

Amazed and Confused

Heather Zempel (Thomas Nelson)

If you've ever been left hurt and bewildered after earnestly praying, this book will be an eye-opener for you. By exploring the story of Habakkuk, you'll learn how to move from confusion to worship.

The God-First Life

Stovall Weems (Zondervan)

With countless areas of life vying for your attention, how can you uncomplicate your life enough to prioritize a strong relationship with God? Pastor Stovall Weems uses Matthew 6:33 to offer a fresh perspective on what following Christ is all about.

Reclaim Your Soul: Your Journey to Personal Empowerment

Cindy Trimm (Destiny Image)

Cindy Trimm explains how to identify destructive relationships, avoid unhealthy attachments and realize your

potential.

The Auschwitz Escape

Joel C. Rosenberg (Tyndale)

Best-selling author Joel Rosenberg shares the story of Jacob Weisz's beloved Germany after the Nazi regime has taken over through a tale that forges into the life of a Jewish militant determined to undermine Hitler's regime.

Spice Up Your Health With Seasonings That Fight Diseases

Common herbs and spices not only add flavor to your favorite dishes, but the right ones can also help fight cancer, diabetes and heart disease. How do we incorporate them into our everyday lives?

Many of us have lots of little bottles of herbs and spices in our kitchens. But too often they're just collecting dust. Sadly, we only use them for special occasions, like Thanksgiving.

Now it's time to open the right ones more often for better-tasting dishes and an even healthier lifestyle.

1. A pinch of cinnamon. Herbs and spices come from plants. The difference is herbs, like basil, rosemary and oregano, come from the leaves, whereas spices come from the other parts.

For instance, cinnamon comes from the bark; ginger comes from the root.

Celebrity chef Christina Ferrare shares cooking tips and recipes on her popular television show, *Home and Family*, on the Hallmark Channel. She says people would be surprised to know about the amazing health benefits of common herbs and spices, such as cinnamon.

“It can lower blood sugar and your triglycerides,” she says. “And your triglycerides are a type of fat that are in your blood. And with people with Type 2 diabetes, this is also very good for them as well.”

Just a teaspoon of cinnamon packs a powerful punch. Ferrare suggests adding cinnamon and a little brown sugar to plain yogurt to make a healthy fruit dip.

2. Paprika and turmeric. Another spice Ferrare loves to use is paprika.

“I put it on popcorn. I use it on rubs—rubs on chicken,” she says. “It contains capsaicin, and it is an anti-inflammatory and has antioxidant effects that may lower the risk of cancer. It also lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease to help with that.”

“It’s great for arthritis,” she adds. “I like to use it on most everything. Believe it or not, when I have pains in my joints, I will use that, and it really does help.”

Turmeric is one of the healthiest spices around. In fact, it was actually used as medicine in ancient cultures.

Ferrare explains what makes it so powerful.

“Turmeric contains curcumin, which can inhibit the growth of cancer cells,” she says. “It reduces inflammation. It supports your immune system, it’s great for your liver function, and, as you know, it’s used in Indian cooking.”

Turmeric is a beautiful yellow color and has a rich, smoky flavor. Ferrare simply adds a little to water when making rice.

3. Garlic and oregano. The great thing about using herbs and spices to flavor food is that we rely less on sugar and salt for taste.

Garlic, for example, is a versatile food that fits a variety of needs. To get the greatest health benefit, let it sit for 15 minutes after chopping. If you do cook it, make sure to keep the temperature low.

Ferrare uses lots of garlic in her recipes.

“Garlic is a superfood,” she says. “It destroys cancer cells. It disrupts metabolism of tumor cells as well, so they won’t develop. It reduces cholesterol and triglycerides. It’s anti-inflammatory and is a great source of vitamin B, vitamin C and iron.”

Add raw garlic to salad dressing, or cook it in pasta sauce.

Speaking of Italian cuisine, oregano, common in Italian food, is gram-for-gram the highest in antioxidants of all the herbs.

“It is an excellent source of fiber,” Ferrare says. “It’s rich in vitamin K, and vitamin K promotes bone growth. I use it on tomatoes, sauces, soups, and put it on pizza.”

Ferrare even takes her love of oregano one step further.

“I love oil of oregano or oregano oil,” she says. “You can get it at any health food store. It comes in a little bottle, and I use it for whenever I’m getting sick or whenever I don’t

feel well. It's like a miracle oil."

