

How a London Church Continues to Worship Through Tragedy

One day can change everything for a local church.

On Feb. 24, 2018, Tom and Sarah Eccleshall drove to Heathrow International Airport to pick up Jeremy Edwardson and Andrew Jackson. Tom was the worship leader at King's Cross Church (KXC), a charismatic church in London, England, and though Sarah, his wife, does not work at the church—she works for a humanitarian network—she frequently helps Tom with songwriting and worship.

KXC was about to produce its first-ever live worship album, and the church had recruited two of the top Christian worship producers to help them. Jeremy Edwardson—former lead singer for the Christian rock band The Myriad—had now shifted to working behind the scenes as an engineer and producer—and he stayed busy. Anyone who has ever listened to Bethel Music, Hillsong, Michael W. Smith, Switchfoot's Jon Foreman or Brian & Jenn Johnson has probably heard Edwardson's work. His friend and fellow passenger, Andrew Jackson, handled sound engineering and contributed music for artists like Matt Redman, John Mark McMillan, Jesus Culture, Kari Jobe, Kim Walker Smith, and Bryan and Katie Torwalt. Together, they were flying from Redding, California to London to help KXC record the album All Things New.

Up until the last minute before he had to catch his flight, Jackson was working on one of the songs for the album. He laid down a bass track, saved the finished demo, sent it in an email and then raced out the door to catch his flight on time.

Over 5,000 miles away, Tom and Sarah were waiting to pick them up after their flight.

"I remember Tom and I went to the airport, to meet Jeremy and

Andrew in person,” Sarah Eccleshall says. “Of course, we were really excited to finally meet them. We were standing in the arrivals, just waiting for them to come out. They never arrived. We got this phone call from John, who was their friend traveling with them, that Andrew had gone into cardiac arrest, and he was rushed off to hospital.”

Jackson died within hours. He was 29 years old.

Sarah Eccleshall and KXC Pastor Pete Hughes spoke to Charisma about Jackson’s story, shared how it changed their faith and their church’s faith, and tackled one of the hardest questions facing charismatic Christians: If God can and does do miracles today, how should believers respond when He doesn’t?

The Silence of the Night

Hughes and his wife, Bee, planted KXC in February 2010, in a part of London which Hughes describes as being “historically ... known for deprivation—the red-light district of London, if you like.” Around 2008, the area was redeveloped, and major technology companies like Google and Facebook moved in.

“So you’ve got this interesting context where you’ve got historic deprivation as well as an influx of wealth and business and retail,” Hughes says. “We’re ministering in an urban context where these different worlds are colliding, and we’re seeking to see God’s kingdom established right in the heart of that context.”

That fusion of worlds has led to an artistic spirit developing within the church. KXC has become a place of creative flourishing—and the talented musicians who call it home began to produce a number of original worship songs.

“We had all of these songs coming out of the church, and we really wanted to record them,” Eccleshall says. “We always say that the songs are the story and the soundtrack of the church. So we really wanted to get them out and hope that they will be

a blessing beyond KXC.

“... There’s this really prominent building in Kings Cross, Scala, [which] has a very interesting history. It used to be a porn cinema at one point. It was this weird kind of ‘gorilla zoo’ at one point. A lot of really interesting things had happened in this building, and now it’s one of the most prominent gig venues in the area. When I first met Tom, now my husband, who is the worship leader at KXC, he said to me he always had this dream of playing worship music in Scala. At the time, we almost laughed it off just because it seemed so impossible. Again, it was this really popular gig venue in central London. The idea of having a worship event in there seemed almost impossible. But as these songs were coming together, a door actually opened up where Scala was willing to host this worship night, which felt like a miracle in itself.”

Hughes believed the idea of bringing 500 people together to proclaim the name of Jesus in a place like Scala was something worth recording. They began to work out the logistics, and Tom invited Edwardson and Jackson to record the album—though he didn’t think they would say yes.

“Tom had been a big fan of Jeremy’s and Andrew Jackson’s work,” Eccleshall says. “So he had heard some of the albums they had produced in the past. We sent them an email explaining what KXC was, sent them some of the music and asked if they would be interested in producing the album. Again, it felt like an impossible request. These guys are based in the States and obviously seemed really busy. So when they wrote back and said, ‘Yes, we’re interested in producing the album,’ we were so excited.”

Five days before the live recording was scheduled to take place, Edwardson and Jackson—accompanied by a friend—flew from Redding, California, to London, England. A few hours later, Tom called Hughes to relay the bad news: Andrew had gone into cardiac arrest on the plane. Hughes remembers the call

vividly.

"I was ice skating with my kid at a church social," Hughes says. "But none of us knew quite what was happening or the extent of it, so I rushed across London and spent the next few hours in the hospital—just praying for a miracle that Andrew's life would be spared. We'd never met Jeremy or Andrew ... in person. So I guess the first time we met Jeremy was in this hospital, gathering outside an operating theater, praying for a miracle."

