed to go even though it had been months since she had been anywhere. At the meeting, the evangelist spoke about emotional illness. After the message he said, “There are three people here tonight whom God is going to touch. I want you to stand.”

Mom and two other people stood. The preacher spoke to each one individually. To Mom he said, “God touched you tonight and started your healing process. But for it to continue, you must fit your life into God’s Word rather than fitting God’s Word into your life. Read God’s Word for what it really says, and do that.”

## **Hanging On to Jesus**

When Mom told me about this, I knew it was going to be hard for her. I asked, “So what are you going to do?”

She said, “I’m going to hang on to Jesus as tight as I can.”

I was privileged to watch Mom begin her transformation. I watched her hang on tight to Jesus. I watched her walk out her healing. She walked out her journey, allowing God to revitalize her.

“Now you must continue to make this new life fully manifested as you live in the holy awe of God – which brings you trembling into his presence. God will continually revitalize

you, implanting within you the passion to do what pleases him” (Phil. 2:12-13, TPT).

### **Following Mom’s Example**

As Mom was living her life, I was struggling with my weight and how impossible it felt for me to give up sugar. I began thinking about how Mom had faced the impossible circumstance of overcoming a mental and emotional illness.

I figured if Mom could walk out her journey with God’s help, I could too. So that’s what I did. There’s more to it, but in reality, holding tight to Jesus is the only thing that can get us through something that has become a stronghold in our lives.

I saw how much like Mom I had become. I wanted to do things my way. I wanted to try to think, worry and plan my way to lose weight and still eat what I wanted. Mom had tried to think, worry and plan her way to avoid life, which is what she thought she wanted.

However, Mom really didn’t want to avoid life. She just couldn’t figure out how to navigate her way back into life. In the same way, I didn’t want to eat everything in sight; I just couldn’t figure out how to control my emotions without trying to eat them away.

### **Letting Go of Lies**

I finally saw what I needed to do. I had to let go of the lies I believed about God. One of the big ones was that God wouldn’t answer my prayers. God had dispelled this lie, though, hadn’t He? He had answered our combined prayers for Mom, but had He healed me of my obesity?

Then I heard God say to me, “I can’t heal you of obesity because you are holding tightly to what you want. I have given you freedom and you have chosen to spend it on your own

pleasures. You have chosen to eat what you want, when you want. It has always been your choice and, My daughter, it still is.”

I had to do what Romans 13:14 (TPT) says: “Fully immerse yourselves into the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, and don’t waste even a moment’s thought on your former identity to awaken its selfish desires.” When I stopped focusing on my selfish desires and started focusing on Jesus, I lost over 250 pounds!

## **Choosing Change**

To say God doesn’t answer our prayers may seem like truth because He rarely answers them in the way we want Him to. He won’t force change on us. He asks us to choose change.

God will lead us to complete freedom, but we have to listen to His direction and follow His guidance. Otherwise, we will find ourselves in bondage to things we wish we could break free from. These things creep in slowly, and before we know it, we have allowed a stronghold to take over.

Jesus will show us how to break our strongholds, and when we hang on to Him, the impossible can happen. That, my friends, is the definition of a miracle – something impossible happening when we follow Jesus. {eoa}

**Teresa Shields Parker** is the author of six books and two study guides, including her number-one bestseller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God’s Favor*. Her sixth book, *Sweet Surrender: Breaking Strongholds*, is live on Amazon. She blogs at [www.teresa-shields.com](#). She is also a Christian weight loss coach (check out her coaching group at [Overcomers Academy](#)) and speaker. Don’t miss her podcast, *Sweet Grace for Your Journey*, available on the [Charisma Podcast Network](#). This article first appeared on [www.teresa-shields.com](#). For more on this topic, listen to episode 130 of the *Sweet Grace for Your Journey* podcast, “Jesus, Heal Me,” at [www.teresa-shields.com](#).

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## **7 Contrasts Between God's Kingdom and Most Contemporary Churches**

The kingdom of God is the rule of God that emanates from His throne. God's kingdom encompasses all universes, including every sphere of life on earth.

Those stuck in typical church structures only understand the kingdom as it relates to going to heaven. The following points are contrasts based on the implications of understanding that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and that His kingdom rules over all, not just the church (Ps. 24; 103:19).

