

EXCLUSIVE: Jeannie Ortega-Law Talks Witchcraft, Spiritual Warfare and Social Media Evangelism

The Holy Spirit is moving among this generation in miraculous ways. Charisma reached out to nine “new voices” who are advancing the kingdom of God around the world. Each story is featured in our Charisma January issue, and we’ve posted the transcripts below. This interview has been edited for grammar and clarity. For the full interview, be sure to download the podcast.

Jeannie Ortega Law is a former “bad girl” pop star who was signed to a Disney label. Now, she’s the host of In the Mix on TBN Salsa, as well as a prolific writer and musician.

You have quite the testimony. Can you tell me a little bit about how you came to know the Lord?

Sure. It’s a long story. I’ll give you the *CliffsNotes*. I grew up in Brooklyn, New York. Back when I grew up in the neighborhood that I did, it was a rough neighborhood, so I couldn’t really hang out outside because of the violence and the danger. It was a hard situation to grow up in, as well as on the inside, because life is life, and my parents didn’t know the Lord, and I dealt with violence and all of that as well.

Didn’t you also grew up with a strange religion that mixed witchcraft with Catholicism?

My aunt is like a high priestess in Santeria, which is witchcraft. It’s like the Latin version of witchcraft. Or Obeah, which is what Caribbean people call it. That was in my mom’s side of the family.

I was being groomed early as I could remember to take my aunt's place and be the high priestess when she's gone. That was kind of the upbringing in terms of religious beliefs. It was Catholic as well, which I still don't get and can't wrap my head around how that religion thinks Catholicism or God is OK with it. But whatever.

I had kind of these beginnings of understanding that there was a God when I needed there to be a God, because of the violence outside, the violence inside, I needed there to be an outlet. So as young as I remember, I was always crying out to God. But I didn't know anything about relationship. I didn't know about the redemptive power of Jesus, the saving grace of God. I had no idea. That was just my outlet to cry, and then I started to get suicidal thoughts as young as 7 years old. That's when the Lord used music. I didn't know it was the Lord. I didn't know anything about God. But clearly, I know He intervened by using music.

It wasn't Christian music. I didn't even know Christian music existed. But He used music to get my attention and helped me just cry it out and realize that music has power, that it is an outlet. This made me want to be a singer, because music has the power to help me feel better.

I became this person who just constantly was letting everything out into music. Once I knew music had power, it became my goal to become a famous singer. I went from being groomed for Santeria to wanting to help people feel better through music. I started to really actively work towards that.

How can I reach people? I was going to my neighbors' houses. I was knocking on their doors with my karaoke machine: "Can I sing for you?" It was that serious. I did that for many years, until I finally was discovered.

This is the craziest story, but it is 100 percent true. I was discovered in a taxicab in New York City. I was singing along

to the radio. The cab driver was also a limo driver. He pulls up by my house, and it's me and my mom, and we're doing grocery shopping. It's kind of creepy, but he was like, "You're beautiful, and you have a great voice. Do you sing? Are you a singer?"

I was like, "Yeah, I'm totally a singer. I'm from New York." I'm letting him know, "This is what I do. I have a demo. I do all of this.'

He's like, "Oh, give me your demo. I drive around famous managers, and I'd love to give it to somebody."

Lo and behold, two weeks later, I got a call from a major manager in the secular pop industry. That was the beginning. It was then from about 13 till 16, I was working with these top-of-the-line—you would know their names if I told you—top producers, and they were kind of grooming me. I went from being groomed in Santeria to be being groomed to be like this kind of pop girl from the hood version of Kesha.

It was Kesha, but like the hood side. But basically that's kind of what happened. I got a record deal. But before that, I just said "Hey, I write."

You know, my whole heart was always to write. But when you get involved with people in the industry; they try to silence your voice and make you what they want you to be—you know, their little puppet. So the whole Kesha thing wasn't working for me. I said, "Hey, I write. Let me write."

Finally, when I did write, that song was picked up by Hollywood Records for a soundtrack. They wanted to sign me. At the age of 16, I was signed to Hollywood Records, the Disney subdivision record company, and I went from a girl in the hood to a girl in Hollywood.