Eccleshall says the experience was—understandably—extremely painful for Edwardson. When the Eccleshalls eventually met up with him at the hospital, the meeting was far different than what they'd imagined.

"These guys were understandably completely in pieces," Eccleshall says. "Andrew's 29 and really healthy, so something like this seems crazy. Cardiac arrest at that age for a healthy guy? So we were waiting. We met them in the waiting room. And I remember just thinking, The only thing we can do is pray. And so that's what we did. I remember praying, 'We choose, God, in this moment, to have faith.' When you're in a situation with something potentially so horrible, you almost have to make a choice right away: How are you going to approach this? What are you going to do? We tried to just choose faith and press into that. We were there for a while. And eventually, the doctors came out."

Hughes remembers where he was when doctors delivered the news to Edwardson.

"I remember being with Jeremy, one of the moments the surgeon came out, and I sort of moved back just to give Jeremy some space," Hughes says. "So I was standing at maybe 5 to 10 meters' distance. And I could see that this final update was essentially the surgeon saying, 'We've done everything possible. You need to say goodbye.'"

Eccleshall says the group was in shock, but she thought of what she would want if she were in Jackson's position.

"I travel quite a bit for work," she says. "So I've spent quite a bit of time away from family in different countries. I remember thinking, If this was someone in my family, [if] I were an American based in the U.K., and I was experiencing this and my family wasn't there with me, what I would really want is a family of faith to gather around me. And I remember just thinking, We have to go for it. We have to pray and have faith and try and, you know, do everything that we can, because his family isn't here with him. So that's what we did."

Hughes told the surgeon that their group was from a local church and that—before saying goodbye—they wanted one final chance to gather around Jackson's body and pray for a miracle. The surgeon allowed them to do so, and 10 people gathered in the operating room. The group was not only composed of KXC members; Hughes says a couple originally from Bethel Church had heard about what happened and came to join them, as well as another couple from Catch the Fire.

"[We] laid hands on him, praying in tongues, singing worship music—music that we found out later that he had produced himself—and singing over him," Eccleshall says. "I remember looking over at the four heart surgeons in the room, who looked really uncomfortable with what was happening. But we didn't care. We needed to go for it in that moment."

As time passed and no miracle came, Hughes says the atmosphere of the room changed.

"You're aware that you're caught up in something tragic, but equally, as we're praying, we became fully aware of the nearness of the presence of God," Hughes says. "After like 10 to 15 minutes of praying for a miracle, I think we just knew that Andrew was actually departing to be with Jesus. And

therefore, our prayers transitioned from, 'Lord, bring Andrew back,' to 'Lord, we ask that you'd embrace Andrew now, and we commend his body into the hands of the Savior.' ... The only experience I've had that's almost close to that was when our first child was born. You were just aware that, 'Wow, this is like life coming into the world. This is a meeting point of heaven and earth. This feels like a holy and precious moment.' And despite the tragedy of Andrew's death, I think there's something of that—this is a holy moment, because someone's going to be with their Savior. There's a deep sense of grief and shock and tragedy, but equally, I've not really known the nearness of God quite like it."

At this point, Edwardson put the phone to Jackson's ear and called Jackson's parents to let them say goodbye to their son. (Eccleshall says the call was "one of the most difficult conversations I've ever overheard.") After Jackson died, the group stopped at a café to get a drink and collect their thoughts. Hughes remembers that everyone sat in silence.

"I think there [are] moments where you can't find the right words, and silence is a beautiful thing," Hughes says. "So we just sat with each other, with God, knowing that God was with us. And every so often, someone would say something, and there'd be moments of laughter. And then there'd be tears, and then a bit more silence."

At this point, Eccleshall says, the decision was made to cancel the worship night and let the American visitors travel back home to be with their family. Besides, the KXC group felt grieved and deflated; they were not exactly in the mood to worship. But when Hughes told Edwardson he could return to the U.S., Edwardson said he wanted to sleep on the decision. The next morning, at breakfast, he announced that he had "met with God that evening" and wanted to carry on with the live recording.

"He wanted to finish this for Andrew," Eccleshall says. "We

learned that he had had a friend pass away 10 years earlier, and he said he learned a lot from that experience. He didn't grieve his friend properly. 'And so,' he said, 'I really want to grieve Andrew properly. I want to do this right. I want to finish what Andrew had started.' That was what was motivating him to finish this album. So we went back into planning mode, getting ready for this worship night."

The Land of the Living

Hughes says many churches struggle to be places where people can authentically grieve, instead of feeling pressured to get over it or to repress their negative emotions.

"Often in the church, we're not as good at actually acknowledging moments of pain and deep disappointment," Hughes says. "But I think we need to develop a spirituality and a breadth of worship that enables us to celebrate all that's good, but also all the brokenness that we experience in day-to-day life. ... The church more recently has written songs that fall in a fairly narrow bandwidth, where we talk about the character and nature of God, which is amazing. But there aren't as many songs of confession or songs of lament, of intercession, of the moments where life is really hard and we're holding on to God but it's difficult. So I think one of the things we need to do is develop songs that enable people to actually worship in those moments.