**1. The kingdom encompasses all of life. Most contemporary churches depend upon a "church" building as their sacred space.** In the kingdom, Christ followers are called to fill everyone else's building and their concomitant spheres of influence (Eph. 4:10). Unlike the perspective of many contemporary churches, they are not merely called to create and inhabit church buildings for religious use on Sundays.

**2. The kingdom releases all saints as ministers. Most contemporary church systems separate clergy and laity.** In the New Testament we see that believers are called to function as a royal priesthood and a kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:8-9; Rev. 1:6). Hence, all Christians are priests called to be set apart for God's purposes as ministers. Contemporary church

systems recognize only a small percentage of their ecclesial body as clergy (priests). Hence, they disempower the rest of their congregation regarding their sacred calling and relegate them to being spectators and pew sitters.

**3. The kingdom releases people to serve in the marketplace. Most contemporary churches only release and equip people to serve in the church space.** In the kingdom, it doesn't matter how many people attend your church service on Sunday; how many are disciplined and equipped as ministers to serve their community on Monday is what matters most. Contrawise, in the contemporary church space, people often separate their Sunday church attendance from their Monday vocation.

**4. The kingdom applies Scripture to all of life. Many contemporary churches apply Scripture merely to the individual soul.** In the kingdom, we turn the world upside down, not just church structures (Acts 17:6). The gospel should positively impact both individuals and communities (Isa. 61:1-4; Matt. 28:19). Jesus told us to pray for His kingdom and will to come on earth. Thus, gospel impact should impact societal systems (Luke 11:2-4). In a typical contemporary church, the focus is solely on the implications of redemption for an individual soul.

**5. In the kingdom, all believers participate in Jesus' ministry DNA. In contemporary churches, only a few are encouraged to participate in His ministry DNA.** Paul said that each one of us in the church has received grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7). In this context, the gift of Christ is His ministry DNA, as seen in Ephesians 4:11 (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher). These five basic expressions demonstrate Jesus' fivefold ministry gifts as illustrated in the four Gospels. In the typical contemporary church, only a few of these five ministry gifts (pastors and teachers) are recognized in the church, and only among the clergy, who tend to be full-time church ministers. Consequently, every person in the church functions in at least

one of these five ministry gifts of Jesus, whether in the church place or the marketplace. For example, in the marketplace, the apostles are the entrepreneurs, the prophets are the futurists who predict macro trends, pastors are the caregivers and counselors, teachers are the instructors, and evangelists are those in public relations and sales.

**6. In the kingdom, the church shepherds the community. The typical contemporary church shepherds only the flock.** Pastors who understand the implications of the kingdom often get their churches involved in caring for the practical needs of their surrounding communities. The lead pastors are also known by many of the gatekeepers of their region as key spiritual leaders to whom they can go for help. In the typical contemporary church, Christians are often only encouraged to serve in their church, and the lead pastor limits his or her gifts, abilities and calling to his or her congregation.

**7. In the kingdom, we understand creation grace. In the contemporary church, we only understand saving grace.** Lead pastors who understand the kingdom of God realize that God's temporal blessings come upon the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). Through His creation (or common) grace, He calls unsaved civic leaders, His anointed ones, and servants to enact His purposes in society (Isa. 1-4; 45; Rom. 13:1-7). This gives kingdom-minded pastors the theological permission to serve alongside unsaved magistrates and civic leaders for the common good of their cities. In the typical contemporary church, many lead pastors and congregations only collaborate with other like-minded Christians, thus limiting their gospel witness and their capacity to utilize their collective gifts to impact their communities. {eoa}

For more information regarding this theme, purchase Joseph Mattera's book *Understanding the Wineskin of the Kingdom*.

**Dr. Joseph Mattera** is an internationally known author, consultant and theologian whose mission is to influence

*leaders who influence culture. He is the founding pastor of Resurrection Church and leads several organizations, including The U.S. Coalition of Apostolic Leaders and Christ Covenant Coalition. Dr. Mattera is the author of 13 bestselling books, including his latest, The Purpose, Power, and Process of Prophetic Ministry, and is renowned for applying Scripture to contemporary culture. To order his books or to join the many thousands who subscribe to his newsletter, go to .*

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## **What Is Your Value to God?**

For most of my life, I have struggled with identifying my purpose in God's kingdom. As such I have been a doer and an achiever, always trying to get things done for God because I wanted Him to value me.

