

Passion 2012



Hoping to see a generation stake their lives on Jesus Christ, Passion 2012 will be a unique movement that's about "finding meaning in a story so much bigger than ours." The worship-oriented conference will be held Jan. 2-5 in Atlanta and will feature well-known teachers such as Francis Chan and Louie Giglio.

Gritty Grace



Filmed in the Puget Sound area of Washington state, *Hollow* is a faith-themed urban crime drama that looks at addiction and redemption through the eyes of four desperate people: a drug dealer, an exotic dancer, a narcotics detective with an online addiction and a reformed street thug trying to make a difference. Despite the movie's emphasis on God's redemption, the subject matter makes this Pure Flix DVD suitable only for teens and adults.

God's Requirements for

Recession-Proof Living

How to not only survive but even prosper amid today's economic challenges{jcomments on}



Before a pilot takes off on a flight, he goes through a checklist of things that must be cleared to ensure his plane is in good working order. If he forgets to check his list, he may miss something, and that could cost him his life. This awareness causes him to be extremely careful not to make any mistakes. As Christians, we should be as diligent in our everyday lives at searching the Scriptures to see if we are missing something God's Word instructs us to do.

We are under grace, so I am not talking about earning anything from God or obeying by our own power. It is His grace that enables us to obey His Word, as Hebrews 12:28 states: "Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

From searching the Scriptures, we know that the Bible says part of God's covenant with us is prospering us (Deut. 8:18; 28:2). Yet do we even know what biblical prosperity is? Is it synonymous with being financially rich? No, I don't believe that.

The Bible's definition of *prosperity* is "sufficiency in all things." Biblical prosperity is God's grace abounding toward us so that we have sufficiency in everything. Here's the way 2 Corinthians 9:8 defines it:

Spiritual Trends to Watch in 2012

{jcomments on}

The doom-and-gloom crowd always expects the negative. But behind the troubling headlines, God is working in surprising ways.



Some people are terrified of 2012. Their fear is based on the fact that the Mayans of ancient Mexico mysteriously ended their 5,126-year-old calendar on Dec. 21, 2012—as if they expected the world to end that day.

This stupid hypothesis became the basis for several New Age books and a silly disaster movie, *2012*, in which actor John Cusack avoids meteors and earthquakes just in time to get his family aboard the modern version of Noah's ark (built in China!) before the rest of the world is destroyed by a tsunami.

I'm not worried about 12/21/12 because (1) Ancient Mayans never actually said the world would end in 2012—and even if they did, they didn't have an inside track to God; (2) Doomsday predictions have *never* been accurate; and (3) Jesus Christ holds the future in His hands. As long as I'm in relationship with Him, it doesn't matter what happens on earth. I'm secure.

Despite strange weather patterns, global terrorism and the spectre of an economic crash, I'm actually optimistic about where we're headed in 2012. Through my research and travels, I've noticed these emerging trends—some negative, some positive—that will shape our future:

Jentezen Franklin: Restore Your Passion for God

How a short season of self-denial will restore lasting passion for God in your life

One Sunday morning before our church service, I received a text from a passionate man of God who used to be our youth pastor at Free Chapel in Georgia. He had since relocated to Kentucky to pastor a church that was in rapid decline. He was texting to tell me what a huge difference fasting had made in his church's turnaround.

He and his wife had rebuilt and reinvented the identity of that struggling Kentucky congregation. They'd grown it in a few years from 600 people to 3,000, while also winning more than 4,000 to Christ. Fasting—a spiritual commitment he once tried to avoid—had changed both his life and thousands of others in his community.

In his text, he recounted how this happened:

“Ten years ago I walked into your office and said, ‘Pastor, this fasting thing isn’t for me.’”

“You replied jokingly: ‘You are on staff. You’re fasting.’”

“So, after some encouragement I joined the fast. Fourteen days later, I cracked—and destroyed a Whopper burger! I thought I was done. I confessed to you, and you said: ‘You did your best. You made it 14 days; that’s not bad.’”

“I want you to know that this January marks my 10th annual fast, and it is our church’s sixth annual 21-day fast.”

Even though this young man's first fast was "forced," God raised him up and led him into deeper places of worship, brokenness and power through fasting. He and I still laugh about his Whopper mauling. And I still rejoice in how the fast God gave him the tools to sharpen his anointing and regain his passion for God. In short, it gave him back his spiritual edge.

How about you—have you lost your edge? Has your worship grown dull? Are people still coming to Christ because of you? On Sunday mornings are you like the dead in Christ, lifelessly taking your seat in the pew, waiting for "the grave" of a dry church service to "give you up" at noon?