I had a top 25 Billboard hit.

I was touring with Rihanna.

I was doing all these things that a little girl from where I came from could only dream of, and I quickly forgot that I wanted to make music to help people. I became a product. I became a brand. I was told that "People have gotta want to be you, or they gotta want to be with you." Obviously, I'm saying it very PG, because that's not how it was said to me—and I was a teenager, you know what I mean? So I started to do music. I don't even know if you know that part of me, but my whole life up to a couple years ago was solely music.

But in the midst of my pop career, God got a hold of me. I was invited to a Christian church. I had still been feeling the same things about inside of my home. Although I had money, although I had all these things, nothing had changed. I was still a broken little girl, and I couldn't make my parents stop fighting, and I couldn't make my friends really be my friends and not be jealous of me and all these things that I had no control over.

Again, I was faced with, "You should just end it all." Now I'm a teenager on my way to becoming an adult. Here I am, hearing these voices again to just end it all, like "Look, you have money now. You have fame now. You can have whatever and whomever you want, and you're still broken, and you're still lost."

Then someone invited me to a Christian church. I knew it was the answer. I don't know how I knew. But inside of my soul, I was crying out to go to a church. It couldn't be the same religious church that I grew up in, because that had done me no good. I went to this Christian church, and I had an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Tell me a little bit about your encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Funny thing: because of how I grew up, I had never seen people

be charismatic at all. I walked in thinking, *These people are nuts.*

But, oddly enough, I was jealous. I had this godly jealousy or something that I wanted to be as free and open with God as they were. I had cried myself to sleep. The shower and my bed were my most charismatic moments up to that point. But I had never been in the religious or Christian setting that I saw people really be that open, and I became jealous of them. I wanted to be that free. But I wasn't. I was still thinking, *These people are crazy.*

I had kind of given God an ultimatum. So I went to the church. I said, "God, if you don't speak to me, I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to leave my family, and I'm never going to look back. I'm going to just do whatever it is that I want, and I'm not gonna ever look back."

That's how my attitude was going in. Halfway or maybe towards the end of service, the pastor called me up. I remember, I had a gray hoodie on, and I probably looked like a street kid, you know? I didn't want to be noticed. I didn't want anybody to know me. I was just so broken. I was unknown. I walked up to the altar, and he didn't say anything to me. He just simply walked by me, placed his hand on my shoulder and just kept moving. But as he prayed for me, when he put his hand on my shoulder—and I'm assuming he prayed—I became overwhelmed with this emotion. I felt this power come over me that I had never felt before. I fell to my knees and began to weep and weep and weep and weep. It was absolutely incredible, because, understand, I grew up in a spiritual world.

But up to that point, I never felt, I had never even known that there was a such thing as the power of the Holy Spirit until that moment. I knew it was God, because I had felt other things. So when it was God, I knew it was God. I mean, I guess he was just healing me in that moment. Then I get up and I go to my seat. I was embarrassed because I had never reacted that

way in front of other people, but it was completely normal to everyone else.

I sat down and I said, "God, that was amazing, and I know that was you, but you didn't speak to me. That's why I went to church. I needed answers."

Then I hear God through His Holy Spirit for the first time, saying, "Go back home and tell your mother and your brother what you encountered."

It was crazy, because I got a ride home, but I could not stop crying. I cried from the moment I fell to my knees till they brought me to the front of my home, and I stayed in the car with them for another two hours because I was weeping uncontrollably. I could not stop. It was just the years of anguish and pain, and I was just letting it out, and I knew it was God healing me.

Then I went upstairs, told my mom and my brother, and then that began their journey with God. from that part, understand, I was already a pop star, so I wasn't willing to give up my dream. I was just like, "Cool. God is along for my life now."

Two or three years after that, I was 21. I had already had this top hit song, and I'm doing all these incredible things. Because I started to fall in love with Jesus so much, I just wanted to talk about Him everywhere. I wanted everyone to know, everyone that I encountered. I didn't care what your resume said, didn't care how popular you were. I wanted you to know that you can feel God and that the Holy Spirit was real, and He was here and He was willing to work with you on your brokenness. So I became a little mini-evangelist. But remember, I wasn't signed for that.