This is the same issue that Martha had with Mary. If you remember the story, Jesus basically told Martha that she needed to take a lesson from Mary and chill out. Well, that's my interpretation.

I knew that but I still had this drive to achieve and be identified by what I did. I was a writer, then an editor, and finally a publisher. I thought I had arrived, but then everything went south with the newspaper industry, and who was I?

**I Am More Than What I Do**

I wallowed in despair from 2008 to 2013. However, the despair led me to finally throw myself into the weight loss journey I knew God had for me. It was 2013 when He tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to write a book about losing 250 pounds.

I should have been elated. Instead, I was scared. Could I do this? I'd been working on my weight and not doing a lot of writing. Now the Lord was calling me back to my purpose.

Then God led me to listen to a podcast interview with Paula Faris, the author of *Called Out*. Her words hit me right where I was struggling.

"I am more than what I do," she said. "Freedom is knowing who I am outside of what I do." This truth was exactly what I needed to hear back in 2008. It was years later that I heard them, though.

### **Who Am I?**

Paula's words reminded me of the stronghold of "I am not valued" that I thought I had addressed years before. However, God told me I was still living inside a lie. He said, "You are still believing your value is in what you do instead of who you are."

He was telling me I needed to know who I am without my career. I dealt with this exact question in 1994. I do know who I am. I am a whole, healthy, happy woman administering grace and truth in a powerful way energized by the Holy Spirit. I know this as my core truth.

The problem is I regularly feel that if I am not doing something in my chosen vocational field, it doesn't matter who I am. I still believed if I was doing nothing, then I wasn't worth anything to God. Therefore, my value is not in who I am; it is in what I do.

### **What Is My Value?**

On the days I relax and take some time off, I tend to feel like I am worthless. God wants me to see I am just as valuable, if not more valuable to Him then than when I am working.

When I'm working hard it can be like trying to push a huge boulder up a hill. I don't feel God's presence when I'm trying hard to meet a self-imposed deadline.

When I take time to unplug from electronics, relax, empty my mind of my to-do list and am simply available to God, He always speaks to me. I relish those intentional, no-agenda times with God.

### **I Am Enough Because He Is Enough**

It has been hard for me to understand that God believes I am enough just like I am. He's watched me from the day I was born. He created me in His image and knows everything about me (Ps. 139:13-16). He knew what I would do and when I would do it. Nothing about me has taken Him by surprise.

"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone" (Eph. 1:11-12, MSG).

I was created on purpose for a purpose. I have value because God made me. I don't have to do anything to prove myself to Him. I just have to be who He created me to be. He and He alone has planned my future.

### **The Stronghold Is Broken**

Does God have a destiny and a purpose for me? Yes, He does. Has He given me gifts, talents and abilities? Yes, He has. Do I need to be concerned about how He is going to utilize those? No, I don't. All I have to be concerned about is loving and

following Him.

If I am doing that, He will work everything out to fulfill the purpose He has for me. Nothing I can do will hurry it up or change it. I just need to trust Him. I just need to follow Him. I just need to be at peace with His plans for me.

The stronghold of “I have to do more to have value to God” is broken in Jesus’ name because I know the truth. I am already enough in Him. I don’t have to achieve anything to earn His grace. I already have it. {eoa}

*This article first appeared on .*

**Teresa Shields Parker** is the author of six books and two study guides, including her number-one bestseller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God’s Favor*. Her sixth book, *Sweet Surrender: Breaking Strongholds*, is live on Amazon. Teresa is a Christian weight loss coach (check out her coaching group at Overcomers Academy) and speaker. Please tune in to her podcast, *Sweet Grace for Your Journey*, available on the Charisma Podcast Network.

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# **Biblical Proof That Prayer Makes All the Difference When**

# Evil Strikes

James and Peter were both apostles. One was killed by an evil king, and one was miraculously delivered from death by that same king when an angel led him out of the jail in the middle of the night.

So, what was the difference?

Why was one killed and not the other? Why was one miraculously delivered from death and the other allowed to die? Was it God's will for the one to die but not the other?

The account is found in Acts 12:1–3 (NASB1995):

*“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.”*

We could speculate why this happened, but the Bible tells us.

*“So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God”* (Acts 12:5, NASB1995).

Apparently, James was killed suddenly before anyone had time to react. Peter was imprisoned first, so the church could respond.