"I think it means, as pastors, developing environments where we can name moments that are hard in life. Vulnerability in our teaching is a great example—we don't constantly present strength, but we recognize that there's a beauty about celebrating weakness and recognizing that God's power is made perfect in weakness. The more that pastors model that, the more those in the congregation realize, 'It's OK for me to be weak.' ... The more honesty there is, the more that a culture celebrates authenticity, I think the better we equip people to follow Jesus in the highs and lows of everyday life."

As Hughes himself discovered only two months later—when his father-in-law died suddenly—grief is a slow journey that cannot be rushed. But God will patiently walk alongside you through the entire ordeal. And he says that reality is more important than any theological questions about why God heals some people but does not heal others.

“I think [grieving] people do raise big theological questions,” Hughes says. “But often behind the big theological questions isn’t ‘Please give me a simple answer.’ The real question underneath the theological question is ‘Can you be with me? Because I’m really hurting right now, and I need to know that God’s with me, and your presence often signifies the presence of God in this moment.’ I think there is a moment to speak in with theological truth about the now and the not yet of the kingdom of God. But we need to be with people when life hurts, and journey with them slowly.”

It’s a reality Eccleshall has also observed firsthand.

“My grandma was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis,” Eccleshall says. “So my early understanding of faith and prayer was praying for her healing. She was completely paralyzed from the neck down and lived a really painful, uncomfortable life. She was also an amazing woman of faith. As a child, my prayer every single day was, ‘God, heal Grandma.’ And He never did. Amazingly, though, I saw God step into her life in different ways. Because she was paralyzed, she had caregivers coming and taking care of her every day, and they saw her faith and her joy, and every single one of her caregivers actually ended up meeting Jesus through her, and so did their families. In some sense, I found it really frustrating and really heartbreaking that my grandma was never healed, because I believe the Lord could do that. But at the same time, I saw that the Lord was present.”

Eccleshall says embracing the messiness and uncertainty of faith is just part of following God on this side of eternity.

“For me, I guess faith is being able to hold on to these tensions,” she says. “Like, ‘Yes, I believe that God heals,’ and ‘Yes, I see that that doesn’t always happen.’ But I’m willing to hold on to both of those things. And it is a tension, and it’s messy, but that’s what faith is to me. It’s choosing to believe that God will heal, even though we haven’t always seen that. I think faith is a choice. There are good days and bad days, though. I have moments where I do feel really discouraged and ask God questions. ... [When people] don’t see that healing, we need to give them the space to ask those questions and to struggle through those things. I think those pat answers of ‘Pray harder next time’ or ‘God can heal’ are not good enough. As a church, we really need to provide people with the space to wrestle with those things. Faith is filled for me with so many different tensions, and that’s OK. I don’t have a faith that’s particularly black-and-white. It’s gray, and it’s sometimes complicated. And that’s all right, because life is, right?”

As the worship event drew closer, Hughes received news that Jackson’s parents had made a last-minute decision to fly to London and attend the event.

“Andrew had given himself to worshipping Jesus, but also recording songs that enable people—whether in congregational settings or in their car—to encounter Jesus,” Hughes says. “And essentially, they thought, Well, we want to be at the last project. This is what Andrew was giving himself to.”

At Scala that night, Hughes addressed the crowd honestly from the beginning, telling them: “A lot of these songs are just celebrating the goodness of God, and we want to do that because His character remains the same yesterday, today and forevermore. But equally, we want to recognize that we’re carrying a lot of disappointment. And what we really need to do in this moment is to bring that pain and disappointment to God as a gift, as an act of worship.”

“Worship is a choice,” Eccleshall says. “You don’t often get to choose what happens to you. You know, grief happens, and we don’t choose that. But we do have a choice when it comes to what we do with that grief. Do we curl up into a ball and hide away, or do we worship? One song became a bit of an anthem of the week for us. ‘With Me’—written by Rich and Lydia Dicas, who are part of our church—wrote it after their brother passed away.”

In fact, Hughes says, “With Me (David’s Song)” was the song Jackson recorded a bass track for immediately before his flight to London—making it the last song he ever worked on. The song’s lyrics declare the choice to worship in the middle of grief: “When sorrow has surrounded and I cannot understand, I reach out in the doubting and hold onto Your hand/ ... I will dance in the land of the living/ I will shout and I’ll never stop singing/ You are good and Your love endures forever.”

“As we sang that song out in Scala, our hands in the air, I really felt like a sense of victory in that moment,” Eccleshall says. “It felt like the worst of the world had come at us. And you know, the worst of the world came against Jesus, but He rose again. And it felt like we were kind of able to tap into that and declare, ‘Death is not the end.’”

Hughes remembers that during the final refrain of this song, he looked around the room and saw something incredible.

