

# Take No Thought

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap-...-yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? **–Matthew 6:26**

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# When God Disrupts Your Life

The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. **–Job 1:12**

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# Robert Duvall Discusses ‘Utopia,’ Faith-Based Films

Throughout the years, the landscape of Christian films has changed. While movies like *Fireproof* and *Courageous* enjoyed success at the box office, decades ago those pictures may have flopped in the box office.

Along with the blockbuster success of faith-based films comes big-name actors willing to lend their talents. Kirk Cameron starred in *Fireproof*, Helen Hunt and Dennis Quaid were in this year’s *Soul Surfer*, and more recently Oscar winners Robert Duvall and Melissa Leo graced the silver screen in *Seven Days in Utopia*.

Duvall, who grew up a Christian Scientist, is often reluctant

to talk about his faith—he told NPR it is a personal thing. But his most recent role is not his first time starring in a faith-based film. He played Mac Sledge in the 1983 film *Tender Mercies*, for which he won an Academy Award for Best Actor. Duvall was also nominated for the same award for his portrayal of Pentecostal preacher Sonny Dewey in *The Apostle*, which he wrote, directed and starred in. Last year he appeared alongside Lucas Black—his *Utopia* costar—in *Get Low*.

Charisma News spoke with Duvall, 80, about his involvement in faith-based films and his latest project. When asked what attracts him to the faith-based film industry, he said a lot of factors come into play when choosing a role.

“It depends if it’s a good part. Everything comes in waves. I do secular films and faith-based,” Duvall explains.

The iconic actor said his character, the cast and the Texas film location all drew him to play Johnny Crawford in *Seven Days in Utopia*. Crawford is an eccentric rancher who helps young golfer Luke Chisolm, played by Black, perfect his swing during a weeklong stay in the small town of Utopia, Texas.

“It was a nice project, that’s what it was,” Duvall says. “If there is a message, I hope it’s not too direct and doesn’t hit people over the head too much. Sometimes if there is a message it could be a little more offhand.”

He didn’t know what viewers should learn from his character, but Duvall said maybe a sense of goodness and positiveness. “You’ve got to be careful with message movies,” he notes. “I think whatever the message might be, it has to be an individual thing that people take away.”

Duvall adds: “A philosopher once said this: ‘Just don’t be a farmer but be a man on a farm.’ You’re a human being before you are what you are professionally. Try to be a good person before you’re a good actor or whatever.”

The Hollywood great has played roles such as Tom Hagen, the Corleone family's consigliere in *The Godfather* trilogy, a demanding marine pilot father in *The Great Santini*, and Josef Stalin in the TV movie *Stalin*. But Duvall says his favorite character he has played is Augustus McCrae, a fun-loving and stubborn Texas Ranger, in the 1989 TV miniseries *Lonesome Dove*.

He said he has some favorites, and although *Lonesome Dove* is not the best made, the miniseries had the greatest impact on Duvall.

"I said let the English play Hamlet and King Lear. I'll play Augustus McCrae. That was my favorite character," he says.

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## **Pastor Pushes Anti-Gingrich Hip-Hop Satire to Iowa Voters**

A pastor from Sioux City, Iowa, prominent in the defeat of three Iowa Supreme Court justices last year for their same-sex marriage ruling, announced today that a hip-hop video calling Newt Gingrich "the GOP's Kim Kardashian for his many infidelities on marriage—gay, straight and his own" would be delivered, via text messaging starting Thursday, to every registered Republican or non-aligned Iowa voter with a cell phone on record.

The rhythmic, satirical three-minute video rips Gingrich for his three marriages—two to former mistresses, one of which was his subordinate in the U.S. House and 23 years his junior: current wife and would-be First Lady, Callista Gingrich.