4. Ginger and rosemary. Ginger is a healthy addition to tea, desserts, side dishes and main dishes.

"Ginger decreases motion sickness and nausea, and it may relieve the pain and swelling associated with arthritis," Ferrare says. "It can also hinder blood clotting."

Ferrare adds ginger to cooked carrots with a little butter and brown sugar. She also enjoys crystallized ginger on its own as a snack. Delicious!

Rounding out Ferrare's list of healthiest herbs and spices is rosemary.

"I put it on chicken, on potatoes. I chop it into my pasta as well," she says. "Rosemary stops gene mutations that can lead to cancer. It also helps prevent damage to the blood vessels that raise the risk of heart disease. I just love the aroma, and it's an excellent source of vitamins as well."

The wonderful flavor from herbs and spices translates into eating less because we tend to feel satisfied sooner than when we eat bland foods, according to research.

The active compounds in herbs and spices degrade over time, so purchase the brands with the "best by" dates on them.

Also store them in airtight containers away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

While dried is great, fresh is even better! You just need to use twice as much fresh than dried. You can find fresh herbs and spices in the produce department of your grocery store. You can also grow many at home—even inside!

So step out of your comfort zone and start using herbs and spices in your everyday cooking—for better taste and better health.

For the original article, visit .

Growing Up Duggar: It's All About Relationships

*Jill Duggar, Jinger Duggar,
Jessa Duggar, Jana Duggar (Howard Books)*

The lives of one of America's largest reality TV families jump off the pages of this book, written from the vantage point of the four eldest Duggar daughters. They discuss their faith, their dreams and what it's like to be in a family with 19 children.

Are True Christians Persecuted in America?

You better believe it!

Sure, if you only equate **persecution** with those who are burned alive inside churches, like Islamists do to Christians in Nigeria, then we are not.

If you mean **persecution** only applies to those who are beheaded with a dull-edged sword, as Islamists do to Christians in Syria, then again, no.

If you mean it is only about crucifying people alive, as

Islamists do to Christians in Pakistan and elsewhere, then that doesn't apply either.

The subtler **persecution** of Christians in America, which began mildly, with the media mocking Jimmy Carter's "born again" claim, has escalated rapidly in the last five years.

If Christians in a social gathering or on the Piers Morgan show say they believe Jesus is the only Savior and Lord, they will incite the most venomous verbal attack. If Christians speak out against Islamism or the celebration of **homosexuality**, they will be attacked with labels such as "Islamophobe" or "homophobe"—words manufactured by two groups that would normally hate each other but join forces for the purpose of eliminating the true Christian point of view.

Our nation once rejoiced to send loving Christian missionaries to alleviate suffering and bring the Good News of the gospel to a world filled with darkness and unbelief. Now our leaders refuse to condemn the genocide taking place against Christians around the world while condemning nations for enacting moral laws against the act of **homosexuality**.

A nation once admired for the peaceful missions of its Peace Corps now exports the most violent and immoral movies—so much so that America is now synonymous with violence, pornography and immorality in general.

America once stood up for the suffering and persecuted. Today, however, if you ask any non-Islamist Egyptian (most of the country), they will tell you that the Obama administration would rather side with terrorists than true freedom-loving citizens.

How could this have happened to a great nation in such a short period of time?

I have communicated with thousands of Twitter and Facebook followers about this, as well as with others in face-to-face

settings. It is safe to say that committed and nominal Christians alike are bewildered.

People who have not been involved in politics are becoming more politically minded, wanting to ensure through future elections that we choose leaders who share America's founding values.

And many who are spiritually inclined are beginning to focus their **prayers** on America—that God may save her from a path that leads to an inevitable abyss.

Either way, we know something is drastically wrong. And, as some believe, it may take a major crisis to return us from the consequences of such political and social arrogance. In that way, we may be humbled enough to repent and return to God.

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World-Class Ministry Starts at Home

A very wise woman once told me that my ministry were my children. I didn't want to hear that because I liked being in the middle of ministry adventures. I love traveling, staying in nice hotels and meeting important people.

While I was working in my dream ministry position where I

occasionally traveled, my daughter DÁndra was born. She has Down syndrome and needed extra attention although physically she was perfect. My unplanned surprise birth of a child with special needs turned my world upside down.