“I looked up onto the balcony, and Andrew’s mom and dad had been up there,” Hughes says. “Andrew’s mom had been lying down for most of the time. She was feeling exhausted from the flight. You know, she was still in shock and trauma. But for that final refrain, she stood to her feet, and with her hands in the air, she was singing and declaring the goodness of God in a moment of turmoil.

“And I just remember thinking, *That’s a picture of true worship. Because whatever we’re going through, whatever our*

circumstances, she knows that God's character is constant. That His love endures forever. And she's celebrating the character and goodness of God right now. The circumstances didn't change. She was still hurting and in deep, deep grief. But for me, it was a picture of beautiful worship. And I'll honestly never ever forget it."

Hughes challenges all believers to embody that spirit of true worship—in the midst of unimaginable hardship—in their everyday relationship with God and others.

"As a community, we've been learning what it looks like to celebrate life, but also just to slow down and to support one another when life is tough," he says. "Because those moments of pain? They're defining moments. They're formative moments. And if we turn to Jesus in those moments, there's an unbelievable opportunity to become like Him, as He begins to redeem our pain and use that pain for His glory."

READ MORE: Watch a mini-documentary about the events detailed in this article, including interviews with Andrew Jackson's parents and Jeremy Edwardson, at [.](#)

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Prophetic Dream Helps Save Woman From Human Trafficking

Just because a dream is frightening doesn't mean it's not from God. When the Lord established His covenant with Abram, the Bible says that as deep sleep came upon the patriarch, "terror and a great darkness fell upon him" as well (Gen. 15:12b). Likewise, when Jacob awoke from his dream of the heavenly ladder, he, too, was afraid (Gen. 28:17).

Obviously those dream encounters, scary as they may have been, were most certainly from God. While we may be tempted to dismiss a dark dream, Scripture demonstrates that God can speak through all our dreams, even the "bad" ones. We don't want to let one of His words fall to the ground; therefore we purpose to honor our visions of the night as revelation from heaven and pray accordingly (see Num. 12:6 and Acts 2:17).

I received the following dramatic testimony from Debbie Keever. Her husband, Eddie, had a terrifying dream, but they recognized God was speaking through the nightmare to warn them.

They honored the dream as a heavenly message and prayed for supernatural protection and safety for their daughter. What happened next is extraordinary as the answer to their prayers unfolded in ways neither of them ever expected.

A Dream of Murder

I'll let Debbie share their amazing story with you in her own words:

My dreams since watching your free video event last September

have been incredible! I now keep a dream journal and my husband, Eddie, has been paying more attention to his dreams as well. I was sharing with him some of the things I was learning from your teaching online, and he then told me about a dream he had that week regarding our 18-year-old daughter Allison, who is a freshman at North Carolina State.

He said in the dream they were together when a car pulls up with strangers in it. She gets in the car. He has a bad feeling, so he also gets into the car. They ride to an old house. They all go inside when my husband realizes there is an evil presence there.

There are women who are trying to kill them. He said the house has a dumbwaiter that people who had been previously murdered were being shoved into. He knew these evil women were about to do the same to him and Allison, so he grabbed a piece of broken glass and began fighting them. He said he killed the evil women so they were able to survive. That was the end of the dream.

I was deeply disturbed about his dream and prayed to the Lord saying, 'I don't know what that means, Lord Jesus, but You do. Please protect Allison from the enemy this day.'

What happened next is reality. My daughter called me about midday on a Monday to tell me about a girl she met at NC State at some parties and events she'd attended since school began in the fall. This young woman's name was Sara Farrell. but she was going by Arabella Ferrell. She claimed to be a freshman at State and was living off campus.

My daughter said about a month prior they scheduled to meet for lunch but the plans fell through. Turns out this girl was being sought by police for being involved with human trafficking. She was lying about being a student at State and everything else. Allison said all of Arabella/Sara's social media info was deleted that day. I was in tears at the

realization of the timing and how the Lord protected Allison from a potentially horrendous situation! Praise Jesus!

Charity, there have been several more unrelated dreams I've had that the Lord has sent me as warnings in recent days and months that have been astounding! All I have to say is thank you for the teaching you've shared online that God has used to open my understanding to more of His mysterious ways! My life is definitely richer in ways money cannot buy!" –Debbie, Eddie and Allison Keever

God's Design for Dreams

Praise God for His revelation through all our dreams—even the “bad” ones! It is also significant to note that although Eddie had the dream earlier, it wasn't until Debbie heeded the warning in the dream and prayed accordingly for safety that then the enemy's plans were foiled. The evil plot was exposed in the dream, and as the dream was honored, the plans became exposed in waking life as well. Once Debbie prayed, God answered, which demonstrates the key role and strategic partnership we have with heaven in releasing miracles into our world.

A beautiful passage found in the Old Testament can help us reframe dreams to see them from God's perspective. Where do dreams come from? Why do we have them? We see a powerful summary of our heavenly Father's design for dreams and how He intends to use them in our lives in the book of Job.

“Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction, that He may turn man aside *from his* conduct, and keep man from pride; He keeps back his soul from the pit and his life from passing over into Sheol. ... Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the

light of life" (Job 33:14-18; 29-30, NASB).

Thank You, Father God, that while we are sleeping, You are speaking. Thank You that You instruct us and that You save us from the pit of destruction. Thank You, Father, that You faithfully guard and protect us. Thank You that You enlighten us with the light of life through our dreams, our visions of the night! {eoa}

Charity Virkler Kayembe has a doctorate in biblical studies, is passionate about the sacred supernatural and writes about the unfolding adventure that is walking by the Spirit on her blog at [. She has been featured on Sid Roth's It's Supernatural!, Cornerstone TV, Charisma magazine and The Elijah List. Charity is the co-author of four books, including Hearing God Through Your Dreams, Unleashing Healing Power Through Spirit-Born Emotions and Everyday Angels.](#)

How We Must Respond When Governors Violate Christians' First Amendment Rights

Note: In my podcast today with Mat Staver, we discuss the very disturbing way some elected officials are violating our religious First Amendment rights during this COVID-19 pandemic and what it means for the future of America. Mat also shares what each of us can do about it. In our podcast, Mat discusses a particular case Liberty Counsel is working on involving Lighthouse Fellowship Church. Here is the press release, which

first appeared on , on this case:

Lighthouse Fellowship Church on Chincoteague Island has filed its reply legal memorandum seeking an emergency motion for injunction pending appeal in the federal lawsuit against Governor Ralph Northam for violating the religious freedom of churchgoers on Palm Sunday. Liberty Counsel represents the church.

Police served a summons to Pastor Wilson for holding a church service with 16 people spaced far apart in a sanctuary that is rated for 293 people. The charge is violating Virginia Governor Northam's COVID Order 55 with a penalty up to a year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine.

On April 5, before the service on Palm Sunday, a local police officer entered the church. He gave no introduction and did not ask for the pastor. He abruptly said they could not have more than 10 people spaced 6 feet apart. Then, after the service, two police officers entered the church in full mask and gloves and asked to speak with the pastor. They issued him a summons and informed him that if he had service on Easter, all attending would get the same summons.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a Statement of Interest and Vice President Pence said he "strongly agrees" with the DOJ filing in support of the church. "Even in the midst of a national emergency, every American enjoys our cherished liberties, including the freedom of religion," Pence said on *The Brian Kilmeade Show* on Fox News Radio.

Lighthouse Fellowship Church helps keep people free of drug addiction, brokenness, mental illness, poverty and prostitution. The church, which does not have internet, provides physical, emotional and spiritual services to the community. Many of the members do not have driver's licenses and are dependent on the church family for rides to get food, supplies and go to medical appointments and personal care

services like haircuts. Many attendees are on limited income obtained from government assistance—whether disability or Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid, and the church has helped various members with electric or gas bills, rent, groceries and physical labor. The church also offers a blanket ministry, prayer ministry, discipleship programs and counseling services.

Liberty Counsel Founder and Chairman Mat Staver said, “We must balance the First Amendment with protecting the health and welfare of people, but picking an arbitrary number of 10 people for every church is not the answer. Governor Ralph Northam has clearly discriminated against Lighthouse Fellowship Church, which does not have internet and cannot flip a switch to broadcast online. Pastor Wilson protected the health and safety of the 16 people. Yet because the church had six more people than the 10 allowed by the governor, the pastor is being criminally charged. This unequal treatment of churches is insane.”

Verified by God

Pastor Michael Todd leads one of the fastest-growing churches in the country, but the vast majority of his audience isn't coming to the church building. Todd, the 33-year old Pentecostal lead pastor of Transformation Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, says in any given week, his church gets roughly 5,000 people in the building—and more than 35,000 online. When fewer than 1 in 8 of your churchgoers actually go to your church, what does that mean for pastors? Long before coronavirus ever forced churches to shift services online, Todd believes the digital age changed what it means to be a

pastor.

“The first thing you have to know is the internet has changed everything,” Todd says. “And [in some ways], the last thing it has touched is the church—because we want to keep our traditions. I really do believe the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples, but I don’t think we could have done that in health until now, with the internet. There’s no way I could be a good father and a good husband and all this other stuff, and now also go into the world and make disciples. Even if you’re [focusing] only on your house and your neighborhood, that’s still a huge undertaking. But I believe God’s given us the internet ... for great good.”

But Todd says he has no illusions that his church’s success can be attributed to savvy marketing, great technological design or his own inspired preaching. In fact, he says his entire testimony served as a test of obedience: Was he willing to obey God even when it didn’t make sense or match his own life plans?

Todd chose to obey—and God blessed his ministry beyond his wildest expectations. He spoke to Charisma about his testimony, why the next generation has latched onto his approach to preaching the gospel and how pastoral responsibilities are shifting in the internet age.