Actually when I was signed, they told me they had signed me to be the bad girl on their label because up to that point, they only had Disney stars: Hilary Duff, Miley Cyrus, Selena Gomez. So I was the bad girl.

That was before they became the bad girls.

Oh yes, this was before. This was even before Rihanna became the bad girl. Up until that point, that was me, but then I became this evangelist, and they're just like, "What's going on here? We didn't sign a Christian artist."

Even the songs—because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks—so even the songs that I was writing, they were coming out from a Christian woman's perspective. Eventually, they just dropped me. No explanation. I obviously understand why they let me go, just thinking about it. They didn't sign a Christian. They signed a bad girl. But you couldn't stop me.

I was wasting precious studio hours for four hours straight, just telling somebody, "You can feel God. I can pray with you right now, and you can have an encounter with God." Like, that was me. I wanted the world to know this. that's kind of how everything else started. I know my story's kind of long.

Basically, from there, I kind of took off, after I lost the deal and everything. I didn't feel compelled to just jump right back in the music industry. I wanted to discover who I was in God. you know how it is: He has to kill all your idols.

Dying to self is the most painful, horrible thing. But it's so worth it.

Oh, it was so worth it. In the middle of it, it's brutal. This is where I was. But it was the first time that I even asked God, "What do you want from me? What are your plans for my life?"

I was a 21-year-old woman at this point. I had already lived a very old life, just because of the life that I had. I had to grow up really quickly. It was the first time that I asked, "God what do you want?" I took a three-year hiatus where I just went to church, and I discovered everything that I could learn about this God, this person I was falling deeply in love

with.

I didn't want any relationships. I didn't want any distractions. I even prayed for God to take away my voice, because I was afraid it was an idol. He never took away the voice, and He just continued to pour into me and nourish and love on me.

Then I started to get giftings: hear prophetically from Him, dream dreams, all these incredible things that—I had always been super-spiritually in tune, because of the life that I had. But I never knew that I could use them for God or that they were even from God. I had some church hurt in between that and all that.

I had to learn quickly the reality of church, because I was super naive going in. I thought church was a very safe place, and I'd never get hurt. And there wouldn't be jealousy in church like there was in the world, or all the competition and things like that. So I learned all these hard lessons.

But then I met my husband. Once we were married, the Lord told me, "I want you to go out and share your story now." It was kind of like He was waiting for me to get married, and it was probably for my own protection. Because even in the Christian world, if you're not married, everyone thinks you're their wife. So God knew I needed to be completely covered and secured before He released me again.

Then I started to do singing and speaking and sharing my testimony. That's kind of how I was introduced to TBN. I was a guest on TBN for many, many years as an artist and a minister before I was offered my own show. Then even before I found my voice in the media, because I never thought I would be doing Christian media either, but, you know, when you're a pop star and you have a change of genre, and you start doing things for the Lord, the finances are not the same. It's a very different world when it comes to that.

But I didn't care. I knew the truth, and I was rich in the Spirit. I didn't need the financial part until I did. So God was like "OK dear, time to look for some sustainability." That's how I got involved in media. The finances were dwindling, and I wanted to continue to do what God had called me to do. But I needed the money to do it. So I was looking for stuff that I was into. I'm like, *Oh, well, I pretty much went from high school on tour, and then I have this huge career, and any employer who looks at my resume, they're gonna laugh.* So I was like, "God, what am I good at?" I just felt this pull toward media. I understand media from art, from the creative side. I did, and I wound up getting a job for a Christian media company and started to do media.

Having been raised in Santeria and then coming full circle and being filled with the Holy Spirit, what is the spiritual warfare in your life like on a daily basis?

Well, the interesting part is in the beginning. It was hardcore, because in my life, because I grew up in this culture, and because it was so close to my family, literally, there were things all over my house that were prepared, if you will. Meaning they were cursed to kind of keep me and lure me into this religion.

So upon becoming a Christian, and realizing I needed to cut ties with anything that was witchcraft, or witchcraft related, or was dedicated to another spirit or god, or whatever, I literally threw thousands and thousands of dollars of things away in my home. I literally walked through my home. I had to comb through it, and make sure it was all clean.

