

# Morning Rundown: Repentance Led Rick Warren to Support Women's Authority in Church

Here's a quick summary of the top stories on :

## **Repentance Led Rick Warren to Support Women's Authority in Church**

Three years ago, former Saddleback Church pastor and founder Rick Warren found himself in the unenviable position of repenting for a stance concerning the church he had held for many, many years.

Since founding Saddleback Church in California in 1980, Warren held the widespread belief that women should not be allowed to have authority within the body of Christ and to preach the gospel. It's something he simply took for granted.

But in 2020, when the COVID pandemic hit, Warren, who retired from his position at Saddleback last year, began "reading every book I could find on the Great Commission and on church history."

## **21 Baptized at Secular University as New Revival Reports Pour In**

As the flames of the Holy Spirit continue to spread across the nation, there are new reports of young people answering the gospel's call. And one noted evangelist says he believes "it's just starting."

As CBN News has reported, it all started as a spark on the campus of Asbury University, where thousands of Christians gathered for two weeks of Spirit-led worship, prayer and repentance. The outpouring has since touched the hearts and minds of young people on both Christian and secular university

campuses, churches and youth events.

One place where the outpouring is being felt is Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. At a recent meeting, 300 students came to join the Collegiate Day of Prayer simulcast from Asbury in Wilmore, Kentucky. Dr. Malachi O'Brien posted to Twitter on Wednesday that the students brought in a pool for what they thought would be three baptisms—instead 21 people came forward to be baptized.

### **Larry Tomczak: 'Jesus Revolution' Has Caught the Nation's Attention**

- ❌ A couple weeks ago, I wrote, "Parents, Pastors, Everyone: Go See The Jesus Revolution Movie!" If you haven't, with a smile and a wink, I say, "What are you waiting for?"

Like many people, I lead a very full life with marriage and children, seven grandchildren, ministry responsibilities and all the rest but I went by myself immediately and carved out time to go with my wife and another couple, then went with my daughter and her friend and I hope I can go again!

This movie is bringing rave reviews from believers and unbelievers. The secular movie review group Rotten Tomatoes scored it a 99% audience rating and an A+ CinemaScore! It's low budget, but it's blowing away all the Oscar nominated films being paraded and promoted for the upcoming Oscars.  
{eoa}

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# Amanda Grace End Times Prophecy Coming to Pass?

Two years ago God spoke to Amanda Grace about an alliance that would be forming against Israel. She saw an Ayatollah and a Dragon merging in agreement with “the purse prize being the destruction of Israel.”

In the last week Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi discussed implementing the China-Iran Strategic Partnership Plan (CISPP). Included in that plan would be Beijing investing \$400 billion into Iran’s economy over the next 25 years.

“So recently in the news it was a big story. I see the image, there is the leader of China and there is the leader of Iran with all of their flags behind them shaking hands in this very big meeting they had,” Grace says in our Charisma magazine interview.

Psalm 122:6 tells us to pray for peace in Jerusalem. In the middle of the Russia-Ukraine war, Grace says she doesn’t believe it’s a coincidence they are coming together now.

“These are territorial spirits we are dealing with,” she says.

America was raised up to be a friend and brother to Israel, and Grace says the Lord is going to heal the relationship with Israel and America. “It talks about in the end days an enormous army marching on Israel. It will be called the war of Ezekiel.”

Many believe this alliance will be one day be part of the army that will march against Israel.

“I warn to never get into an escapist mentality because I believe we are supposed to occupy until the return. Occupy is a military term. That means we are supposed to be influencing

every area of the nation,” Grace says.

Tune in to the rest of the video with Amanda Grace to hear the prophetic word God gave her and her encouraging take on what happened at the Asbury revival.



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## **The Norm for Israelis: 15 Minutes Away from Terror**

At 9:34 p.m. Thursday, I got a strange message from my daughter in our family WhatsApp group.

“For all those who asked, I am ok and alive.” Since nobody asked, her sarcasm coupled with a little fear were evident.

I had been recording a podcast and didn’t know what she was talking about. None of us did. It seems that there was another terrorist attack, this time in central Tel Aviv.

Three people were injured, one shot in the neck and as of this writing in critical condition. One terrorist was killed on the spot but there are reports that another terrorist got away. The last time this happened much of Tel Aviv remained on lockdown until the terrorist was caught, as it was again.