Promotion and Favor

Todd never wanted to be a pastor. In fact, as a teenager, he wasn’t even sure he wanted to be a Christian. Though he grew up in a Christian home, he says he never had an authentic relationship with God until his late teenage years. Before then, he says he was primarily raised and discipled by BET and MTV. The church didn’t have answers for the problems he and his peers were going through.

“I messed up so much because I didn’t have an example,” Todd says. “The only rule we were given was, ‘Don’t have sex before

you get married.' Well, what happens when you've done that? What happens when the locker room introduced you to pornography? ... The church has been so silent about that. In recent years, they've started talking about it, but even then, the church is so PG when our middle school locker rooms are R-rated and X-rated. ... So what ends up happening is we're trying to spend the rest of our lives undoing what was presented first."

That feeling of being failed by the church as a teenager is part of why Todd says he's so passionate about helping teenagers and young adults today. He says he wishes he'd had a relatable, young mentor like himself when he was struggling with his faith.

Instead, Todd says what drew him back into relationship with the Lord was his love of music. He had played drums since childhood, and the church worship team became his primary musical outlet. During high school, he began pursuing music full time and, after graduating, started his own production company and became a music producer. During that season, he flew around the country to events and studios to produce music for clients.

One of those gigs took him to Greenwood Christian Center (GCC) in his hometown of Tulsa in 2008. He knew the pastor there, who asked him to run sound for a conference. After he did a good job, the pastor asked him to keep running sound at the church. Later, the pastor noticed his musical talent and transitioned him to becoming the worship leader.

At this time, Todd was splitting his time between GCC and serving at his parents' small church plant in the same city, called Spirit and Truth Praise and Worship Center. His involvement at his parents' church began after his mother called him on the phone and informed him, "God told me you're supposed to do something with the youth of this church." Todd tried to politely refuse—even suggesting that maybe she had

misheard God, who meant to use one of her other sons. After all, Todd had never preached or taught from the Bible. But his mom would not be swayed. The next week, Todd became the youth pastor of his parents' church. There were only seven youth present: three of his brothers, three godbrothers and godsisters, and one other person. (The church itself had only 15 members.) Todd called the ministry "S0 FLY," an acronym for "Sold Out Free Life Youth."

"I had never prepared a message or done anything like that," Todd says. "But God told me four things before I walked in there. He said, 'Be real. Tell on yourself. Don't judge them. And love them first.' And that was my instructional guide into ministry."

Six months later, Todd says S0 FLY had 150 young adults attending weekly. S0 FLY had no flashy sound system or game systems. The youth group was 150 young people "literally in a room in a circle," Todd says.

Today, he recognizes it was a spiritual phenomenon, but at the time, he says he didn't take it that seriously. He didn't even study or prepare message notes; he just showed up every week planning to share what was going on in his life, talk about the Bible and try to relate to the kids. He says he focused on the four tenets God taught him before his first night of S0 FLY. That meant confessing his own sins to the group at times—including pornography addiction and emotional manipulation—and sharing how Jesus personally transformed him every day. He believes that raw, uncomfortable honesty is the real reason young people responded to him.

"I think people are drawn to authenticity," Todd says. "We have a saying around here: 'It's not about perfection; it's about progression.' So that gives people license to mess up and be like, 'It's my bad. I messed up, but I'm going to get better.' And I think hearing that from somebody who holds the office of a pastor—when most pastors [project perfection]—is

just refreshing to people. ... How many pastors or small group leaders actually confess what they've done—not in an ethereal story or in an 'I know a guy' story? That's how the Bible tells us we overcome. Yes, it's by the blood of the Lamb—that's what God did and what Jesus did on the cross—but then by the words of our testimony. And I think that's what's missing today."

Todd says he continued to lead S0 FLY for another year, until about 250 young people were coming every week in 2010. During that time, Todd started to compare the work he was doing at GCC with the work he was doing at his parents' church. He believed Bishop Gary McIntosh, GCC's founding pastor, needed more pastoral help, while he thought his evangelistic, charismatic parents could use some structure—and then he realized the two churches should team up and become one. Though there was initial resistance, over the course of three months, both sides became open to it, and eventually Todd's parents' church merged into GCC. And when it did, S0 FLY grew even bigger.

"It got up to about 900 young people in summer 2011," he says. "We still had no real leadership team—it was just me, my new wife [Natalie] and my godsister. Then I preached a message on purity and cut the thing in half, to about 400 or 500 young people. For about three years, that's where I learned. I had no budget. We had to raise a leadership team of 12. We did internships. I had to teach the young people how to give because we had no budget, and the church had just gone through a hard financial season."

Todd served faithfully in the youth ministry, but his fruitfulness did not evade McIntosh's eye. He met with Todd in 2013 and told him he wanted Todd to help him bring the S0 FLY culture to the Sunday morning crowd. At 25, Todd was named the executive pastor of the church, and McIntosh mentored Todd in leadership, bringing him to all the board and financial meetings, letting him program services and design sermon

series. Then McIntosh had a heart attack that sidelined him completely for eight months—and Todd was the only one at the church who knew how to do McIntosh's job.

