

# HBO's New Comedy Mocks Televangelists

On Wednesday, HBO released the official trailer for *The Righteous Gemstones*, a new comedy mocking televangelists. The series—which stars John Goodman and Danny McBride—focuses on “the Gemstones,” a fictitious family of successful televangelists. The show’s executive producers, McBride and Jody Hill, previously created the profane comedy *Vice Principals* for HBO.

McBride—who reportedly grew up Baptist—told television reporters the show is critical of hypocrisy but not Christianity itself.

“The goal isn’t to be a takedown of anything,” McBride says. “When Hollywood takes on religion, they make the mistake of lampooning one’s beliefs. For us, it’s about lampooning hypocrites—people who present themselves in one way, an act differently in another. I don’t think that’s something that’s relevant [only] to the world of religion and televangelism but the world we live in: People who present themselves one way on social media and present themselves in another way.”

*The Righteous Gemstones* will premiere August 18.

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## Have You Been Trapped by a Regional Stronghold?

Ryan LeStrange says not to be dominated by regional

strongholds, which are deceptions created by demonic principalities.

“If you’re prophetic, if you’re a person that feels and sees and knows and senses, chances are the climate of the territory you live in has tried to at one point or another affect you, but God placed you in that climate to intercede, to pray,” LeStrange says. “I want to give you a strategic key that you can overcome the stronghold in your territory. Understand this: strongholds are established by principalities. ... One of its mechanisms is it infiltrates a territory with polluted thinking [and] polluted thought processes and patterns. When we travel to different nations [or] territories, oftentimes we can see the mindset of the ruling spirit that is affecting the people.”

For example, LeStrange says, “If you’re in a territory with a strong spirit of religion, you feel kind of legalism. You feel boxed in. And if someone comes in and begins to prophesy, they begin to preach prophetically, the spirit of religion will come rise up against them, because it’s in the thinking of the people.

“The Bible said, ‘As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.’ So you’ve got to pray against that. You’ve got to war against that. But more importantly, you need to put solid teaching into yourself that begins to arm you against the regional stronghold.”

Watch LeStrange’s full video [here](#).

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# Lauren Daigle's New Music Video Showcases God's Faithfulness

Lauren Daigle released the official music video for her new single, "Rescue," on Saturday. The song's lyrics are written from God's perspective and highlight His faithfulness to rescue us from any broken situation. The music video—which features Daigle singing the song in a variety of breathtaking vistas—was filmed in Alaska, according to Daigle's Instagram account. Watch it [here](#).

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## WATCH: Tom Hanks Plays Christian Minister-Turned-Entertainer Fred Rogers

Tom Hanks will play Fred Rogers in the new movie *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, which released its trailer today.

Rogers is best-known as the host of the long-running children's TV show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. But fewer people know that Rogers graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister before he went into children's television. Language on the show—such as his catchphrase "Won't you be my neighbor?"—was directly inspired by Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself.

In a May 2001 commencement address at Marquette University,

Rogers said, “I believe that appreciation is a holy thing—that when we look for what’s best in a person we happen to be with at the moment, we’re doing what God does all the time. So in loving and appreciating our neighbor, we’re participating in something sacred.”

It’s unclear from the trailer whether the film will explore Rogers’ faith, which was deeply examined in last year’s documentary *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* In the trailer, Hanks’ Rogers speaks of the preciousness of life: “I think the best thing we can do is to let people know that each one of them is precious.”

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## **How to Speak Life and Declare Freedom Over Others**

Bianca Olthoff explains in a recent video clip from Q Ideas how to proclaim freedom and speak life over marginalized people. Using Galatians 5:1, Olthoff says that because Christ set us free, we should set others free too.

“If we are free, we have the moral duty and the obligation to speak freedom to those who are struggling to break the bonds of oppression in our generation and the next,” Olthoff says. “But how? Not all of us will go into prisons. Not all of us will work in anti-human trafficking organizations. But we all have the ability to look at someone and say, ‘There is potential. God has a plan for you. If you are not dead, then God ain’t done. Get back up. There is still reason and purpose for your life.’ You don’t need to be the most educated. You don’t need to be the most beautiful. You don’t need to be the most influential or affluent. You don’t need to be the

richest. You don't need to be the prettiest. You need to be the most willing. The most willing to look at the debased of society, the dredges, the overlooked and the undervalued and say God has a plan for you. Tell them that they have potential."