I also didn’t know my daughter was in Tel Aviv. She’s 26, I don’t need to know her every move. But she lives in Jerusalem and we live just south of Jerusalem so, while not far away, we’re not often there. It’s a strange paradox in Israel that our kids have such wide freedom, so much so that we don’t feel

the need to keep track of them 24/7 or on an unusually tight leash, yet we live in a society in which this could happen.

My daughter was out at a restaurant when it happened, 15 minutes away by foot on Ben Yehuda St. They were just about to leave to go to Israel's first 7-Eleven on Dizengoff St. nearby right before it happened.

Fifteen minutes after her first note she wrote that she and her friends had decided to go back to where they were staying and had arrived safely. Thank God.

About 45 minutes after her first message, another daughter wrote, "There was a terrorist attack?"

About 15 minutes later, an hour after the shooting attack took place, my younger son came into the room announcing another attempted terrorist attack in a community nearby. A Palestinian Arab terrorist entered the largely ultra-Orthodox community of Beitar Ilit by bus, left a package on the bus which began emitting smoke but didn't explode (here's to terrorists being incompetent as well as evil), and then fled at the second bus stop into the city of some 50,000 residents.

The residents were put on lock down while a bomb-squad came to detonate the explosive, and other security personnel looked for the get-away terrorist.

While this was unfolding, several friends from overseas reached out to ask if we were all OK. I said that we were all fine, that my daughter who was 15 minutes away was shaken but also fine. I explained that it's sometimes surreal that things like this happen. Sometimes it's close to home, sometimes closer and sometimes it's too close. But we go about our lives.

While we were watching the news unfold, three of my kids were out, going about life. I didn't really think about it, but did want to stay up to be sure they got home safely. My youngest

son went to a midnight movie with friends. Another daughter was out to a kosher Korean restaurant with her boyfriend (and didn't bring me any) and my older son and his fiancé went to an engagement party for other friends.

One friend asked about mental health and trauma related issues, a logical and intuitive question. I explained that because of the reality of terror and the threat of terror and war that exists (though the impression is that Israel is unsafe like the wild west which is not the case), people do suffer trauma but most just go about their lives.


Trauma like this particularly impacts terror victims and families of terror victims, military and former military and orphans and at-risk youth who live in areas that might be particularly unsafe, and/or come from homes where they have no parents or parents who are unable to care for them. These children need help articulating and then coping with the realization that their homes are not safe and they don't feel protected, and that in many instances the society in which they live is also dangerous. It's one of the important projects that the Genesis 123 Foundation funds, to empower "at-risk" youth and make them into children of promise.

First responders must be trained in defense, able to confront a live terror incident and take care of anyone injured from an attack before EMS personnel arrive. Providing resources for these rapid response civilian security teams saves lives, I know because my son-in-law is in one of the local teams and has actually saved people's lives. It's a reason that this is also a project that the Genesis 123 Foundation is proud to fund.

Friday morning, while running errands before the onset of Shabbat, the Sabbath, I drove by Beitar Ilit, just 15 minutes away from my house by car. I went to the bakery where "Abed" and I always greet one another, as we did again. In another shop, another Palestinian Arab worker helped me professionally

and politely. All as if nothing had changed. Maybe it hadn't. Maybe this is just the norm: on one day others try to kill us and the next day we're being polite and respectful.

All this comes on the heels of other civil strife in Israel that's been adding to the stress of increased terror attacks. Earlier in the day there were country wide protests over proposed sweeping judicial reforms.

 Roads were blocked to and at Ben Gurion airport, and main arteries in Tel Aviv. Hours later, Tel Aviv's roads were clear of protestors, replaced by police and military securing the area and hunting for the terrorist who got away.

This is a taste of life here. There are injured people and their families who need your prayers. There are others for whom this creates trauma.

And if these don't hit too close to home, the rest of us just try to go about our lives. {eoa}

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**Jonathan Feldstein** was born and educated in the U.S. and immigrated to Israel in 2004. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He is president of the Genesis 123 Foundation, which builds bridges between Jews and Christians. Hear and understand more about this subject, including the backstory on the *Inspiration from Zion* podcast.