If so, then you don't need me to tell you that you've lost your edge.

What you do need to hear, though, is this: It's time for you to declare a fast and pray—because God wants to supernaturally change you. His plan for you hasn't changed: He still wants to make you the son or daughter in Him you are meant to be.

God Restores the Edge

How does fasting help to accomplish this? I have been asked that question more times than I can remember. My answer is always the same: "Fasting and prayer bring you closer to God."

That brief answer is by no means simplistic. Because whenever you begin a spiritual fast, you are choosing to break away from your life routines to draw closer to God, and amazing things happen as a result.

I chose to develop a lifestyle of prayer and fasting more than 25 years ago, and nothing has been more powerful in my Christian life. I am convinced that fasting is a gateway through which God releases His supernatural power into our lives. The choice is ours, though. We can either open that gateway or ignore it and stay in our routines.

At Free Chapel church for the last 12 years our members have undertaken a 21-day fast each January. With every year I become more certain this annual fast to honor God is part of His design and calling.

I've witnessed profound miracles in this church and through this ministry—things that could not have come about from our own strength or effort. I was amazed to learn that nearly a million people visited our fasting website over a two-day period during our most recent annual fast.

So many people have lost the edge in their lives; they've lost their homes, their marriages, their commitment to the Lord. We stand in church and sing the songs and lift our hands, but there is no edge to our worship. There is no edge to the preaching. It all has become just dull routine and ritual.

Fasting can change all that. It's a short season of self-denial, but it releases long-term rewards.

Taking the time to fast is like taking the time to sharpen an ax before you cut down a tree. Ecclesiastes 10:10 says, "If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength." Sure, you can cut with a dull ax, powering along in your own strength until your energy runs out. But the writer of Ecclesiastes is saying, "There's a better way."

Dull "axes" is the problem for so many people and churches today. Fasting restores your sharp edge. God uses fasting to give you the power to do far more than you could possibly do in your own strength.

When a young man in 2 Kings 6 lost his edge (literally), God gave him the miracle he needed to get it back. He was part of the so-called Sons of the Prophet, followers eager to be mentored by Elisha. The group had outgrown their living quarters, so they headed to the banks of the Jordan River to cut trees and make beams for a new lodge.

As he worked, this young man didn't notice that with each swing against the tree the head on his ax was working loose. Suddenly the piece of iron slipped off the handle and flew into the muddy river. He stood on the bank, ax handle in hand, devastated and powerless to change what had just happened. He was eager to do something great for God, but now he couldn't even help chop wood.

He'd lost his edge—literally!

Maybe you know how that feels. You had an edge once. You sensed the Lord's anointing on your life. You were going for it. Your life was consecrated to God. You had a deep passion for spiritual things. Then something slipped, and you lost your edge. Now the enemy has convinced you that it's out of sight, out of reach, buried, stuck at the bottom where you can never get it back.

The young man did the only thing he knew to do. He cried out for help from Elisha. He knew God had used Elisha. The seasoned prophet made the water of Jericho drinkable again. He made oil multiply in a widow's house. He raised a young boy from the dead. He even healed a man's leprosy. If anyone had the faith to see God do what seemed impossible, it was Elisha.

Second Kings 6:6-7 tells us what happened next:

"So the man of God said, 'Where did it fall?' And he showed him the place. So [Elisha] cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. Therefore he said, 'Pick it up for yourself.' So he reached out his hand and took it."

Have you bought the lie that your anointing, your purpose, your dream, your family, your lost children all are gone forever? Are you facing dire circumstances; have you lost a job, a home, or even respect and hope? I want to encourage you right now, God still can make iron float. Like He did for the young prophet, He can return the edge you lost.

You Have a Part Too

Just like the young man had to reach out and take the iron from the water, there are a few steps you too will need to take to regain your edge.

The first step is: Make up your mind that you are going to get your edge back. It's the starting point for fasting to regain your edge.

Think about the young prophet-in-training: There he stood at the edge of the Jordan, not prophesying for anyone, not speaking forth any great oracles of God to the nations; just a person who had been stopped cold. The word in his heart said he would be a prophet, but his world said he was a woodcutter without an ax. He easily could have tossed the handle aside and given up.

You may be in a season when your word doesn't match your world. Faith is trusting God no matter how impossible the odds are. Sometimes God allows the odds to be stacked against us so we can experience a miracle.

