

CharisMatters

Gospel Bluesman Offers God's Love In Sin City

Blues guitarist Landon Spradlin mixes with topless dancers, prostitutes and drug addicts. There's nothing unusual about that for a rock musician, but Spradlin is a minister who is showing God's love to these needy people.

You'd normally find him jamming at a blues club or helping lead worship at Family Christian Center in Azle, Texas. But he's also pioneering an outreach to the dancers of New Orleans with Jackie Holland of Restoration Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

"Because of the love [Holland] shows, the girls are drawn to her," Spradlin said of his ministry associate. "When we walk in those clubs, she has favor. The house mothers take her to the dressing room and talk, and they open up. Most of these girls have major needs in their lives."

It wasn't an easy start. Spradlin had booked a banqueting room for an outreach evening earlier this year. Three tables were adorned with the finest china, silver, flower arrangements and candles.

But for a while,
no one turned up.

"It seemed the devil was saying, 'You idiot,' but then at

quarter to seven two people came in—and from that point on there was a constant flow.

“They were
visibly moved, every

single one of them. They could feel the love and the lack of condemnation.” The girls shared not just their hearts, but also their contact numbers with the ministry team.

Such a response is unusual in the French Quarter of New Orleans, a hot spot of unholy behavior. “I’ve worked there for two years, and that just doesn’t happen,” said Spradlin, who plans to continue the event on a bimonthly basis.

“There’s a whole other deal going on with the musicians,” he pointed out. “I’ve got a tremendous entrance and a lot of respect in the New Orleans musical community.”

—Clive Price in Fort Worth, Texas

Charisma Writers Win Awards

Two regular contributors to Charisma have received awards for their work, and a regular Charisma cartoonist also received recognition in recent awards ceremonies.

David Aikman, who served as a
foreign correspondent for Time magazine for 23 years, won

first place in the Standing Column category at the 1999 Evangelical Press Association (EPA) awards held in Nashville, Tenn., in May. Aikman's regular column in Charisma often focuses on the persecuted church as well as spiritual issues aimed at raising the mark for believers' daily walk and servanthood.

The EPA also recognized regular Charisma cartoonist Dik Lapine, granting him a third place award for his cartoon, "What Lazy Charismatics Do."

The 31st Annual Christian Writers Conference held in April in Mount Hermon, Calif., recognized yet another Charisma editorial contributor. Ken Walker of Louisville, Kentucky, received the Pacesetter Award. Walker, a regular writer of Charisma news and feature stories, has published more than 1,200 articles and several books. His most recent article in Charisma was, "The Decline of the Mainline Church," a report on the theological drift occurring among older Protestant groups.

Blues brother Landon Spradlin works the French Quarter for Jesus.

Mozambique Gets Flood Relief

LIFE Outreach International, founded by James Robison, is continuing a mammoth relief effort to the flood-ravaged African nation of Mozambique.

In partnership with Peter Pretorious' Jesus Alive! Ministries, LIFE

Outreach has supplied 380 tons of food, 5,400 blankets, tents to house 15,000 people and three tons of personal hygiene items to refugee camps in the Save River valley area.

LIFE Outreach feeds more than 100,000 children each month in the remote regions of Mozambique and Angola.

"We know how to get to the crisis situations, and we have a food factory that can produce 20 tons of a nutritious porridge mix per day," Robison said.

Three cyclones have dropped more than 60 inches of rain in recent months, and as much as 18 inches in 36 hours. Two million people have been affected by the floods, and at least 2,000 have died.

"The floods are worse than anything we've ever seen," Pretorious said. "People have lost their homes. Their food is gone—they have

nothing." Those interested in making donations to help rebuild Mozambique can call (800) 947-5433; or write LIFE Mozambique Relief, P.O. Box 982000, Fort Worth, TX 76182.

BEFORE JESUS, AFTER JESUS

Jesus Was Her Lifesaver

Belinda Mitchell survived rejection and physical abuse, an

abortion and a murder attempt before she decided to ask Jesus Christ to come into her life as she lay ill on a hospital bed.

Mitchell's nightmare began in 1985 when her planned marriage to "a man I shared everything with" fell apart after she became pregnant.

Having already brought three children into the world outside of wedlock, Mitchell decided to abort her pregnancy—an act that "haunted me for years to come."

On the rebound, Mitchell married a high school friend in 1987. She moved 400 miles away from her hometown to live with her new husband, who soon began to physically abuse her. After two years of abuse, she filed for divorce.

Enraged, her ex-husband threatened to kill her. He stalked her and had her phone tapped. Mitchell had to be escorted by security in and out of her workplace. The stress of raising three children and holding down a full-time job while being stalked by a man with murder on his mind caused her health to fail.

Mitchell said she "fell for dead" at her work desk in July 1992, and doctors could not determine why she was ill. They later found that she had been poisoned with arsenic.

Desperate for a miracle, Mitchell called on Jesus to save her. When she recovered, she joined a church and made a public profession of faith in Christ.

She was then filled with the Holy Spirit and healed. Today

Mitchell lives in Albany, Ga., and has been married for four years to a Christian man who, she says, “loves Jesus as much as I do.”

—Billy Bruce

Jim Bakker Makes TV Debut On Tampa Show

Jim Bakker made his post-prison debut and returned to host live television for the first time in 14 years. During the week of April 3, Bakker and wife Lori filled in for former PTL vice president Richard Dortch on Dortch's late-night prayer program that is produced in the studios of a Tampa-area TV station.