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# Saudi Arabia Waiting for Security Guarantees From US to Make Peace With Israel

A peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel, what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refers to as the “big prize,” will only be achieved if the Saudi kingdom receives help from the United States, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Saudis will wait for Washington’s help in developing a civilian nuclear program and security guarantees before agreeing to normalize ties with the Jewish state, according to unnamed officials involved in the discussions.

In December, the local i24NEWS published an article naming two additional conditions from the Saudis. The first demand was an affirmation of the alliance. The second is a commitment from Washington to supply weapons to the kingdom.

If such an agreement materializes, it would be the fifth signed Abraham Accords agreement between the Jewish state and an Arab gulf nation. However, according to the WSJ, the Saudi demands pose serious “obstacles.”

“Some Washington lawmakers will likely oppose those measures,” the report stated.

Stopping the Iranian nuclear threat and signing a historic peace deal with Saudi Arabia are the two main diplomatic goals that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu vowed to deliver, if re-elected. These also became a priority for the Biden administration.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides told ALL ISRAEL NEWS Editor-in-Chief Joel C. Rosenberg that the Biden

administration will “work tirelessly with the Israelis and the Saudis.”

Last month, Bloomberg reported that Israel and Saudi Arabia held discussions to increase their military and intelligence cooperation over shared concerns about Iran’s aggression in the region.

*This article originally appeared on ALL ISRAEL NEWS and is reposted with permission.*

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# It’s Time for American Christendom to Go on the Offense

Friedrich Gustav Emil Martin Niemöller (1892-1984) was a German theologian and Lutheran pastor who served from 1931 to 1937 at Saint Anne’s Lutheran Church in Dahlem, a wealthy suburb of Berlin.

Believing as a young man that Germany needed a strong leader to promote national unity and honor, Niemöller thought that could be achieved by Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party, touting nationalist slogans and advocating autonomy for private worship of the Christian faith. Niemöller voted for

the Nazis, both in the 1924 Prussian state elections and in the final national parliamentary elections of March 1933

Most Germans hailed Adolf Hitler's appointment as German chancellor on Jan. 30, 1933, but few were more jubilant than Protestant church leaders, who welcomed the possibility of national regeneration. Yet, following Hitler's rise to power and Nazism's interference in church governance, Pastor Niemöller became a disillusioned and outspoken critic.

Niemöller had come to the ministry late in life, at nearly 40 years of age. A gifted charismatic preacher, he soon became widely known for his critical sermons against the state and the view that neopaganism was being encouraged by the Nazis.

As a consequence, Pastor Niemöller was frequently arrested between 1934 and 1937. In February 1938, he was sent off and held in solitary confinement in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In 1941, the Gestapo transferred the pastor to Dachau. The last eight years of Nazi rule, Niemöller toiled in Nazi prisons and concentration camps.

Martin Niemöller was a complex man and a self-confessed anti-Semite, in contrast to modern evangelicals, who are viewed as Israel's best friends due to the Abrahamic Covenant, which came about when God said to Abraham, "I will bless those that bless you and curse those who curse you, and I'm giving you the land."

As an aside, I went in 2013 with my friend Ralph Hallow (1938-2020), the celebrated chief political correspondent for The Washington Times, to his scheduled interview with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. When asked in the foyer outside Abbas' office, "Why do the evangelicals back the Jews over the Palestinians?"

I answered by paraphrasing Genesis 12:1-3;7: "God said to Abraham, 'I will bless those that bless you and curse those who curse you, and I'm giving you the land.'" The official

responded, "So you're saying that I'm not a son of Abraham?" I replied, "You are a son of Abraham, and you came through Ishmael."

All hell broke loose.

Ralph and I were thrown out of PLO Headquarters in Ramallah for articulating the very last truth that God spoke to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:4: "This is the land that I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your offspring.'"

Niemöller's unscripted remark from his 8-year period of captivity is what he's best known for today. He said: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."

Pastor Niemöller's colleague, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), didn't fare too well either. A Lutheran pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident, Pastor Bonhoeffer's theology would not lead him away from the German public square, but instead deeply and profoundly into it.

In witnessing the atrocities of the Nazi regime and the unspeakable human suffering, Bonhoeffer became involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Imprisoned for the last two years of his life, Pastor Bonhoeffer was executed at dawn on the morning of April 8, 1945, having been led naked into the execution yard while prison guards jeered and ridiculed him.