The video also blasts the former House Speaker for dodging the

Iowa Family Leader's Marriage Vow—a sweeping political pledge document that addresses adultery and fidelity, gay unions and health issues, fatherless children, U.S. monogamy and Islamist polygamy—which has been signed by three 2012 presidential hopefuls: U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann, Texas Governor Rick Perry and former U.S. Senator Rick Santorum.

The video's star is Molotov Mitchell, whom Cary K. Gordon, president of PeaceMakers Institute and pastor of Sioux City's Cornerstone Church, calls "the guerilla warrior of Judeo-Christian political commentary." Mitchell is an edgy independent filmmaker whose Illuminati Pictures delivers something akin to an animated political cartoon weekly at WorldNetDaily.

Gordon also announced today that 832,897 text messages went out to Iowans last week bearing a link to his own video endorsement of a proposed GOP ticket, less than a month from the Iowa Republican Presidential Caucuses on Jan. 3.

In that video, Gordon called for a marriage of sorts, urging Iowans to rally for a merger between the Santorum and Bachmann campaigns. Gordon wants Santorum to name Bachmann as his running mate now, for the event Iowans launch him to the GOP nomination, in exchange for Bachmann's merger of her campaign with his.

"Michele and the two Ricks—Santorum and Perry—have each been polling in single digits for one reason: They're dividing conservative Iowa voters who delivered Mike Huckabee his upset victory here in 2008," Gordon says. "If Santorum and Bachmann can make a deal now for a ticket—many Iowa conservatives don't care who's on top—and especially if Rick Perry would be willing to somehow join such a unity effort, we could easily have a Jan. 3 'Rickaboom and Bachaboom' just as loud as the 'Huckaboom' of 2008."

Santorum and Bachmann, Gordon says, have both pledged to

reinstate the military's longstanding "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy against open homosexuality, reversed earlier this year by President Obama. "Rick and Michele would make a great GOP match, and would defend Judeo-Christian monogamy, while I think it's quite clear Gingrich simply cannot be trusted with the institution of marriage in any sense," Gordon says. "I think the 2010 *Esquire* interview with Newt's second ex-wife and former mistress was very troubling."

In his endorsement video, which popped up on iPhones, Android-powered phones and mobile devices last weekend, Gordon emphatically rejects Iowa's 2012 front-runners.

"The first two, Gingrich and Ron Paul, have refused to sign all pledges against gay marriage, while third-place polling Mitt Romney went out of his way as Massachusetts governor to sign marriage licenses for homosexual couples," Gordon says.

"Romney wasn't complying with the law at that point. He was making law for same-sex marriage. He also issued a 2004 governor's 'Gay Youth Pride' proclamation. Any Iowa pastor who fails to warn his flock about Gingrich and Romney especially, will be abdicating moral leadership in the most important election of our generation."

Gordon won national attention last year for "Project Jeremiah," a statewide campaign involving a controversial letter he sent to over 1,000 Iowa churches. It called for the removal of the three Iowa State Supreme Court Justices for their abuse of judicial authority in imposing same-sex marriage upon Iowans, while promising pro-bono legal defense for any Iowa church harassed by the IRS for exercising their rights to free speech in the pulpit.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State in Washington, D.C., called Gordon's actions one of the most outrageous attempts to politicize a church he has ever seen. The Iowa Caucuses

endorsement of the Family Leader and its president, 2010 GOP gubernatorial candidate Bob Vander Plaats, a crucial ally of Gordon's in the defeat of the justices, is still pending. So too is that of influential U.S. Rep. Steve King, Congressman for the 5th District.

During his recorded interview, Gordon praised Santorum for championing a Personhood Amendment to the Constitution, something the pastor said was necessary if Americans wished to stop the barbaric evil of abortion once and for all. Says Gordon, "Rick Santorum is committed to rescuing this nation from economic disaster, and that's good news for everyone concerned about their families."

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## **Will True Christian Churches Be Forced Underground in America?**

Will the real Christian churches please stand up? Or, er, should they rather go underground?