And they responded with fervent prayer. And that made the difference.

Do we know that?

Yes, because it is a detail in the story that wouldn't have been added if it wasn't the missing piece.

A long time ago, I learned about the Lord's Prayer.

It's a prayer that is meant to be prayed every day, and early in the day. I explain all that in other places, but it would be too long here.

The prayer has a petition: deliver us from evil. Some translations say "evil one." It could be translated as "protect us from the evil one," but the lexicon notes three possible different translations for this expression – the evil one, evil, or that which is evil. I believe translating it as "evil" is consistent with the rest of the Bible, though Matthew twice uses the same expression as a term for Satan (Ps. 91:10; 121:7; Prov. 1:33; 12:21).

If this prayer is to be prayed every day, early in the day, that means this prayer is prayed before we encounter evil. It's a prayer for protection to keep us from evil happening to us.

Did James pray this when he got up that morning? We don't know. I do know when people are busy and things are going well, we don't expect bad things to happen. It seems James' death was sudden.

Was it God's will? Some will say yes, and some will say maybe not. The text clearly suggests that if the church had been praying as fervently for James as they were for Peter, he would not have been killed.

The fact is that Jesus taught us how to pray twice (Matthew 6 and Luke 11), and He told us to pray every day for protection from evil. Some Bibles say that this phrase is missing from the earliest manuscripts of Luke's Gospel, but it is definitely in Matthew's.

If Jesus tells us to pray every day for protection from evil, that doesn't sound like a suggestion. I think He expects us to.

Does that mean nothing will ever go wrong in our lives?

Often those bad things are opportunities for good things.

Now, I wouldn't call this an evil thing, but recently I was trying to do something and cracked a window in my kitchen. The guy came out to fix it and saw that the window did not stay open by itself. He offered to fix it. Now a window that was hard to lift and that wouldn't stay up by itself and was never going to be fixed opens with a finger's touch and doesn't need to be propped up anymore.

Something that could have been really annoying and ruin my day actually made it better.

But no, that was not an evil thing.

There is a story in the Book of Ezra (chapters 4-6) where the people were rebuilding the temple and they faced hostile opposition from the neighbors. The neighbors stopped the work while reporting them to the authorities. The authorities in turn essentially told the neighbors not only to leave them alone but to help them in some pretty extraordinary ways.

So, what was a case of apparent evil turned into something very good.

Either way, Jesus said we should pray every day, early in the day, for protection from evil.

Let God figure out the details. Just do it, and stop asking so many questions. {eoa}

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## **Messianic Rabbi: 4+1+1 = The Good News**

The Bible is filled with stories about people, and each one of those people is an intricate part of the greater narrative that tells the story of G-D's love for all mankind. Some of those people have names, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or David, Solomon, or Herod.

Some, like Moses and Ruth, are the main characters of their stories, and others, like Miriam and Aaron, seem to be more supporting roles. But we should never allow ourselves to consider their seemingly supportive roles to mean they are less important to the greater narrative. Every person mentioned in the Bible was a significant and crucial part of the story, and without them the story would not only be incomplete; it would not provide the fullness of the good news that G-D established from before the foundation of the world.

However, the importance of the characters of the Bible isn't limited to those for whom we are provided names. As a matter of fact, some of the most important lessons we can learn from

within the Holy Scriptures are gleaned from the stories of those whose names are not provided. For instance, in Genesis 24 we are not told the name of Abraham's servant who travels to Abraham's homeland to find a bride for Isaac. Yet from this unnamed servant we learn lessons about faithfulness, prayer, servanthood and so much more.

There are thousands of unnamed people in the Bible, and not one of them is irrelevant to the story they are found within, and not one of them is unnecessary to the greater narrative of the good news. It is this greater interconnective narrative that I want to share with the hope that it will not only provide some insight into the wonder that is the Bible, but also in hope that it will bring encouragement to you.

Every event that we read about in the Bible is divinely connected to every other event, even if we cannot see how they are connected. To demonstrate how two events in the Bible can be connected even though they involve different people in different books that lived during different times, I want to look at two separate but connected stories.

One story is found in the Book of 2 Kings 7 and is about four unnamed lepers. The second story is found in the Book of John chapter 4. These stories may seem completely unrelated, but if we look into the details of these stories, we find many similarities and ultimately a message of the good news for you and me.