At the foot of the scaffold, Bonhoeffer paused to kneel and pray, then got up and climbed the steps to the gallows. Using a meat hook from a slaughterhouse, Bonhoeffer was then slowly hoisted by a noose formed of piano wire. Asphyxiation is thought to have taken half an hour ... one of the last gruesome

acts of Adolf Hitler.

The SS camp doctor who witnessed Bonhoeffer's death later recalled a man "devout, brave and composed; I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."

Pastor Martin Niemöller came to the realization that compliance and doing nothing, as expressed in his "they came for," is that which led Germany to Adolf Hitler, a despot "who consorted with crazies and criminals and was often seen carrying a dog whip in public." Niemöller's adage is especially prescient and current as America drifts idly towards the abyss, having surrendered the culture to religious secularism over the last 100 years or so.

Last week, Canadian Pastor Derek Reimer was arrested by Calgary police over his protest at a drag queen story time at a public library. Tucker Carlson reports: "Canada has now become an atheist totalitarian state with amazing speed, and in Canada, it's now become a crime to object to sexualized Drag Queen shows for children ... you're not allowed to say a word.

"Late last month, a pastor in Calgary was violently thrown out of an all ages—in other words, children's Drag Queen story hour—for daring to object to the sexualization of children.

"In Canada, showing any disloyalty at all to the Trudeau government can get your bank account frozen, your truck seized."

Jesse Kelly's insight from last week comes to mind:

"We're not playing offense yet. We're in the early stages of playing real defense. But no offense yet. It will take time to learn. You'll know we're playing offense when we're pushing our values in schools. Not just stopping theirs. When we're building our statues ..."

☒ Contemporary American Christendom looks like the boxer in apostle Paul's account from 1 Corinthians 9:26. It is nothing more than shadow boxing—just beating the air and failing to land any telling blow.

Unlike early America, where 106 of the 108 early American colleges were distinctly Christian. That's if contemporary Christianity even dares to get into the ring with its opponent, secularism, it just flails around like one beating the air.

Yet, praise be to God as Gideon's and Rahab's are beginning to stand. {eoa}

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**David Lane** *is the founder of the American Renewal Project.*

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## Several Houses of Worship Violently Attacked

A recent rash of attacks on houses of worship highlight the growing violence that Christians face throughout the world.

These attacks are not confined to any one country's border either, as the United States also is seeing an uptick in attacks against Christian organizations in today's culture.

There is an ongoing investigation in Austin, Texas, as the Goodwill Baptist Church, a historic Black church, was burned. Investigators are treating this as an arson case, believing that it was set intentionally. The fire ended up causing some \$200,000 worth of damage to the property, but that isn't going to stop Goodwill's Pastor Kelvin Austin from praising the

Lord.

"It's a tragedy to see that this has happened, but we bless God because we know that He moves in miraculous and strange ways, so we will trust that He will allow us to recover from this," Austin told CBS Austin.

"I just for the life of 've never had a cross word with anybody in the community. They've always been to know that somebody in this season would do something like that to God's house," he continued.

Sadly, recent riots have shown many in the U.S. that people will travel out of state to stir up and cause trouble. This was the case in the recent burning of a police and fire training area known as "Cop City" by domestic terrorists from outside the Atlanta area.

Just as deflating, Pastor Austin's church has a target on it simply by existing. It is a place of worship for people who declare that Jesus Christ is Lord and promote biblical values.

The enemy will attack anyone who claims the name of Jesus, even as doctrines vary on the interpretation of Scriptures.

This is evidenced in the recent mass shooting at Kingdom Hall, located in Hamburg, Germany.

This church is home to many worshippers of the Jehovah's Witness sect, who's belief system varies significantly from mainline Christianity, yet they still consider themselves to be Christians.

Reports currently state that seven people were killed and 30 injured as they gathered for a Bible study that night around 9 p.m.

While still unconfirmed, authorities believe they found the perpetrator of this callous attack. Stating on Twitter, "We found a lifeless person in a community center in Great Borstel

who we believe could be a perpetrator. In order to rule out the involvement of other perpetrators, we carry out checks and search extensively.”

Do people think Satan cares if the Jehovah’s Witnesses doctrine does not line up with a Pentecostal, Catholic or Methodist doctrine?