In order to stay true to their belief and to God, one conservative Christian commentator is convinced that the "real" Christian church in America is going to be forced to do as the early Christians did—go underground.

J.D. Longstreet is making a lot of noise with a commentary that argues many of the mainline Christian churches have slipped away from the foundation of Scripture to adopt secular tenants and leftist, politically correct philosophies until they have become only a shadow of the true followers of Christ.

Strong words, but words that Longstreet—who left his own denomination a few years ago because he said it was forsaking the tenants of the Bible and the gospel—is standing on.

“Unfortunately, many of our mainline denominations have become nothing more than social clubs with many franchises nationwide,” Longstreet writes. “Their pastors ‘preach’ feel good ‘sermonettes’ about the environment, and things like ‘social justice.’ In my opinion, that is not the mission of a church that purports to follow Christ. In fact, Christ Himself, spelled out the mission of the church in what we refer to as the Great Commission.”

As Longstreet sees it, pastors in America are fearful of preaching scriptures and of pointing out main’s failings. They are concerned that they will be accused of slander or sued for libel. Longstreet admits that’s a real threat in America—and that’s why he is suggesting churches that hold true to the gospel will be forced underground.

“And very soon now, I believe, the Supreme Court of the land will be in the hands of socialists, as well, and that will be the end of the experiment called ‘America’—a nation which was to have been governed only by the voice of it’s people and their God,” he writes. “The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah could not hold a candle to the wickedness in America today. If the true Christian church is to survive in America, it must go underground.”

Do you agree with Longstreet?

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# Obama Administration Holds Ground on Morning-After Pill Prescriptions

The Obama administration on Wednesday shocked pro-life supporters and women's health advocates by rejecting a plan that would let girls under the age of 17 buy a morning-after pill called Plan B One-Step without a prescription.

Plan B One-Step is a single-dose pill that works to reduce the chances of getting pregnant if taken within 72 days after unprotected sex. Morning-after pills contain higher levels of a hormone found in some types of daily use oral hormonal contraceptive pills and works in a similar way to birth control pills.

Plan B is currently sold without a prescription to girls 17 and older, but requires a prescription for girls younger than 17.

"There is adequate and reasonable, well-supported, and science-based evidence that Plan B One-Step is safe and effective and should be approved for nonprescription use for all females of child-bearing potential," FDA administrator Margaret Hamburg said.

"However, this morning I received a memorandum from the Secretary of Health and Human Services invoking her authority under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to execute its provisions and stating that she does not agree with the Agency's decision."

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said she reversed the FDA's decision because she did not believe the drug maker's data conclusively established that young girls could use Plan B safely.

“About 10 percent of girls are physically capable of bearing children by 11.1 years of age,” Sebelius said. “It is common knowledge that there are significant cognitive and behavioral differences between older adolescent girls and the youngest girls of reproductive age.”

Jeanne Monahan, director of Family Research Council’s (FRC) Center for Human Dignity, applauded the decision. As she sees it, making Plan B available for girls under the age of 17 without a prescription would not have been in the interest of young women’s health.

“Secretary Kathleen Sebelius was right to reject the FDA recommendation to make this potent drug available over the counter to young girls,” Monahan said. “In her own words, the research submitted to the FDA did not include data for all ages for which the drug would be used.”

But not everyone agrees with Sebelius. Kirsten Moore, president and CEO of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, is among them.

“We are outraged that this administration has let politics trump science,” Moore said. “There is no rationale for this move. This is unprecedented as evidenced by the Commissioner’s own letter. Unbelievable.”

FRC’s Monahan, however, points to another safety issue: sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). About half of the STDs nationwide are among young people, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Monahan said the availability of Plan B over-the-counter for all ages would have bypassed necessary routine medical care for sexually active girls. What’s more, a study released in 2010 revealed that adolescent use of Plan B was correlated with an increase in unplanned pregnancies and a high STD rate.