Let's review some of the similarities. In both stories, we find the unnamed people outside of their cities. In both stories, there is a need for food: in Kings because of a famine, and in John they ran out of food so the disciples went to buy some.

In both stories, there is a king: in Kings, it was the king who ruled the city; in John, it was the King of all kings. In both stories, the unnamed people were all undesirables. In

Kings, they were lepers. In John, it was a Samaritan woman who'd had five husbands and was living with a man to whom she was not married. These are not the only similarities between the two stories, but they should be enough for us to see that while the stories took place in different places and times, and although one is in the Tanakh (Old Testament) and the other is in the New Testament, there are enough similarities between the two for us to see that we should look at similar stories to find a similar lesson for us.

In the case of these two stories, I love that the characters are unnamed. I think one of the reasons that they are left unnamed is so that you and I reading these stories could, in a symbolic and spiritual way, insert our names into the story. Each of us, like the lepers and the Samaritan woman, either are or were separated because of our sin.

However, their being a leper or a sinner isn't the end of the story. In both cases, these people who were seemingly undesirable to everyone else were desired by G-D, and in both cases, they were chosen to bring the good news of salvation to the people – the lepers were in the physical sense as they announced that their enemy had been vanquished by G-D, and the Samaritan woman was in the spiritual sense when she announced basically the same message to her city: the Messiah has come (the One who would vanquish our enemy)!

So, while these stories are hundreds of pages apart in your Bibles and took place in different books and time periods, the connective message of both is the same. That message is the good news: no matter what we have done in our past that causes us to feel undesirable or outcast, G-D loves us; if we turn to Him in faith, He not only can but *will* use us to share the good news if we let Him, and the result will be the salvation of many. So, when we add the story of the four lepers, plus the story of the Samaritan woman, plus your story, the answer is good news. {eoa}

**Eric Tokajer** *is the author of* *Overcoming Fearlessness; What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?; With Me in Paradise; Transient Singularity; OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry; #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer; Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians and Galatians in Context.*

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## **Mario Murillo Says a Revival Bigger Than Jesus People Movement Has Arrived**

Just before the Jesus People Movement of the 1970s, things looked terribly dark for America. A sexual revolution was fueled by the free-love culture of West Coast hippies, and drug culture was normalized on college campuses.

Evangelist Mario Murillo, who helped to spark the Jesus People Movement, readily points out the parallels between that moment in U.S. history and today. But based on what he's seen at his tent meetings, he says this moment is bigger. "We never have enough counselors, never have enough Bibles," Murillo says, describing the meetings. "Not even in the Jesus Movement did I see it this way."

He continues, "In the Jesus Movement, it was widespread, and

it felt gentle. This is a voracious appetite for God that I've not seen before."

I've been around long enough to see moves of God come and go. I was personally affected by Murillo's ministry in the Jesus People Movement of the '70s, and I've witnessed Brownsville and The Toronto Blessing. Some of them, like the Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement and Promise Keepers, even filled stadiums.

When I ask Murillo how this moment in history is different, he addresses the curiosity and skepticism in my question. "The church has been fixated with a phrase, 'God is about to.' We hear it all the time," he says. "We get into this state where we're constantly expecting. What God wants is for us to realize we have to take the initiative."

Murillo has taken the initiative. In 2021, Murillo held a series of tent meetings nationwide to get around indoor COVID restrictions, and in his most recent event, his ministry rented out the Mabee Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and 11,000 people attended.

Although Murillo has watched crowds of thousands surrender to Christ in his recent meetings, he's not just impressed by the big things God is doing. He has noticed how the small act of just having human contact again after the lockdowns powerfully affects individuals.

When he talks about the unexpected success of his tent meetings, he cites leftists overplaying their hand. "Wokeness has been so devastating. Nothing it has touched has improved," he says. "Everything it has touched has withered, and people are sick of it."

While Murillo acknowledges that many people in America are deeply involved in sexual anarchy, heavy drinking and drugs, he sees hope in that.

Murillo tells me a story about a woman of God he knows personally. The woman's daughter lived inside a crack house, during which time the woman would walk around the outside and pray for her daughter to be delivered. One day, someone dropped a particle of crack on the floor, and the daughter found herself wrestling on the floor for a piece of crack cocaine.