Because he doesn’t. He wants to steal, kill and destroy anything and anyone that he comes in contact with regardless of affiliation.

And according to Scripture, the times are only going to get worse.

The decision to live a life for Christ instead of oneself will be looked upon as evil by the world, and the world will hate those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Even as this kind of hatred is already visible in today’s world, Jesus’ own words offer encouragement in times of trial:

“You will be hated by all men for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved,” (Matt. 10:22).

It is so important for Christians to be firmly grounded in the Word of God. The instructions, commands and principles held within are the tools and weapons needed to persevere against the enemies attacks during dark times. {eoa}

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**James Lasher** is Staff Writer for *Charisma Media*.

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# **Top of the Week: Demonic Ritual Sends Dozens of Young Women to Hospital**

Following are snippets of the top new stories posted on over the past week. We encourage you to visit the links to read the stories in full.

## **Demonic Ritual Sends Dozens of Young Women to Hospital**

Satan is trying to take control of young people's lives, and preys on the world's lack of knowledge regarding warfare in the spiritual realm.

By convincing people that demonic activities and rituals are harmless and no big deal, they in turn open themselves up to spiritual attacks that can have physical manifestations.

This is what many parents are fearing when 28 young women were hospitalized after collapsing while playing with Ouija boards at a school in Colombia.

## **ER Prayer Brings Woman Back From the Dead**

During the Coffeyville (Kan.) Revival a medical doctor testified of a woman rising from the dead in an Emergency Room when an Assembly of God pastor laid hands on her and prayed over her.

Landon D. Vinson, M.D., who works in the Emergency Department at Coffeyville Regional Medical Center (CRMC), has been witnessing to colleagues of the miracle he witnessed of God raising a woman from the dead in the Emergency Room. Now, he is telling it to churches.

Rev. Randy DePriest, pastor of the First Assembly of God of Coffeyville, Kansas, and a key leader in the Coffeyville

Revival, witnessed the miracle when he was called upon by the medical staff to console the woman's husband. DePriest invited Dr. Vinson to tell First Assembly of God of the miracle that they witnessed.

### **Disney Actor Declares Jesus His Savior Live at Awards Show**

There is power in the words people speak out loud, especially in front of a young, impressionable audience like the one at the Nickelodeon Kids Choice Awards.

The words that come out of a person's mouth have the power of life or death held within them. So, when an awards recipient stands up in front of an audience of millions and declares Jesus to be their Savior, they are speaking life over all who hear their words.

As Disney star Joshua Bassett of the hit show, "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series," took the stage to accept the award for "Favorite Male TV star," he used the opportunity to speak life over every young person in the audience.

### **God Used Lonnie Frisbee Powerfully Despite His Flaws**

Near the end of the film "Jesus Revolution," Pastor Chuck Smith gives his young disciple Greg Laurie the keys to a church and challenges him to launch a new congregation. When Laurie expresses his lack of confidence, Smith says: "God has a long history of using flawed people."

Those words certainly apply to the Jesus Movement, the spiritual revival that started in California when a long-haired hippie named Lonnie Frisbee showed up on Smith's doorstep in 1968. The movement brought hundreds of thousands of people to Christ during the 1970s. "Jesus Revolution" portrays Frisbee's early days as an evangelist, but there wasn't enough screen time to unpack his complicated life.

"Jesus Revolution" captures Frisbee's humor, his passion for

the gospel and his love for his disciples. We see him baptizing new converts in the Pacific Ocean, preaching on a college campus and sharing his testimony on a Kathryn Kuhlman TV show. But there are hints of a darker side: His relationship with his wife gets testy, he has conflicts with Smith after the pastor corrects him about his youthful arrogance and Frisbee eventually parts ways with Smith.

## **One Pastor's Alleged Abuse and Cover-Up Across Multiple Megachurches**

"There's nothing quite like waking up to discover that your church is being featured on an episode of 'Dateline,'" Pastor Cal Jernigan wrote in a letter to Central Christian Church, the congregation he leads in Phoenix, Arizona.

Jernigan's church has been under the microscope and featured in news headlines after he brought in Caleb Baker to work on their staff as the Lead Student Pastor and Associate Preaching Pastor.

