

Fact or Fiction?



*Can divine truth and prophetic insight come through a Christian novel? **Frank Peretti** thinks so. In this exclusive interview, the genre-changing author explains why believers should pay more attention to today's "stories."*

interview with Marcus yoars

CHARISMA: Many of our readers may not know that you actually have an Assemblies of God ministry background. Tell us about your Pentecostal roots.

PERETTI: I grew up in the Assemblies of God church. I was a licensed minister with the Northwest district of the AG until my mid-30s but stepped down because God had called me to be a writer and speaker. I tried pastoring for five years, and that showed me I wasn't really cut out to be a pastor. My family is all still AG; I'm just off on my own now. I've been to a lot of different churches since then, but I still have a Pentecostal basis in my doctrine.

CHARISMA: How did your upbringing shape your early writing, particularly as you wrote *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*?

PERETTI: It provided a broad base for my perspective of things. I draw upon every aspect of life, each spiritual experience in God's Word as I grow in the Lord—it's a pretty broad spectrum. So now I have a much wider view of things than just strictly an Assemblies of God view.

CHARISMA: Those books helped re-establish for much of the American church the reality of spiritual warfare, demonic strongholds and everyday angelic involvement—which had mostly been emphasized in charismatic circles. What prompted you to

write about such things?

PERETTI: I wrote those books when New Age occultism was picking up steam in the West. You can view them as almost an evangelical reaction to the cultural shift we were going through at that time. This is what the church was thinking and feeling, and this is the perspective they had when witchcraft and occultism were becoming mainstream belief systems in our culture.

CHARISMA: We recently highlighted Jonathan Cahn's *The Harbinger*, which, like your books, blends a narrative story with a prophetic message. What role do you think Christian fiction can play in presenting God's message to His church and to the world?

PERETTI: It's like any form of art—it should convey truth. Francis Schaeffer pointed out that it seems like it's the artist who gets wind of something before the collective culture does in terms of political or philosophical change. I think the Lord just grants artists and creative people insight. It's in the arts that you first see ideas taking root in a culture, and I think that's the role that Christian fiction is playing. Writers of Christian fiction most certainly have something to say—I always have. If someone were to examine my life, they could trace the books I've written and see the things that I was dealing with, what the Lord was talking to me about.

Each of my books reflects a truth at a heart level. You can buy a nonfiction book that spells it out with bullet points, or you can read a fiction book that flows deeper than you can sometimes articulate in a nonfiction work. It's a matter of the human experience that goes deeper than nonfiction.

Books touch people at a heart level. It's great to be able to read a book, to vicariously experience your struggle in a character's struggle and identify with how the Lord brings

them through a situation. It sheds light on your own situation. Every good story is that way.

CHARISMA: How do to hear from God, and how does that affect your writing?

PERETTI: I try to keep my life quiet. I take my time because usually the Lord takes awhile to help me get the full idea. I think about things and I write; then I think about them some more, and I always glean from the Word what I can find out about them. I talk to the Lord all the time and I write down the ideas, and then He brings other ideas to me—sometimes through people, just sharing ideas with friends. It's part of my Christian growth process. I try to make sure that whatever I'm writing reflects genuine lessons, growth and information that I've gotten from the Lord.

For my latest book, *Illusion*, I reflected on my 40 years of marriage and how that plays out as an allegory for Christ and His bride. I reflected on how I want to be like Christ, love my wife and give myself for her. I know the loyalty and the steadfastness of my bride is such a good reflection of how the church ought to be. Again, it's at a heart level. You write about something you experience that other people can relate to.

I want to hear from the Lord and write what I hear. I don't want to be concerned about what the market's buying today. People are always asking me, "When is there going to be another Darkness book?" There will be another Darkness book when God tells me to write another one. Why else should I write another one? Because people really want one? Because the market would be great? Because I could sell zillions of them? The only reason would be because God has laid the message upon my heart. I've got to stay in that world or I've lost my validity as a writer.

CHARISMA: Sounds a bit prophetic, doesn't it, in the purest

sense of God delivering a message through someone?

PERETTI: It's not like a spontaneous sort of prophecy like you get a word from the Lord or something. I'm just walking with the Lord and keeping my ears open. He's called me to be an exhorter. I get a picture sometimes of Ezekiel. The Lord picks him up by his hair, dangles him between heaven and earth and says, "Son of man, come here. I want to show you something."

Sometimes I feel like the Lord's picking me up by my hair and saying, "OK, Frank, I'm going to show you something. Take a look at this." It's no big, heavy, spontaneous occurrence. It's just a slow, steady learning process, but I'm always asking the Lord, "What's this all about?" And then He shows me more. It's a drawn out, step-by-step sort of prophetic ministry. I don't see myself as a prophet, but I do want to speak from the Lord to spread His truth and speak to His body.

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