Then, it hit the daughter. "I have so degraded myself that this is what I am now," she said to herself. "I'm nothing but an animal. I'm a creature, a monster."

"That's the universal experience," Murillo says. "Jesus said, 'Look, the fields are white to harvest.' It's dangerous to appeal to the lukewarm Christian when there are so many people famished for God right now. We have to deliberately go out and get them."

Murillo is currently writing a book, *It's Our Turn Now*, to encourage the American church to act during this opportune moment in our history. "Your prayers are being answered. The shift in American morality is at the door," he says. "The danger is that we can lose it, and we can miss it. But I know that we are at that moment where it's our turn in Jesus' name."

In an earlier podcast, I told the story of how Mario Murillo affected my life in 1971. He has become a good friend.

Soon, in another article, I'll share more of my interview with Mario and report on the huge rally in Tulsa in conjunction with Flashpoint at the Mabee Center at Oral Roberts University. For now, listen to my podcast with Mario, who reveals how the church has an opportunity to offer an answer to an overplayed woke culture. {eoa}

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# Why One of the Hardest Spiritual Disciplines to Master Can Be the Most Rewarding

Waiting. It seems like I have spent my entire life simply waiting for something, or for God to move on my behalf. How many ordinary days have dragged along when I had my heart and mind set on tomorrow?

The truth of the matter is this: we all have to wait for something! And it is my personal choice whether I will wait well or wait poorly.

*“Wait for and confidently expect the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for and confidently expect the LORD” (Ps. 27:14, AMP).*

Perhaps it would be a powerful discipline if we refused to worry while we were in a waiting zone. Worrying is a waste of time, energy and emotions. While you are waiting, throw away negativity like yesterday's garbage.

Don't become bitter while you wait. Don't mistakenly suppose that nothing will ever change for you. Bitterness always turns into selfish anger. Anger will change a fruitful life into a futile life.

Another suggestion is to refuse to whine and complain while you wait. Invest yourself in productive and healthy activities, such as volunteering at a homeless shelter, babysitting for a young family, taking an elderly couple out

to lunch, or perhaps inviting people over for dinner and a game night.

*“But let all who take refuge and put their trust in You rejoice, let them ever sing for joy; because You cover and shelter them, let those who love Your name be joyful and exult in You. For You, O LORD, bless the righteous man [the one who is in right standing with You]; You surround him with favor as with a shield” (Ps. 5:11-12, AMP).*

Talk the language of hope while you are waiting! The only language that should be spoken in the waiting room of life is the language of hope.

Worship your way through the wait! Sing yourself to sleep and whistle while you work. The song of your heart should be at its loudest when you find yourself in the waiting room of life.

*“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable” (Isa. 40:28, NASB).*

What do *you* do when you find yourself in “the wait”? The days that I am in the wait, I spend more time in the Word. The Word comforts my weary heart while I am in the wait. The days that I am in the wait, I spend more time in worship. Worship places my eyes on who He is!

It is in the wait that I discover I am not alone. God is with me in the wait. There is nobody I would rather wait with than Him. I find it a far more powerful choice to simply wait with Him than to wait for His hand to move.

It is in the wait that I discover a strength I never before had. It is impossible to wait and remain weak when one waits with the Lord.

*"He gives strength to the weary, and to him who has no might He increases power. ... But those who wait for the LORD [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] will gain new strength and renew their power; they will lift up their wings [and rise up close to God] like eagles [rising toward the sun]; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not grow tired" (Isa. 40:29, 31, AMP).*

Waiting is not for wimps. But then again, maybe waiting IS for wimps. Perhaps it is in the wait that wimps become warriors.

It is *who* you wait with that makes all of the difference. It is also in the wait with God that I discover a tenacity that I never before possessed; my vision is refined and my desires are purified.

I think that I am only waiting, just hanging around until life happens, but God sees the wait as the stuff of which life is made. He made me for the wait and for the work that it accomplishes in me.

When I realize the purpose and the productivity that waiting achieves, "the wait" becomes my favorite place to live! I become stronger and more like Jesus as I commit my times of waiting to Him. {eoa}

**Carol McLeod** is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written 12 books, including *No More Ordinary*, *Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* and *Defiant Joy!* Her most recent book, *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*, was released last August. Her teaching DVD *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming. You can also listen to Carol's *Jolt of Joy* program daily on the *Charisma Podcast*

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