The founder of PTL and the Inspirational Network, who once wondered if he would ever step onto a TV studio stage again after PTL was dismantled by scandal, told Charisma he was excited by the renewed desire to do live television again. Bakker has plans to produce regular live programming when funds are available. But he reveled in the “practice run” he enjoyed by filling in for Dortch.

“It was a thrill to tell people about the love of God over TV once again and to read the phone reports of those finding Christ as Savior and Deliverer,” Bakker said.

The shows were beamed by satellite to 70 TV stations throughout the country and were seen in cities from Tampa, Fla., and Nashville, Tenn., to Detroit and even in Jim's hometown of Muskegon, Mich.

Jay Bakker, Jim's son, and Jay's wife, Amanda, appeared on the show. Jay gave an emotional testimony, telling viewers how he went from a "little boy whose father was the head of a major ministry to a father in prison."

During his previous years on television, Bakker didn't have today's technology that includes cyberspace communication. Bakker marveled at being able to receive instant e-mail messages during the broadcasts. He said he looks forward to doing more television with live interviews from all around the world, reaching millions of people instantly via "real time" broadcasts on the Internet.

"I believe we are on the verge of a new world of communication, and God's people should be there first as we were with satellite television," Bakker said.

Relief station in Mozambique

THE JULY LIST

No. 1 Christian hardback: Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Jim Cymbala and Dean Merrill, (Zondervan)

No. 1 paperback: The Power of a Praying Wife, Stormie Omartian (Harvest House)

No. 1 fiction book: Left Behind, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (Tyndale)

No. 1 CD: The Fundamental Elements of Southtown, . (Atlantic)

Where Are They Now?

Pastor and author Larry Tomczak is now leading a church in Atlanta after surviving an embarrassing libel lawsuit.

When Larry Tomczak was first on our cover in September 1981, he was embroiled in a bitter lawsuit with mainstream author-psychologist Thomas Harris, who had written the best-selling book *I'm OK, You're OK*.

Rumors had circulated that Harris had committed suicide, which were repeated by leading charismatic ministers. Tomczak heard the rumor and, to his chagrin, repeated it before thousands of people at a Jesus '79 rally in Chico, Calif.

Harris, who was very much alive at the time and fed up with the annoying charge, filed a \$22 million lawsuit against Tomczak. It took three years to reach a settlement in the fall of 1983.

"That was a character-building season for me," Tomczak says. "The lesson learned for me was to make sure you always get your facts straight. And second, it's good to say, 'allegedly.'"

Throughout the ordeal, Tomczak, author of *Clap Your Hands and Divine Appointments*, continued to write books and minister through People of Destiny International, a network of churches he co-founded in

1982 with C.J. Mahaney. But in 1997, Tomczak says, the leadership “refocused,” taking on a more Reformed/ Calvinistic theology, and he could no longer align himself with their vision.

“I came to a defining moment where I felt I no longer fit with the direction some of the other men were going with the ministry—doctrinally and directionally,” says Tomczak, now 50.

He says he took a step of faith to leave the movement and was seeking the Lord for direction. He planned to start a church in Atlanta, but then he got a call from an old friend, Michael L. Brown, dean of the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry.

The reports of the revival at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, well as his own experiences there—reminded him of his original mission: to see revival fill the earth and the hearts of men and women burn with passion for God.

“I felt [God] was recommissioning me to the path He had set me on,” Tomczak says. “I felt the Lord was returning me to my roots of challenging people to fulfill their destiny while focusing on Jesus Christ and Him alone.”

Tomczak joined the staff of Brownsville Revival School of

Ministry in 1998 and today teaches church planting and gifts ministries there twice a week. He's also considering some more writing projects. But most of his time is spent in Atlanta, where he is senior pastor of Christ the King Church of Greater Atlanta.

With a few hundred people, the church is growing steadily, Tomczak says. But he doesn't want to focus on the numbers. Helping people develop a more intimate relationship with God is his primary goal.

"I want to see this church established as a New Testament church," he says. "The primary focus has been on Jesus. We simply want to cultivate the life-changing presence of the Lord in our midst."

In 1996, Tomczak called Thomas Harris' home in California and learned that the author had passed away. He spoke with Harris' widow, asking her forgiveness for his misstatement, which he says she graciously granted. —Adrienne S. Gaines

Where Are They Now?

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Larry Tomczak:

Older and wiser

We've Got Charisma!

Thank you for all the work you are doing in this great magazine. I thank God almighty for His inspiration that enables Stephen Strang and the team of editors to produce this great publication.

I was first introduced to Charisma when I visited a friend in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1998 and saw the October 1997 issue. I picked it up and began thumbing through it, and though some of the pages were torn off, I thoroughly enjoyed the cover story, "In the Shadow of Islam," and "The Glory of the Upper Room." The stories were interesting and reminded me that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The issue was so interesting to me that I took it back to my home in Cameroon. It wasn't easy to get a subscription from Africa, so I contacted a friend in the United States, and he has subscribed for me and has been sending me two issues each month for the last two years.

I am anxious to renew my subscription for the coming years. I cannot afford to miss any issue of this wonderful magazine. Charisma is a source of inspiration these days, and it has been a tool for evangelism. I was especially blessed by the March cover story by Tommy Tenney, as well as by the teaching of Bishop Eddie Long. Please send them my regards. Their words have been a special encouragement to me.

There isn't enough room for me to tell you how much the refreshing words published in Charisma magazine have meant to me. I pray that God will give you more inspiration to complete

His Great Commission in Jesus' mighty name. –Sunny J. C.
Obialor,

Douala, Cameroon, West Africa