"For eight months, I preached four different sermons to different groups of people every week," Todd says. "On Sunday morning, I was preaching to a mostly traditional Pentecostal church. On Sunday night, I was preaching to a bunch of youth who were just trying to explore God and see if they wanted to be saved. On Wednesday night, I was preaching to the people who wanted to go deep in God—so you had to bring some outlandish revelation. And then on Saturday, I was teaching at a leadership internship. I did it for eight months, and it about killed me."

When the pastor returned, he started to take back some of his usual workload, and they split the sermon load 50/50. But soon Todd felt a sense of stagnation. He started to grow concerned that GCC lacked a vision for the future and wondered if God was calling him away from ministry and back into music producing. After all, he'd never intended to be a pastor long term. He went to meet with McIntosh and told him his season had come to an end. McIntosh disagreed.

"I don't have the vision for the next season," McIntosh told him. "I believe you do."

Todd disagreed: "I literally told him verbatim, 'I don't think I could be a pastor to a church. I don't even like people that much.'"

"I've seen you do it," McIntosh said. "I've watched it over the past two years. You raised up a leadership team of 12 people who committed three years of their life to this and never got a dime. You taught the hardest demographic in church—which is young people—to give, and by the end of your time [at SO FLY], the youth were giving \$9,000 to \$10,000 a month. We were able to hire a youth coordinator off of what

they were giving.”

As McIntosh chronicled all of Todd’s achievements, Todd realized God had been training and equipping him for years to serve as Transformation Church’s next pastor. He was still hesitant, but when McIntosh told him it would be a five-year leadership transition, Todd agreed. He thought, That will give me time to go to seminary or college and to learn some more stuff.

Shortly after that, in September 2014, McIntosh announced to the congregation that Todd would assume the lead pastor position in one year. Todd was flabbergasted. But that didn’t actually happen. Instead, Todd became the lead pastor on Feb. 1, 2015. It wasn’t the transition he’d imagined or planned. But Todd says God was in it.

“All I can tell you is that there was a supernatural grace that came over my life,” Todd says. “God put me in rooms and in relationships with the right people who could give me what I needed when I needed it. We’ve just been faithful in stewarding Transformation Church. When I took over, we started in a converted grocery store with 350 people and a very small budget. Since then, God has expanded our influence to be able to help a lot of people see transformation in Christ. So we’re just grateful, and we’re super humbled.”

For the rest of this story, read the June-July issue of *Charisma* magazine.

READ MORE: To watch the original sermon that made Todd go viral, visit .

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the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of believers around the world. If you are thirsty for more of God's presence and His Holy Spirit, subscribe to CHARISMA and join a family of believers that choose to live life in the Spirit. [CLICK HERE](#) for a special offer.

Pastor: God Is Not Absent in Your Pain

Pastor Erwin McManus says there are many examples in the Bible of godly men and women walking with Jesus through pain. Christ doesn't promise us a life without pain on earth—in fact, He dealt with a lot of mocking and suffering, especially toward the end of His life. But He does promise to give us the strength to move forward.

“We hope that maybe if we could turn to God, that God would give us a path of life that would allow us to go around pain or to avoid the deep wounds that life can bring,” McManus says. “Yet, if you pay attention to it—not only in the overarching story of the Scriptures, but also in the story of Jesus—we realize God has never promised us a way out of pain. But He does, actually, promise us a way through pain. ...

“Peace never comes because we've abdicated responsibility for our lives. Peace only comes when we decide it is worth fighting for. So when you stand in your pain, this is when you are in the heat of the battle. It's when you stand in your pain that you realize you're stronger than you know. ... When you're standing in your pain, that's the moment you can

realize that God is with you.”

To listen to the entire sermon titled “The Power of Resilience,” [click here](#).

Man Sets Out to Share Jesus With 1 Million Muslims

“Jesus appears to them all the time through visions, dreams and miracles. Sometimes I feel these days if you want to see Jesus, you have to be a Muslim. It’s almost like Jesus is looking at the rest of the world, saying, ‘Look at Me. I love them. I’m healing them, I’m appearing to them. Will you love them with Me?’”

This is the invitation of Hormoz Shariat, head of Iran Alive Ministries, who recently sat down with The Christian Post to share how God is working in the country of Iran, and in the Muslim community. Iran is closed to Christianity; according to Iran Alive Ministries, there are no above-ground Christian churches. However, Christianity is fervently spreading throughout the country, bringing hope and freedom to its people. Shariat’s media ministry is a key tool for Iranian Muslims to encounter the gospel message.

Shariat grew up in the Muslim faith in Iran and moved to the U.S. in 1979 to pursue doctoral studies in artificial intelligence. During that time he began what he refers to as a time of “spiritual questioning.” On a search to discover if God is “really there” he dove into studying the Quran, and after completing it, found it “didn’t add anything” to him.