I was thrust into turmoil where I thought God forgot me and wanted to leave the church. The wise woman, Pastor Diana, took me out to lunch to find out what was going on. I shared with her about my struggle that now I wasn't doing anything worthwhile for the kingdom of God. I think I even cried through the lunch.

I'll never forget what she told me that day that literally saved me and my family. With her bright blue eyes glistening with compassion, she reached out to me and said, "Your ministry now is your family." I think I wiped away tears and said that I didn't think of my family as a ministry. I thought they were in the way of the ministry.

I was super performance-oriented and Pastor Diana opened a door to a brand new world of compassion, love, kindness and the goodness of God. I dreaded the thought of stepping down from a high profile ministry position to take care of my daughter with special needs and my sons. But that feeling of being forgotten, unworthy, and washed up as a I sat in the foyer with my daughter began to fade with the years.

I took her advice and poured my love, my faith and everything I had into my children. Don't get me wrong – I didn't have Bible studies and Bible memorization campaigns. Instead, I tried to find ways to naturally include the things of God in our everyday life.

We have lots of fun playing together and enjoying each others company. We also had moments where we talked about life, dreams and how God fits in. Through the years, God added Erin when she was 13 into our lives. My beautiful niece moved in with us from L.A. to go to school in Kansas City.

I'll never forget the summer nights where we had Haywood church. Each child was assigned a scripture and a task to either preach, pray, or sing the scripture. Those gatherings began awkwardly but soon grew into dynamic moments where God stepped into our midst.

I'm still in that season of ministering to my kids although I own a business and adjust my activities according to their needs. DÁndra is in the 6th grade, Alex is in the 10th grade, Chris is in college and Erin is married and living in Florida. Ministering to my children was a ministry that I didn't want.

But I realized that this ministry that no one prays for or claims is what attracted God to Abraham. In Genesis 18:19, there is a pattern of what caught God's attention when He picked Abraham. "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Having the ability to teach your children how to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just is apparently so important to God that the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham depends on him teaching his kids. What a radical departure from what we look for in leaders today. We want the sharp, good-looking affluent guys or gals. God is looking for someone who had the ability to pass loving and honoring Him to their children.

The ministry that no one wants in our culture is a primary ministry to God. God sees how we are able to pass on our faith to our kids and our household. He responds to that and acts to fulfill His promises when we make a priority of reaching the people in front of us with the goodness of God.

Thank you Pastor Diana for those wise words spoken years ago to a mom struggling with her place in life. Moms and dads, your first ministry are your kids. Treat this like a world-

class ministry and you'll be amazed at what God does in your home.

Leilani Haywood is the editor of Spirit led Woman emagazine. Leilani and her husband, Jerome, have raised countless young adults as well as their own three kids.

Are There Hidden Christian Messages in Macklemore's 'Same Love'?

Macklemore and Ryan Lewis rustled more than a few feathers with the release of "Same Love," which recently served as the soundtrack to the *en masse* gay marriage ceremony at this year's Grammys. Christian outcry against the single even included a dubbed-over rebuttal rap from pimp-turned-Jesus-freak "Bizzle." So what Christian ideas did the hip-hop tune accidentally affirm?

All right, so Macklemore isn't exactly a Bible scholar. In the song, he complains of Christians who "paraphrase a book written 3,500 years ago," even though Paul's exact words to Roman believers during the church age condemn some men for "their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error" (Rom. 1:27, NKJV).

But the refrain of the chorus—"I can't change, even if I tried"—resurrects an old debate. According to the Bible, do people change? If not, does that make your natural tendencies OK? Or if people can change, should they?

Biblical Message #1: You Can't Change Your Nature

Early in the song, Macklemore criticizes “right-wing conservatives” who “think [being gay] is a decision, and you can be cured with some treatment and religion.”

He's dead right. Treatment and religion can't “cure” homosexuality.

Everyone—homosexual or otherwise—is born with the same inescapable nature, according to the Bible. That human nature is called sin. Only two men ever had real free will: Adam, the first man, and Jesus Christ. But when Adam chose to disobey God, he left a state of perfection and entered a state of unrighteousness—where he had all his children, including you and me.

From our perspective, this is why no one's perfect. We're all “only human.” But from God's perspective, it means we're just plain *bad*. Even if you're a decent, respectable person, you are not good in God's eyes (Ps. 14:1-3; Rom. 3:10-12). You can't escape your sinful nature any more than you can escape its consequence: death itself.