Let me remind you that as a born-again believer you serve the same God Elisha served! He is the God of the impossible. Now is the time to make up your mind that you will believe Him for what seems to you to be impossible and stop believing the lies of the enemy, who wants to see you defeated.

The second step is: Confess that you have lost your edge. The young man did not keep silent. He immediately sought help from God's prophet to regain what he lost.

You will not get anything accomplished by remaining in denial about your situation. Going through religious motions day after day is no way to live. It is not what God has called you to.

If you have lost your passion, if you have lost your edge, be

swift to confess it to someone who can pray with you and help you find your way back.

The third step is: Take action while the opportunity exists. Elisha did not grab the ax head and put it back on the handle. The young man had to do that for himself.

God will not do for you what you can do for yourself. You'd think that if the miracle could cause the piece of iron to float, it also could have reattached it to the handle! But God intends for you to do your part in regaining the edge.

When you declare a fast and set aside time for prayer, you are reaching into the river and picking up the sharp edge that God has provided in order for you to be effective.

I challenge you to do your part. Declare a fast while you are reading this article. I'm in agreement that sharp ideas are going to come to you. Sharp relationships with new people are going to add significantly to your life. Cutting-edge creativity is going to flow your way as you begin to hunger and thirst for more.

Let the crisis drive you to your knees in a season of prayer and fasting. Go back to the place where the edge was lost.

Where did you lose it? Was it due to life's batterings and disappointments suffered along the way? Was it through sin that you need to confess? Go back to that place and get it under the blood of Jesus. The altar is a place to get free from the thing that weighs you down and drowns out your fiery passion for God. The altar is a place to *alter* your direction and get back on the right track with God.

Holy Surprises Will Come

You'll find that when you fast and pray, the supernatural possibilities suddenly become much more natural! Holy surprises seem to come out of nowhere. God knows where the ax

head fell off, and He will help you get your edge back!

One Thursday night, God illustrated vividly for me how He can do this.

I met my daughter Courteney for dinner, and she began to tell me about her friend Nate. He was not much of a churchgoer. He decided to come to Free Chapel for the first time on a Wednesday night when I preached a message titled "Jesus Passing By."

But he was so moved by the message that when he got home, he felt compelled to start reading his Bible again. It had been months since he had picked it up—six months to be exact.

He knew it had been that long because six months before coming to Free Chapel, he had been paid \$2,000 for a job. He had stashed the cash somewhere safe, but had forgotten where he hid it.

He searched for it for months, but finally concluded he'd left it on the seat of his car and it had fallen out. He assumed it was long gone.

That Wednesday night as he was stirred to dig into the Word of God, he was blown away to find the \$2,000 tucked safely inside the pages of his Bible—right where he'd "lost" it six months before.

Seeking God will help you get back the things He gave you that you feel like are gone. Seasons of fasting and prayer make this happen. Cry out to God; fast and pray. Invite Him to begin demolition in your life. He's going to tear down who you used to be as He raises up who you are meant to be!

Remember, fasting is a gateway through which God releases His supernatural power into our lives, and we have the choice to either open that gateway or ignore it and stay in our routines. I challenge you: To whatever degree you can, make it

part of your life.

Jentezen Franklin is the pastor of Free Chapel in Gainesville, Ga., and Orange County, Calif. He hosts a weekly TV program, Kingdom Connection, and is an author. His new book, *The Fasting Edge* (Charisma House), from which this article is adapted, released in November. His other books include *Fasting and Believe That You Can* (both Charisma House).

Charisma Online

No More Religious Persecution in China?



With reports of 30,000 people accepting Christ daily, one thing is for sure: God is moving in the most populous country in the world. But missionary Dennis Balcombe says the 21st century Chinese church is not experiencing the same persecution their predecessors did. Visit [to watch an exclusive interview with Balcombe and Charisma Editor Marcus Yoars.](#)

Praise from prison

As a Christian living in communist China, Dorothy Sun spent six years in prison and 14 more working in a forced-labor factory. She has since become a U.S. citizen. Today she returns regularly to China with her husband, Freddie, who also was jailed there for his faith, to work with house churches and spread the gospel. Watch their amazing testimony at [.](#)

How fasting can be edgy



Visit [this link](#) and find out how choosing prayer over your dinner plate can help you reclaim your spiritual edge. Watch as pastor Jentezen Franklin gives key principles to fasting that will catapult you into your spiritual destiny and restore your edge.

Win *The Harbinger*

Starting in 732 B.C., God gave Israel nine prophetic warnings of coming judgment for refusing to repent. Messianic rabbi Jonathan Cahn writes that the same nine harbingers are now manifesting in America with profound ramifications for this nation's future. Win a copy of his compelling prophetic novel at

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Recession? What recession?