On Feb. 12th Jernigan discovered Caleb was involved in a six month extramarital relationship with another staff member at their church. {eoa}

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**21 Baptized at Secular  
University as New Revival**

# Reports Pour In

As the flames of the Holy Spirit continue to spread across the nation, there are new reports of young people answering the gospel's call. And one noted evangelist says he believes "it's just starting."

As CBN News has reported, it all started as a spark on the campus of Asbury University, where thousands of Christians gathered for two weeks of Spirit-led worship, prayer and repentance. The outpouring has since touched the hearts and minds of young people on both Christian and secular university campuses, churches and youth events.

One place where the outpouring is being felt is Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. At a recent meeting, 300 students came to join the Collegiate Day of Prayer simulcast from Asbury in Wilmore, Kentucky. Dr. Malachi O'Brien posted to Twitter on Wednesday that the students brought in a pool for what they thought would be three baptisms—instead 21 people came forward to be baptized.

In an email to CBN News, Pastor Dave Shockey of the Purdue Christian Campus House gave even more details about what happened on the Boilermaker campus.

"A week before the National Day of Prayer, some of our student leaders were thinking about going to Asbury, but felt like God asked them do stay at Purdue and do an event here. They asked me what I thought, and we've hosted prayer and worship events a bunch of different times for the NCDOP (National Collegiate Day of Prayer) over the years. We quickly pulled together an event," Shockey recalled.

"Several ministries at Purdue joined together for the night especially Campus House (my church), Greek InterVarsity, and Chi Alpha who decided to cancel their big meeting and join the collaborative prayer and worship event. We had students from a

lot of other churches and ministries there as well including Cru, BYX and Stewart cooperative. We also had some pastors from Indianapolis join, as well as 420 ministries in Indy who led worship for the first half of the night," the pastor explained.

"We had a couple of students who'd recently met the Lord through our Alpha ministry want to get baptized so we had scheduled part of the night for their baptisms," he continued.

"The night was focused on reflecting and praising God for how good He was. We talked about baptism and baptized the students who had planned to be baptized. Made an invitation for any others who wanted to be baptized and a line started to form. We baptized about 8-10 more people and had to pause so we could keep worshipping and praying. Students shared testimonies and praises. Other students led corporate repentance and prayer," Shockey recalled.

✘ "It was really sweet, but baptisms just didn't stop. By the end of the night, we'd baptized at least 21 people but we're not completely sure the whole number because many pastors and leaders from different congregations were baptizing their people," the Campus House pastor said.

"It was a wild night. All said and done we prayed and worshipped for more than 4.5 hours and God moved," he concluded.

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The movement brought hundreds of thousands of people to Christ during the 1970s. "Jesus Revolution" portrays Frisbee's early days as an evangelist, but there wasn't enough screen time to unpack his complicated life.

## 6 Reasons Why Revival is Not the Focus of the New Testament

The Asbury revival has garnered the attention of many. As a result, some pastors and young leaders are looking at this phenomenon as the norm and primary goal of their ministry.

However, we must look at revival as a means to an end, not the end itself.

Historically, charismatics have been "all in" on revival. To them, this term is an all-encompassing word that means a mighty move of God in the church that spills over into the community and wins the lost.

## Chris Rock: 'I Believe Women Should Have the Right to Kill Babies'

Chris Rock is an award-winning comedian and an actor, but in one of his recent stand-up performances his callous humor appears to come right out of a skit from the liberal program Saturday Night Live, of which he is an alum.

During a recent Netflix special, Rock compared paying for an abortion to hiring a hitman, akin to something Pope Francis said in an interview last summer. Known for controversy, Rock tackled an issue that many celebrities won't touch.

At times, however, it's difficult to determine whether Rock's comments are sincere or tongue-in-cheek. {eoa}

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## Celebrating a Modern Persian Heroine

Marzi Amirizadeh is not a Persian queen. Unlike Esther, an orphan in Persia expelled from Judea following the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and exile of the Jewish people, Marzi is a native of Persia. Today, that's Iran.

She lives in the United States, her adopted country where, like Esther, she has risen to the occasion "for such a time as this." Like Esther who put her life on the line to approach the king, her husband and to save her people, Marzi also put her life on the line.

She did not go before the modern "king," the ayatollahs, to save her people from imminent death, but rather worked

stealthily behind the scene, against the ayatollahs, to affirm her faith and for the well-being of Iran.