“There is also the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation. The

average age of a girl who is sexually trafficked in the U.S. is 13 to 14. There is a real danger that Plan B could be given to young women, especially sexually abused minors, under coercion or without their consent," Monahan said.

"Interaction with medical professionals is a major screening and defense mechanism for victims of sexual abuse. Finally, Plan B can act in a way that can destroy life by preventing implantation. Women of all ages have the right to know how this drug may act in their bodies and on their newly developing babies."

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## Faith Pleases God Now

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe ... **-Hebrews 11:6**

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## The Biology of Christmas

*The virgin birth contradicts the laws of science. But our faith rests on the miracle of the Incarnation.*

My wife and I have four girls, and I was in the hospital room for each birth. There was a normal amount of blood, but no serious complications. Our oldest took forever to be born. Our second was in such a hurry that we thought she might end up on the floor of a hospital hallway. Our third tied her umbilical cord in knots in the womb. And our youngest calmly slipped out as if to say: "OK, I'm born. What's next?"

I had very little to do in the delivery room. My wife was the hero. She sweated, strained, pushed and gasped for hours. I stroked her arm a few times—and ate some doughnuts.

Normal births are amazing, whether they occur in hospitals or homes or the back seats of taxis. But when I consider the birth of Jesus, I'm in total awe—not just because of Mary and Joseph's bumpy ride from Nazareth, Mary's lack of a doctor (and no anesthesia!) and the crudeness of the manger, but also because of how Jesus was conceived. Mary was a virgin. Joseph, the "father," had nothing to do but stand in the background.

Secularists and liberal theologians have mocked the virgin birth for centuries. Thomas Jefferson called it a fable, while Episcopal heretic John Shelby Spong called it an "entrance myth." The concept of a woman giving birth to a baby without a man's involvement is ludicrous to unbelievers. It contradicts all the laws of biology.

Yet Mary was not a scoffer. She asked the angel how she would bear this child, and he said: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35, NASB).

I would have asked for more scientific information. ("Um, thanks Gabe, but how does this process of miraculous impregnation work?") But Mary didn't quibble over details. She believed Gabriel's announcement and submitted to God in childlike faith.

The Greek word for "overshadow," *episkiazo*, is a reference to the cloud of God's presence that materialized in Moses' tabernacle. The Amplified Bible translates Luke 1:35 as: He "will overshadow you like a shining cloud." This same cloud hovered over the ark of the covenant, led God's people through the wilderness and filled Solomon's temple with shimmering shekinah glory.

Think about it. The same cloud of glory that caused Moses' face to shine hovered over a virgin and deposited a divine seed in her womb. The God who hid behind a veil in the Old Testament clothed Himself in human flesh in the New Testament.

The Incarnation cannot be explained in purely biological terms. There was nothing sexual about it, yet Mary's ovum was fertilized without Joseph's sperm. Divinity merged with humanity. Jesus, fully God and fully man, began a nine-month gestation.

When the Savior was born, there was a normal amount of blood, sweat and tears—because Mary was human. But this birth was surrounded with wonder because Joseph was not the father. He came from a line of kings, but his pedigree was not enough to save the human race. He could not contribute to this miracle.

Doubters think Joseph got Mary pregnant out of wedlock. If that were true, Christianity itself would be a lie because (1) if Jesus were not born of a woman, He could not have identified with our sins fully; and (2) if God were not His biological father, He could not have redeemed us.

This is the most glorious revelation of the nativity. Bible teacher R.T. Kendall put it this way: "The virgin birth of Christ shows that salvation can never come through human effort." God performed this science-defying miracle without our help. All we can do is receive His amazing love and forgiveness.

We just stand there in awe. As you prepare for this holiday season, I pray you and your family will be overshadowed in a fresh way by the presence of the Savior.

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# 'Muppets' Movie's Kermit the Frog Accused of Communism

This Christmas, there are some great family options at the box office. And, one of the most entertaining and most wholesome is *The Muppets* movie. So, why is Eric Bolling of *Follow the Money* going on Fox News accusing poor little Kermit of going red? Clearly, it's not easy being green.