When Jesus came and lived among the hyper-religious Jewish leaders, He didn't criticize their belief in God's commandments; instead, He showed them how high God's standards really are. Some people applaud themselves for never cheating on their spouse, but Jesus said that whoever even looks at a woman with sexual desire is already an adulterer—in the heart (Matt. 5:28). If you've ever hated someone even for a moment, you're a murderer in your heart (1 John 3:15). If you've ever lied, you're a liar. And even if you've only sinned once, you might as well have broken every single law God ever wrote (James 2:10).

So according to the Bible, treatment and religious exercises are about as good at changing your core, unrighteous nature as medicine and food are at reviving a corpse. That's why the

Bible says you're dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). Dead people can't diet or exercise back into good health; neither can sinners (whether gay or straight) get right with God by simply modifying behaviors.

What Macklemore Missed: Predisposition Isn't Permission

Lady Gaga ("Born This Way") missed this too. God did not make us as sinners; He gave Adam a choice, and Adam chose to enslave himself—and us by extension—to sin. And by obeying our inborn sinful urges, we re-enlist daily as slaves to sin (Rom. 6:16). So while we're born with predispositions to do certain things, we're still held accountable.

In a culture where we let our feelings rule us, know that your natural inclination to feel or act a certain way doesn't equate to divine license. No jury would forgive a thief simply because he has kleptomaniacal tendencies. No court would acquit a murderer simply because he's always been an impulsive, angry person. And what wife would forgive her cheating husband simply because she knows he's drawn to curvy women?

But if we're all sinners by default, how can God judge us? Paul anticipated a similar question and wrote, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'" (Rom. 9:20, ESV). Whether a potter finds a crack in his pot right when it comes out of the oven or when he pours water in it a week later, isn't he equally justified in throwing it away in both cases?

Even inborn desires must be tamed. Scripture consistently maintains that homosexuality, along with any kind of sexual activity outside a heterosexual marriage, is detestable to God. But Macklemore also forgot that desire isn't identity. We might be defined by our sin now, but God's will is for us to be defined by Him being in us (Gen. 1:27). But that's

something only He can do. And by God's grace, He does.

Biblical Message #2: Man "Plays God" When He Uses Human Methods to Change Someone's Nature

After exposing the weaknesses of treatment and religion, Macklemore laments, "Man-made rewiring of a predisposition, playing God, aw, nah, here we go."

If these people are "playing God," then that means they're doing what only God can do. Macklemore emphasizes the negative at the expense of the positive. The bad news is, no one can change you, not even you. The good news is God can!

What Macklemore Missed: God Made You, So He Can Remake You

Since Adam's sin is what gave us a default sin nature, we don't need new rules from God. We need a new "Adam."

His name is Jesus.

When you trust Jesus' death for you, your old life and nature dies. When you trust Jesus' resurrection for you, you are resurrected spiritually, granting you a new, righteous nature. This is where we get the term "born again" Christian—not "believe right" Christian or "do good" Christian, but *reborn*.

Jesus is not about helping you fix yourself. He recreates you. He doesn't just modify your behavior or give you new rules; He gives you brand new desires altogether. "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV).

Does God magically rewire every predisposition of your brain and body? Sadly, no. I know several who have struggled with homosexuality even long after being transformed through Jesus. God miraculously changes some of them, but He calls others to wage all-out war against their sinful desires.

But when Christians fight sin, it's a fundamentally different

kind of battle. A living, breathing person can fight an infection in his body; a dead person cannot. Christians aren't enslaved to sin anymore, but freed and purchased by Christ. So sin's call is like an old slave master: You could go back, but why return when he has no control over you?

Moreover, God promises that He will give you a brand-new body one day, renewed to be like Jesus (1 Cor. 15:50-53). And in this body, all your struggle is replaced with effortless, joyous obedience.

Whether from birth you've been drawn to the same sex or to opposite-sex lust, premarital sex, pornography, pride, lying, greed or gluttony, the solution is the same. Don't settle for heart surgery when what you need is a full transplant. Jesus, who died and is now alive again forever (Rev. 1:18), can give you a new nature—His perfect nature.

Identify yourself with Jesus, and trade in your "same love" for "For God so loved" (John 3:16).