You can live free from the fear that grips people during economically tough times. Go to ***recessionfree .charismamag .com*** to find out how.

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Judgment in a 'Don't Judge Me' Culture

Few things rile Christians more than talk of God's judgment in the wake of disaster. When mass tragedy hits it's become routine for some prophet, preacher or politician to stir up controversy by pronouncing God's role in the matter. The problem for believers, however, is discerning exactly *what* that role is.

After Haiti's earthquake in 2010, multiple leaders in the prophetic movement declared God had judged the already poverty-stricken country for its spiritual ties with witchcraft. Japan's quake and tsunami last year yielded similar "words from the Lord," some of which harkened back to warnings issued decades earlier. Yet these prophetic responses also drew the ire of fellow leaders upset by those whom they felt were misrepresenting God's heart as if He were gloating over the millions suffering through these tragedies.

Around the same time another judgment prophecy warned of a massive earthquake that would hit California and the West Coast. When catastrophe didn't come as predicted, many local believers—particularly those who feel called to California—not only questioned the prophecy's source, but also took issue with the implied theological ramifications.

The Change of Mind That Changed My Life

Someone once said, “When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.” Change is a part of life. It’s also uncomfortable and can be scary. Here are a few facts about change:

It’s a process. And it’s often a lengthy one that requires long-term commitment.

It’s frightening. Even though we usually want change, we also like to be in control. But we have to be willing to let go of something to move toward something new—without knowing exactly what the new thing will be like.

It takes action. It comes when we confront our fears.

A word for the Grand Poobah

People often ask me if I have a title. My normal reply is: “You can call me Lee. Or if you want to sound formal, you can say, ‘Brother Grady.’” But my reply doesn’t always satisfy everyone.

All kinds of labels have been pinned on me: Reverend, pastor, prophet, apostle ... even bishop. Once I was introduced to a church as “Dr. Grady” and I almost crawled under my seat. I only have a college degree. There are no letters after my name.

Today it seems we’ve developed a title fetish. For a while everyone in charismatic circles was becoming a bishop (and some were installed into this office with rings, robes and

strange hats). Then the same guys with the pointy hats started calling themselves apostles. Then the prophets got jealous and started calling themselves apostles too. And I knew one lady who required people to call her “Exalted Prophetess.”

New Movie About Margaret Thatcher Misleads Viewers

Thousands of studies have shown that the media, including movies and television programs, can shape the thoughts and behavior of people. Politicians, advertisers and educators depend on this being true.

People’s view of history also can be shaped by movies and television programs. For instance, in 1915, the popularity of D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* led to an increase in the Ku Klux Klan’s membership, and in the 1930s, Adolph Hitler’s propaganda minister, *Goebbels*, took command of the German movie industry to solidify Hitler’s power across Germany.

Thus, people of truth and values understandably view the release of *The Iron Lady*, a new biopic about former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher starring Meryl Streep, with trepidation.

First, the good news. *The Iron Lady* doesn’t completely bash Margaret Thatcher and her conservative politics. In fact, it has several scenes showing Thatcher ably defending her conservative, capitalist, democratic ideals of limited government and free markets.

The bad news? *The Iron Lady* fails to capture the regal strength, wit, faith and intelligence of Margaret Thatcher,

even in her aging years. Half of the movie is a stagey presentation of an aging Thatcher reminiscing about her life while she interacts with a hallucination of her late husband, Denis. The movie also spends too much time concentrating on the outcry and street protests among the radical left against some of her policies.

The movie starts off by showing Thatcher in the twilight of her years. Her daughter and staff have given her the task of throwing out her late husband's things. Facing this sad prospect, Thatcher procrastinates and envisions herself talking with her beloved husband, Denis. As they converse, Thatcher recalls her political career, beginning with her memories of her conservative, politically oriented father.

As the timeline goes back and forth, Thatcher recalls the beginning of her political career in the House of Commons, her marriage to Denis, her takeover of the Tory Party, her election as Prime Minister, her tussle with Argentina over the Falkland Islands, her renovation of Britain's economy, and, finally, her resignation.

Supporters and opponents of Margaret Thatcher can agree on at least one point. She was, without a doubt, one of the most influential and results-driven political leaders of the 20th century. She was the first woman to lead a major political party in the United Kingdom and, after leading her party to victory in the 1979 general election, became the U.K.'s first and only female prime minister.