Fox's main point is that the Muppets malign capitalism by featuring an oil tycoon villain, Tex, who wants to drill beneath Muppet Studio in order to increase his own fortune. Fox's critics take this plot point completely out of context. In fact, it leaves us wondering if they watched the movie at all.

Featuring Tex as the villain does not amount to communism. In the book of Kings, Naboth refuses to sell his vineyard to King Ahab. The king's wife, Jezebel, writes a letter in the king's name instructing his followers to proclaim a fast, seat Naboth at a banqueting table, and then take him outside and stone him. Shortly after his death, Ahab appropriates the vineyard. Both Ahab and Jezebel are rebuked by God for their actions.

Does this mean that being a king is evil? Absolutely not. God rebukes Ahab and Jezebel for their treachery and for the choices they make—something that David is at pains to explore in the psalms, especially the Beatus Vir in Psalm 1. The message is reaffirmed once again when Christ casts the unethical businessmen of his day out of His temple.

A lack of ethics and goodwill is precisely the problem with Tex Richman. He wants to steal Muppet Studio away from the rightful owners and stoops to sabotage in order to get what he

wants. The problem is not that Tex is rich; the problem is that he's deceitful, arrogant and evil. There is a difference between being a successful businessman in a free market and being morally bankrupt.

The contrast is all the more blatant when we consider that the Muppets are also capitalist entrepreneurs. For example, they own a studio, Kermie lives in a Bel Air mansion and Miss Piggy is an editor at *Vogue Paris*, who loves to wear Chanel and other fancy and expensive clothing brands. (This doesn't smell like communism to us.)

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx spoke out against individualism, the state, religion and property. In the 2011 movie, the Muppets work within the Hollywood system to organize a telethon on their own initiative. They don't force anyone to join in the effort. In fact, at first, Miss Piggy refuses. She then comes back on her own terms to help raise the \$10 million the Muppets need to reclaim their rightful property.

Religion also makes a brief, but overt, appearance in the movie when a church choir bus full of singers pulls behind Kermit's mansion when he comes face-to-face with Walter for the first time. And, most importantly—and most contrary to Marx—Walter must dig deep inside to figure out his special, individual and unique talent to save Muppet Studios. (His brother, played by Jason Segal, must likewise go through a similar process to figure out his own identity, save his relationship and marry the woman he loves. The whole debate is played out in the wonderful song, "Am I a Muppet or a Man?")

Need more? The examples abound.

By the end of the movie, even Tex's assistants question his ethical practices. At one point, the big bear wonders if they're perhaps working for "the bad guy." And of course, the whole movie is full of delightful commentary, much of it

capitalist in underpinning. At one point, Fozzie exclaims "Wow, that was such an expensive looking explosion. I can't believe we had that in the budget." Did we mention that Gonzo has made his fortune as a CEO in the executive toilet industry?

*The Muppets* is full of great family values. Friendship, love, hard work, family, individuality—these are just some of the moral principles celebrated by the movie. In an age in which the media exerts more influence on our children than family, church and school combined, these are great messages to be promoted by mainstream Hollywood. It is important that families speak out at the box office and support great storytelling full of great traditional values. There is a little light action violence (especially with Miss Piggy around), but as in an animated cartoon, nobody gets hurt. That said, be sure to explain to your kids that pushing adults from the top of buildings will not achieve the same results at home.

Don't forget the final message of Kermit the Frog. When it seems their efforts have failed, he encourages his fellow Muppets to do something that would be impossible in a communist society. He says, "Let's just start at the bottom and work our way back up to the top."