Marzi is an Iranian born Christian who fled the land of her birth, the land in which she came to faith. Just doing so put her life at risk. In Islam, Jews and Christians are granted the status of dhimmi, a protected second-class citizen. But in Iran, the reality is somewhat less "favorable."

Jews and Christians are persecuted, as is pretty much anyone who does not fit into the narrowly defined version of extremist Shia Islam that's hijacked Iran since 1979. Sunnis, Kurds, Bahais and other religious and ethnic minorities are all in the regime's crosshairs.

Coming to faith as a Christian in Iran is not something to be taken for granted. As much as there are morality police guarding how people dress and behave in public, simply being a Christian and affirming that in any way publicly can be dangerous if not life threatening. Marzi knows all too well. She was arrested and interrogated, brought to trial and received a death sentence due to what the Iranians called "apostasy."

But Marzi is not just brave like Esther, she's smart too. In her interrogations and even at trial, when accused of apostasy, converting from Islam to Christianity, Marzi simply said, "No." She was never a Muslim, despite the Islamic practice that a child born of a Muslim man is a Muslim, and that children born as such in Iran are registered as Muslims.

She was forced to study Islam, but never avowed it, never embraced it, so she could never disavow it. Her Iranian accusers were left without much to challenge her back, despite that she and everything about her upset the Iranian system.

But she didn't stop there. Marzi shared her faith with her accusers, her captors, her interrogators. If Allah was really God, why could she not have a personal relationship with him?

Why could Allah not speak to her directly? There were many “whys” in her search for faith, and then her affirmation of it.

Marzi related that their God is a God who is distant, with whom you cannot have a close relationship, is always ready to punish you, even which will inflict torture for the most minor infractions. She never accepted Allah, revered in Islam, as the true God. She was always searching for a personal relationship with God, to find the truth. Even something as mundane as only praying to God in Arabic, not in Persian or any other language, challenged her and caused her to challenge their theology. If their god were God, he would surely be multi-lingual and receive prayers in all languages.

She understood they were lying, and was thirsty to get to know God. Eventually, God spoke to Marzi in a dream, revealing the true face of Islam, and God’s love for her and all people. A God of love was comforting, made sense and upended their God of fear. After this, God made Himself present in her life, and became her rock.

In coming to faith in the land whose Islamic leaders brand Israel “the Zionist entity” and “the little Satan,” Marzi also had a spiritual awakening about Israel and the Jewish people, how important they were to her faith and very existence as a Christian. This alone could have earned her another death sentence. Even in our conversation for the Inspiration from Zion podcast, she notes dispassionately, would be used by Iranian extremists to demonstrate her “spying” for Israel. Off the cuff, she notes that should the Iranians arrest her in the future, she will be accused as a spy.

Marzi enraged the judge, in whose hands her life was at stake, by recounting how God spoke to her against the judge’s (and Islam’s) belief that God only speaks to prophets and holy people. Some of her captors admired the strength of her faith for standing up to the many forms of intimidation and threats

of consequences of not renouncing her Christianity, even while challenging the underpinning of Islam.

But Marzi does not do anything in half measures. Though Iran is the land of her birth, and the United States is where she's now a citizen and where she has even run for elected office, Israel is a dream, on her radar. Next month she'll get to fulfill her dream and visit the land of the Bible, the land in which her faith was born, where Jesus lived.

☒ She wants to see all of biblical and modern Israel, and be inspired in her own faith. But she also wants to bring a message of love to Israel that while the Iranian regime hates Israel, average Iranians do not. She knows that just as she was arrested and sentenced to death, and only a miracle saved her, the Iranian threat to Israel is very real, but that God will also protect Israel.

More than 2500 years ago, Esther beseeched the Jewish people to pray and fast for her, that she should be able to use her position to save the Jewish people from the death decree forced by Haman. Today, Marzi represents Esther's bravery and boldness, and is very much a bridge between Jews and Christians.

We should join her in prayers for Iran, that somehow miraculously the Iranian people can be saved from its evil rulers.

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**Jonathan Feldstein** was born and educated in the U.S. and immigrated to Israel in 2004. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He is president of the Genesis 123 Foundation, which builds bridges between Jews and Christians. Hear and understand more about this subject, including the backstory on the *Inspiration from Zion* podcast.