Thatcher was re-elected to an unprecedented three terms and voluntarily resigned in 1990 after Michael Heseltine's challenge to her leadership of the Conservative Party. In over three decades as prime minister, she successfully reversed a precipitous national decline and, as the movie eloquently states, "left the country in a better state than [she] had found it." In recognition to her service to her country, she holds a life peerage as Baroness Thatcher (only mildly

referenced in the movie when she is once addressed as “Lady” Thatcher), and is entitled to sit in the House of Lords.

One thing and one thing alone stands out in the 2011 movie which fictionalizes the life of Lady Thatcher: Meryl Streep’s enchanting, masterful performance. In fact, at times, viewers will have to pinch themselves in order to remember that they are watching a work of fiction. Even so, Streep fails to capture the regal dignity of Thatcher, and therein lies one of the movie’s major problems.

Fiction is, precisely, the greatest failing of the movie, marketed as a biopic about the former “Iron Lady.” The movie doesn’t completely bash Thatcher and her politics. In fact, it features several scenes in which Streep successfully defends her conservative, capitalist and democratic ideals of limited government and free markets.

Despite this, the movie deceptively downplays the former prime minister’s successes by drawing the viewer’s attention to the weakness and sickness that allegedly dominate her later life. However, Thatcher leads an extremely private life in London, and such allegations are purely speculative.

At the end of the day, audiences are misled (intentionally or not) by director Phyllida Lloyd, a distinguished professor of Theatre at Oxford who was also named one of the 101 most influential gay and lesbian people in Britain by the Independent. Lloyd re-envisioning Thatcher’s political successes in light of her later frailty. “I will not die washing a teacup,” the young Margaret Roberts proclaims when Denis proposes to her; and yet, at the end of the movie, that is precisely what she does. The movie’s iconography, though perhaps subtle, is dangerous because it leads viewers to believe, at the end of the day, that Thatcher’s life, no matter how grand and how accomplished, is reduced to that very moment, when finding herself alone after saying goodbye to her dead husband, she cleans up a teacup.

Although one might argue that this constitutes a portrayal of the eventual state of all human beings reaching a certain elderly age, it's a dangerous, misleading view of Thatcher and her impact on history. One cannot help but wonder how much stronger Streep's portrayal could have been if the movie had closed on the extraordinarily powerful eulogy Thatcher delivered via video for President Ronald Reagan's funeral in 2008. Overall, therefore, Thatcher ultimately comes off as weak, befuddled, and sometimes strident, not regal, tough, smart and faith-filled. Only a few scenes point to her underlying personal strength.

A watery script further weakens *The Iron Lady*. The script skims the surface and jumps from postcard to postcard images and recollections of Margaret Thatcher's life, interspersed with scenes from her now allegedly precarious mental state. These scenes of an elderly Thatcher take up too much time. They could have been made better if Thatcher didn't look so befuddled so much of the time and if the movie made the scenes seem more like just imaginary conversations with a dead loved one rather than hallucinations. For contrast, see the dignified, touching scenes in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* where a middle-aged John Wayne talks to his clearly beloved dead wife at her grave.

Another failing of the movie is its focus on Thatcher as a grocer's daughter. Although Lloyd does include two references to Thatcher attending Oxford university (one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the world), it fails to note she was a successful chemist and lawyer. When she first took office in Parliament, it was based on those talents and abilities, and her clear conservative philosophy, not on her popularity as a commoner's daughter.

Perhaps the most bizarre aspect of the movie is the director's choice not to emphasize Thatcher's relationship with Ronald Reagan and Pope John II. Together with Thatcher, these Western leaders helped defeat the Communists in Russia and Eastern

Europe in the 1980s while forcing the Russians to tear down the Berlin Wall. Only about 30 seconds in the movie makes note of this remarkable and enduring achievement.

In contrast to this, the movie spends a lot of time focusing on some of the riots and political unrest that greeted her election as Prime Minister and led to her resignation. Very little of the movie focuses on how her conservative policies led to a huge reinvigoration of the British economy.

As a result of all of these problems, one cannot help but wonder, What is the agenda of the filmmakers? Apparently, Meryl Streep's agenda was to offer the most heart-wrenching, memorable performance she could, and for this, she should be commended. However, it seems that the filmmakers didn't achieve such a noble end. Without Streep's performance, in fact, Thatcher would lose any resemblance to the regal, strong, and wise woman who helped change the course of Great Britain and the world. As Norman Tebbit points out in a recent interview with the Telegraphy, that is how we ought to remember her—instead of as the elderly, weakened, slightly befuddled retiree the scriptwriter and the director decided to bring to the forefront.