This is a thing Christians don't do. Even when they go on trips, they'll buy things in the Caribbean or the islands, and they think it's cute, and they don't realize that they can have things like spiritual ties.

So my spiritual sensitivity really was heightened, and I have

to do a clean sweep of my house and make sure I got rid of all these things that were given to me and, oh my gosh, from my sweet 16 crown. That was a gift to me from my relatives who were in Santeria. I got rid of it all. That was one thing.

It was a rough thing, because I needed deliverance. I had things living in me that were not of God. Just even growing up in the industry, the things that you do open the door to the enemy. I needed deliverance. So I actually got prayed for, and I felt the spiritual battle within me, which was very crazy. [Only] one time in my life before that, I had felt that there was a tug back and forth on the inside of me. It was during one of those feasts, a spiritual feast that my aunt had thrown on Halloween. They were trying to conjure a spirit into me.

Tell me a little bit more about that.

They were like chanting over me—a bunch of adults and I was a teenager—and they're chanting over me and, you know, I didn't want to. I didn't want to feel it, but you know, you just do what your family tells you to do, right? Then in the midst of that, I felt that stirring inside of me, and I just screamed, and I said, "Get away from me!" and I ran out of the house.

That was the first time I felt that stirring. The second time I felt that stirring was that day in church years later, where the pastor was praying for people to be delivered from things that were not of God. And I went up to the altar, and I felt the stirring. And they prayed and they prayed for me, and then I went to my feet and I'm like, "It's still in here! Pray for me!"

It was at that moment that I realized that it was the Holy Spirit years before then who fought for me that day at the feast. That night, it was actually that evening, we went back to my house—the pastor, a deacon, my mom and myself—and we got rid of every tie that I had to that religion. That's kind of like the beginning of how that whole spiritual warfare began.

But constantly as you grow as a Christian, you just continue to exercise the truth, and knowing that greater is God in you than any demonic spirit or force or curse or anything that's in the world. Where the blood of Jesus is, the devil has to flee.

I'm very intentional about constantly covering myself like that and my home like that. I don't even know if you know, but now I'm a pastor's wife, and we open up our home to people from everywhere to come and hear the gospel and partake in fellowship with us. We do Bible studies a lot. Even when you do that, you still have to make sure that your home is covered. Because you don't want—and you know people do, they come in with their own things, their own spiritual things, and you just want to make sure that you're sealed, and there's no ties to any spiritual kind of things that are not of God.

You talked about how once you were filled with the Holy Spirit, you began to have prophetic dreams. Can you tell me a little bit more about those?

I never knew that I could even have a relationship with God ever. I didn't know that. I always thought God was this person in the sky and was very distant from me. So as I began to grow in the spiritual, the Lord just started to take me through my life in so many times where he intervened and where he was there and I had no idea.

So that was kind of a way of Him just telling me, "Hey, I've always been here."

Then as I started to pursue him, I would say, "Lord, I want time with you."

Then I feel like I would go to these special places with God that only He and I could go, and He would just pour into me and fill me, because remember, for so many years, I tried to fill my void with all these other things. So in this moment of these incredible moments with God, He started to fill me with

Him, and I literally started to see—you know, I felt like he took me all over.

I wrote a song on one of my albums after becoming a Christian called “Loved by You.” It’s saying, “I can dance across the moon with you/ I can sail across the deep blue.”

That’s kind of what my spirituality became with this God, that any place that I wanted to be, I could go there with Him and find this moment of intimacy and love and just know that He’s God. He’s the Creator of everything and holds everything in His hand. He has me. He has me, and He loves me, and He was just pouring into me. That’s what being loved by God was like. I started to really go into my prayer closet and have these moments where I could just feel like I was dancing with God across the moon, and beautiful things. Then I started to get dreams where I would dream about things happening, and then they would happen.

It actually still happens. Just this week, I had a dream about a church in New York. I called them to say, “Hey, I was in spiritual warfare for you. The Lord showed me this, this and this. I just want you to know that he’s with you, and he’s fighting for you. He has people lifting up across the country to pray for you.” There was something going on. These are the types of things that God will get me, and I’m so grateful for it. I don’t take it for granted at all.