Watch the full video clip [here](#).

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## **WATCH: House Chaplain Casts Out Spirits of Darkness From Congress**

The Rev. Pat Conroy, chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives, cast out "spirits of darkness" from Congress during his opening prayer on Thursday morning.

Conroy's prayer came the morning after President Donald Trump attacked "the Squad," a group of four Democratic Congresswomen, at a rally in North Carolina. In the previous week, Democrats had fallen to infighting, and Trump was accused of racism for tweets urging political opponents to "go back ... [to] the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came."

Conroy struck a conciliatory but bold tone in his remarks, blaming not a political party but spiritual powers and principalities for the divisiveness in politics.

"We give you thanks, O God, for giving us another day," Conroy prayed. "This has been a difficult and contentious week in which darker spirits seem to have been at play in the people's

house. In Your most holy name, I now cast out all spirits of darkness from this chamber, spirits not from You. I cast out the spirit of discouragement, which deadens the hope of those who are of good will. I cast out the spirit of petty divisiveness, which clouds the sense and the desire to be of fruitful productivity in addressing the issues more appropriately before this House. I cast out any sadness brought on by the frustration of dealing with matters detrimental to the honorable work each member has been called to engage in.

“Pour out, O Lord, Your sacred oil, as You did upon Aaron of old. Anoint Your servants here in the House with a healing balm to comfort and renew the souls of all in this assembly. May Your spirit of wisdom and patience descend upon all, so that any spirit of darkness might have no place in our midst. Rather, let Your spirit of comity, of brother and sisterhood, and love of our nation and of all colleagues in this chamber empower our better angels to be at play and the common work to be done for the benefit of all Your people. May all that is done within the people’s House be for Your greater honor and glory. Amen.”

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## **Stephen Colbert Challenges Atheist Ricky Gervais’ Lack of Faith**

Comedian Ricky Gervais talked about his atheism during a recent episode of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, earning him a rebuke from host Stephen Colbert, who has been open about his Christian faith. Colbert opened up about his

struggles with consistent faith while challenging Gervais' assertions that there is no evidence for the supernatural.

"I don't believe in anything supernatural," Gervais said.

Later, Colbert asked, "[Are] magic and faith the same to you? Because they're different things to me."

"No, I don't believe in anything without evidence," Gervais said. "That's it. That's all they have in common. I have no problem with faith or spirituality. I feel it when I see nature."

"And what is it you feel?" Colbert asked.

"An awe," Gervais replied. "It's amazing that we're here."

"So you don't have control over it, right?" said Colbert.

"No, I don't believe someone made it," Gervais said. "That's all the difference for me. We know how amazing nature is and how good people are and how amazing dogs are. Oh, dogs are amazing. I just don't think there was a will to it. ... I absolutely have no problem with faith or anything like that."

"I have a problem with magic," Colbert replied. "I don't have a problem with faith. I have a somewhat anemic faith—it comes and goes. I have a firefly of a faith. It comes ever so often and you go, 'Oh! Look at it!' and now it's gone. Where'd it go? I don't know. Can I put it in a jar? Yes, but it'll die."

Gervais has debated religion with Colbert during at least three previous appearances on *The Late Show*.

Colbert later asked Gervais more about dogs, noting that Gervais has talked about his love for his dog co-star on the Netflix series *After Life*. Gervais said he was sad to leave that dog at the end of filming, because the dog would miss him and would not know why Gervais had left. Colbert countered that Gervais was putting a lot of faith in his understanding

of the dog's psychology, given the lack of concrete evidence.

"Maybe she'll just be thinking, *Where's that squirrel?*" Colbert said. "Because you're assuming she had the same emotional connection to you that you had with her. And I think that, if you pardon me, that's magical thinking. There's no evidence."

Watch the video to see Colbert and Gervais' religious sparring.