The First NFL Gay Player—Let's Throw a Parade

On Sunday night, news outlets reported that NFL prospect Michael Sam is gay. By all accounts, Sam is a beast on the defensive side of the gridiron. He was the Southeastern Conference defensive player of the year. His talent is undeniable, and on merit he deserves to be drafted.

However, he has done what no NFL player has done before—declared himself openly gay—and ESPN is falling all over itself to declare him the next Neil Armstrong. I am sure

President Obama will give him a call this week.

As I watched his interview Sunday night, I could not help but be moved by this young man's courage. Don't get me wrong, I view homosexuality as a sin—an aberration of healthy human sexuality, just like adultery and pornography.

But still, knowing what I have suffered as a Jewish believer in Jesus—being ostracized by friends, family and my community (I must say that on all accounts, things are much better today than 30 years ago)—I know it took courage for him to do this. But not nearly as much courage as it would have taken in the past.

While Sam will suffer from some segments of society, he will be hailed a hero from many more segments. The upside is endless. He will be compared to Jackie Robinson. Just wait.

ESPN is celebrating this like he is the new Martin Luther King Jr. Hollywood and the left have conditioned us over the last decade to believe that gay is not just OK, it's cool. Shows like *Modern Family* portray just enough gayness to not turn people off. (There is a very good reason they never show Mitch and Cam half-naked, in bed or passionately kissing!) They go through everything a traditional couple goes through. And just about every movie these days has the "cool gay guy."

Former NFL star Jeff Saturday wasted no time in throwing out—I am sure, fully convinced of its truth—the debunked Alfred Kinsey lie that 10 percent of all humans are gay. That would mean every NFL team already has five gay men—in the closet, of course—and that one of every two families of five has at least one who is gay.

This is ridiculous. The Family Research Council states that 2-3 percent of men have same-sex attraction, as do 2 percent of women. This seems closer to reality.

But getting back to Michael Sam: Should he be drafted? Of

course he deserves a job. In my 48 years, I have worked with gays and lesbians. I have befriended them. And some I have seen leave the lifestyle. You will never reach people with whom you are unwilling to associate.

I have never believed that someone from a sexual orientation that I strongly disagree with doesn't deserve a job. And yet, in employing them, I would never compromise my stance against such behavior.

But we hire other sinners, don't we? We hire people who are living together outside of marriage, those addicted to pornography and adulterers. A friend of mine recently shared with me a report that 50 percent of born-again men *regularly* look at pornography. Yes, that is half of you who are reading! (Well, the males.) But you still have jobs despite your struggle.

To be clear, I didn't write that to shame you. Pornography is a horrible addiction, and we must pray for each other to stand strong in this area. I wrote it to say that sin comes in many forms (like jealousy, bitterness, unforgiveness) that we ourselves struggle with, and these sins do not disqualify us from employment.

However, Sam is not applying to be a mailman, an accountant, a waiter or an investment banker. He is seeking to be in the NFL. And in the NFL, men get naked in front of each other several days a week. And ESPN, *that* is the main issue, not whether or not he should have a job.

Let me just be honest. If I had a job whereby I had to undress and shower several times a week with a roomful of very fit, attractive females—well, let's just say I would struggle. And that clearly is the concern of heterosexual football players. It is a legitimate issue.

I am not an expert, but if someone says to me that they are attracted to men and then are going to see them undressed on

an almost daily basis, it is going to make for an uncomfortable situation. Right?

But don't say it out loud—not unless you are willing to be skewered by the media elites. Oh, wait, too late. Jonathan Vilma of the New Orleans Saints already stated the obvious.

“I think that he would not be accepted as much as we think he would be accepted,” Vilma said. “I don't want people to just naturally assume, like, ‘Oh, we're all homophobic.’ That's really not the case. Imagine if he's the guy next to me and, you know, I get dressed, [bare], taking a shower, the whole nine, and it just so happens he looks at me. How am I supposed to respond?”

Vilma made those completely honest and valid comments a few days ago—before Sam came out. For sure, he will be vilified and called immature. But come on, let's be honest: No one expects adult men and women to take mass showers together on the job—for the *obvious reasons*. But Vilma is juvenile and uneducated for not wanting to shower next to an openly gay man?

I wonder if more NFL players will have the courage to speak up. How ironic—in the past it was the homosexual who was afraid to come out. Now it'll be the guy who doesn't want to take a shower next to the homosexual who will be shunned and shamed—and he will be told to keep his mouth shut.

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