I feel like a lot of people are prophetic, or they’re like “I knew that was gonna happen,” but they don’t know what to do when God gives them these things. my advice would be, “If God gives you something, pray. Just pray. Pray because you never know.”

So what is next for you right now? What are you doing with your ministry, with your church, with your TV show?

Oh, gosh. I’m always doing so many different things. It’s hilarious. As a pastor’s wife, our goal now is to just really

utilize what we have: access to social media, access to this live field of media that we can use to reach out to the world, even on Facebook Live.

God has talked, and He's been like, "Get on Facebook Live, and I want you to worship."

I'm like "OK."

"Get on Facebook Live, and I want you to pray against depression."

"Okay." As I am obedient with doing these things, it's incredible.

Because so many people followed me throughout the years. Many of them are not charismatic Christian people, so they have no idea what worship looks like. They have no idea what true praying for deliverance looks like. They don't know anything. So just me, being a voice, even in a digital world, to show them that, it's helping people find freedom and even become curious on how they can access that same power. So that's kind of what we've been doing.

We've just been utilizing everything God has given us, whether it's online or here and just doing that. We want to cultivate Acts 2 communities. We want the fire that's in us to spread like wildfire, especially where we are in Orlando, because it's very different than New York. But we want that same fire to spread. We're determined to do that wherever we go. We travel all over the world, and we do that. So that's what we're doing in the ministry. With the TV show, I'll continue to do what I am doing, using my platform to help highlight other people and overcome the devil by their testimonies. I was offered a book deal. So we're in that.

What do you see happening within the charismatic church as a whole right now?

What I see in this generation is a generation that is not afraid to go out and spread the gospel, the unadulterated gospel. But that's also not, I think, like in the past, where people would be just kind of excluded or shunned. I feel this generation is so bold that they're willing to go in the face of these people who might be living on opposite life than we are to show them, "This is what God has to offer. This is why you want it," and I see that happening.

I feel like obviously, we can't compromise, and we have to show the love of Jesus. That's a fine line. But I do feel like God is raising up a generation that's bold enough and loving enough to do it. I see that that's happening. I know everyone keeps saying, "There's another Great Awakening. There's a Great Awakening coming." I feel like we can all cultivate that. I think it starts with sacrifice. We have to be willing to get on our face and our knees and spend the time.

I think time is a big factor here—to really call on God and be willing to just get in that place and that posture where we're available for Him to pour out himself to what He wants to, but I feel like we all have access to it. I don't feel like it's this wave that's going to come. I feel like it's this thing we need to activate.

That's wonderful to hear. I think the time thing is so important, because so often, I'm like, "All right, God, what can I do now?" I'm reminded of the verse "Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord."

Amen. See, that's the secret place. We look at the secret place as this place where we go to find strength for ourselves. But it's in that secret place that we become activated to do really what He's calling us to do. I think for our generation, that's the hard part. But that's where it is.

Do you have anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

I know my story is crazy. It takes all these turns. It's obviously written only by God. But it's not unique, in the sense that we all have our stories. There's pain in all of us. There's a longing in all of us. Jesus is the answer. I don't want to sound cliché or whatever, but it's true. When you come from a place where you've had everything you ever thought you wanted, and it didn't fulfill, and then you lost everything that you thought you wanted, but you found the greatest thing ever that can fulfill you and sustain you and keep you, you'll never let go. My husband and I, we've been through the loss of two of our children. We've gone through miscarriage. We've been married almost 10 years, and you know, we've certainly been through church hurt where we've been so hurt by church people, leaders and faith people that you respect.

But if you never forget that Jesus is the one, Jesus is the one that sustains. Jesus is the one that stills. Jesus is the one that strengthens. If you never forget that, you will be able to get through anything and everything. that's just something I want people to understand. We can't put our stock in anything but Jesus: not politics, not church, not life or successes or even family. It has to be Jesus. Let that be your foundation because when the world cracks around you, you'll only stand if Jesus is your foundation.

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