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## **Prophetic Word: Prepare for a Billion Soul Harvest in 2020**

Patricia Bootsma says that God is preparing for a "billion soul harvest" that will begin next year, in accordance with Bob Jones' prophetic words of "global harvest" in 2020. Bootsma's comments came in a recent video posted by Catch the Fire Toronto.

"I believe the Lord is really highlighting His Son Jesus for us to radically fall in love with Him in a new way," Bootsma says. "I have a burning word in my heart for this year about get to know Jesus Christ. Get to know Him through the Word. Get to know Him through His voice. Get to know Him through His presence. I've been a Christian for 40 years. I just feel like the Lord's saying, 'You know what? There's way more about Jesus Christ that you don't know. I want you to know Him. I want you to love Him.' ... And why I think that is happening is because this is unto His return, but it's also unto this billion soul harvest. It's unto a harvest of many, many souls coming in ... which I believe is a trickle right now, but it's

going to be like a flood, I think. I believe Bob Jones' words about 2020 being a real year of the kicking in of the global harvest, that there's going to be another level of the harvest coming in 2020."

Watch the full video [here](#).

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## Joyce Meyer: How to Heal Your Broken Marriage

Joyce Meyer shared advice for healing a troubled marriage in a recent video. Meyer says that as a result of abuse by her father, she had a lot of issues when she first married her husband, Dave. But she says Dave was strong enough in the Lord that he would not let his wife drag him down into bitterness or unhappiness when old wounds resurfaced. Meyer says it's good advice for any married couple.

"What I began to see was stability," she says. "Something I had never seen before. I began to see somebody who wasn't controlled by outward circumstances. Dave loved me unconditionally but I had to receive the love. He didn't turn it on and off based on my behavior. He just was who he was. And one of the things we need to learn is to be who God wants us to be, no matter what everybody else is doing."

Meyer recommends a simple prayer.

"What you need to do is just say, 'God, I'm going to be who I am, and I'm going to trust you to take care of them,'" Meyer says. "So I'm telling you that you don't have to let other people make you unhappy. That's something that you can do, but

only if you have self-control.”

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# What Our Society's Obsession With 'Stranger Things' Says About Spiritual Warfare

On July 4, the third season of *Stranger Things* premiered—and if you're a Netflix subscriber, there's a good chance you've already seen it. Netflix claims over 40 million member accounts worldwide viewed *Stranger Things* within the first four days of its release—an original series record. So why is everyone obsessed with *Stranger Things*? Russell Moore believes it's due to the show's unique mix of nostalgia and paranoia—and the way people are drawn to those characteristics says a lot about our society today.

“There's a reason I think why people enjoy nostalgia, and a reason why people are drawn toward some forms of paranoia, and that shows up in *Stranger Things*,” Moore says. “...With the release of *Stranger Things* season 3, we'll have just another pop culture nostalgiafest. Maybe it's an indication that people are really searching for signposts for something deeper, something better.”

But it's not just *Stranger Things* that points to this drive. The rise of social media conspiracy theories demonstrates our culture's growing impulse toward nostalgia and paranoia.

“As one sociologist puts it, nostalgia is history without guilt,” Moore says. “And that's the reason why you can have people who can hearken back to this golden age that never

really existed. Nostalgia can be really bad. Conspiracy theories can be really bad. We've seen that with Pizzagate, with the Seth Rich stuff, with ways that these conspiracy theories can actually lead people to act in crazy ways, sometimes even violent ways."

Yet Moore says nostalgia and paranoia aren't necessarily bad. In fact, they're rooted in a very true spiritual reality which Christians must always keep in mind.

"If you think about nostalgia, C.S. Lewis talked about joy," Moore says. "[He] talked about this sense of longing, this sense of almost pain that can come with thinking back to a time in one's past, because it's rooted in looking forward to something that God has created us to see shadows in the things that we experience as blessing. And a sense of conspiracy, I think, is rooted fundamentally in the fact that there is a conspiracy. We're living in enemy-occupied territory where things are going on around us that are not the way that they are supposed to be."

Watch the video to see Moore's full explanation of the spiritual forces behind the rise of *Stranger Things*.