For our little green friend, success is not about making lots of money; it's about being the best you can be and responding to your calling. Human beings sometimes just need a shift of paradigms to get things right. That's precisely what happens to Tex. The symbolic wake-up call comes in the form of a large bowling ball that hits him in the head. (Do not try this at home!) When he wakes up, he's a changed and happy man who gives back to the Muppets what is rightfully theirs. And yet, he's still rich and he's still an oil tycoon. He just cares for the first time about his fellow man ... or in this case, Muppet.

We're with Fozzie on this one. At the end of the day, any suggestion that this year's Muppets movie pushes a liberal or communist agenda is just plain "Waka Waka Waka." Thanks, Eric, for the laugh.

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## Choosing the Right Republican Presidential Candidate

These days, because I'm an Evangelical minister, a missionary to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and chairman of the Committee on Church and Society for the Evangelical Church Alliance, the question I'm asked most is, "How do evangelicals pick the right candidate this time around?"

The implication is whether evangelicals are bound to pick only an evangelical candidate, even if that person can't win in the general election. My answer is simple: We should pick our candidates for president in the same way we pick our doctors—on their skills, experience, reputation and approach to our problems. When it comes to the lineup in Iowa, evangelicals should ask particular questions about the person seeking their vote:

- Does this person have the skills to address the problems our country is currently facing and will face when my children and grandchildren are my age?
- Does this person have a proven track record in solving these problems—and in what ways will this person solve them? Because our most urgent problems are economic, we must ask if this person has the extensive private sector experience necessary, as well as the meaningful executive level public sector experience, to get the job done.

- What is this person's professional reputation? More importantly, what is this person's personal reputation? Is this person known as a good, morally upright individual who has demonstrated—over a credible time—a commitment to the highest values of conduct and fidelity? As we've already seen, under the bright lights of day-in, day-out, 24-hour media scrutiny, personal issues can become an insurmountable obstacle to victory.

- What kind of leader is this person? Is this person open to change for the better? Can this person effectively lead others toward better solutions? A willingness to change is good when it's change for the best. All of us hope and pray our elected officials will seek wisdom for a better direction in which to lead our country, for, "In the multitude of counselors there is safety." (Prov. 11:14)

When it comes to picking a president, evangelical doctrine is not a litmus test of whether that person will serve well. George Bush (who was highly favored by evangelicals) was a United Methodist, and when in office he attended an Episcopal church; Bill Clinton (much disfavored by Evangelicals) was a Baptist. Ronald Reagan attended Hollywood Presbyterian Church (affiliated with the liberal Presbyterian Church USA), while Jimmy Carter, the first self-professed "born again" president, taught Sunday school in a Southern Baptist church.

History has not judged these presidents on their church affiliations, but on their record as leaders. This will be true for the next president.

It's not helpful to make a decision on a candidate's religious label, whether it's Newt Gingrich as a Roman Catholic (he left his Baptist roots in 2008), or Mitt Romney as a lifelong Mormon, the two leading contenders. The same applies to the other candidates.

Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7:16)

) This says nothing about the person's religious identity. Jesus made this clear in the parable of the Good Samaritan by holding up a Samaritan (considered an infidel by his fellow Jews) as the paragon of virtue over a priest and a Levite—two certified Jewish doctrinal authorities.

My prayer is that Christians in Iowa will make their choice for president based on the best overall—and one that is electable. This may be the most important presidential race in our nation's history. The next president will leave a legacy far beyond four or eight years, because this president will likely choose Supreme Court justices who serve lifetime terms, deciding cases on the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family. In other words, the choices of this next president will affect the future of American civilization. The consequences are too grave to risk wasting a vote.

As Iowan Christians prayerfully vote in the caucuses, we should all pray that our choices will, in the end, be the best for our families, our communities, and our nation.

**Rev. Rob Schenck**, *who speaks here as an individual citizen and not for any organization, has been an ordained evangelical minister for 29 years. He is a graduate of Faith Evangelical College and Seminary and is president of Faith and Action, a Christian outreach to government officials in Washington, D.C. He is also a board member of the Evangelical Church Alliance.*