However, he felt compelled to continue studying, despite feeling as though he wouldn't discover anything new. He picked up the Bible, and while reading the book of Matthew, encountered a different Jesus than the one taught about through Islam.

A friend invited Shariat to a church in Los Angeles where he heard the gospel preached and he committed his life to Jesus. Shortly thereafter God called him to share the gospel message with other Muslims.

He began by planting a church in San Jose, California, where he saw hundreds of Muslims convert to Christianity. However, his heart burned to see more Muslims hear the Good News of Jesus, so in 2001 Iran Alive Ministries was founded, utilizing satellite television to broadcast the message of Jesus.

Shariat's goal was to reach 1 million Muslims with the gospel. He states, "By God's grace, through media, I have passed this number multiple times." He points out many who follow Islam are attracted to Christianity because it is a faith based on love.

The government of Iran has made it incredibly difficult for Iran Alive Ministries' message to be heard. They have blocked their website and phone lines, making it challenging for those in the country to connect for prayer or more information; however, Shariat reports " ... We have the names of over 37,000 people who have received Christ, and we know there are several hundred thousand who have made decisions but haven't been able to tell us."

Those who are able to contact IAM have reported experiencing God through dreams, visions and miraculous events.

God is moving powerfully in the country of Iran. IAM's website shares this statistic: "According to the latest release of the Operation World manual, Iran has the fastest growing Evangelical population in the entire world! This is not

because it has grown from ten people to hundreds of people, but because it has exploded from hundreds of Persians to hundreds of thousands of Persians and continues to grow exponentially. At a 19.6 percent growth rate, the Evangelical population is doubling every four years!"

Shariat has a deep passion to see Muslims come to Jesus, and Iran to become a Christian nation. He invites other believers into his mission: "Let's share the gospel with Iranian Muslims. Let's disciple a nation together. Iran is such fertile ground. Whatever you invest, you see much return. God is radically transforming an entire nation." {eo}

LightWorkers' mission is to create engaging, uplifting and inspirational content that breaks through the clutter, building a community of sharing and igniting a movement in the real world that motivates people to celebrate and share the good all around them. Visit .

Instances of Christian Persecution in US Are Increasing

Who would have thought Christians would be persecuted in the United States, a nation that was founded largely on Christian principles?

Stephen Strang, CEO of Charisma Media, says that although instances of persecution against Christians in the nation are still not common, they are increasing. This should concern believers across the country.

“There are a lot of examples,” he says on *The Jim Bakker Show*. “Thankfully, they’re still fairly rare just in the total number in the country, but the thing is, they’re increasing. If we don’t stand up to it, they’re going to come and it’s going to be more and more and more. So it’s very important that we stand up to people who really oppose the gospel.”

Watch the clip to learn more.

How Are Angels Involved in End-Times Evangelism?

I will admit that this “safer at home” quarantine during the current COVID-19 crisis is getting old.

Multiple times each day, even though I feel fine, doctors, scientists and newscasters are reminding me that I’m in the “vulnerable” senior-age-group! As I write, we’re at over seven weeks of home-detention and still counting.

This crisis and these weeks have caused me to reflect in a new way on the end times, the brevity of this life and the biblical hope of eternal life to come. Whether this epidemic is part of the biblical “last days” or not, it certainly has been the last days for scores of thousands of virus victims in our country alone. How many were without the hope of heaven?

A Final Harvest Awaits

John the revelator tells us that at the last days and the end of time, just before the final harvest of the remaining righteous souls is reaped, a final effort of evangelism is to be undertaken by angels (Rev. 14:6-8, 14-16).

First, an angel is said to proclaim the “everlasting gospel,” which focuses on:

–Preaching to all humans who remain on earth, “to every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

–Proclaiming: “Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7b).

–Pleading for all people to “worship Him” as Creator, for He “made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev. 7:14c).

It seems to me that this angelic evangelistic-effort completes and fulfills Jesus’ prediction that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). This simple message is to be a life-changing and future transforming experience for all remaining humanity.

God’s initial and ultimate intention is that He would receive worship for His “worth-ship” and praise from the people He has created and sustains: Revelation 4:11 (MEV) proclaims:

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

Bringing People to our Creator God

That initial divine intention remains as mankind’s obligation. Our “Good News” proclamations are insufficient and incomplete if they do not bring people to our “faithful Creator” (1 Pet. 4:19) and to that intended worship experience and expression.

Two reasons are stated for that needed response: the reality of God’s eternal judgment and the responsibility of His creation. Sin dishonors God and contradicts His holy, moral character. It must ultimately be punished. Paul told the Romans that the ancient, unrighteous mankind “suppress(ed) the

truth,” which would have required them to repent and serve the living God, even by faith (1:17-18).

Today, such saving faith only comes through hearing and believing the Bible’s message about Jesus, the Jewish Messiah and the Gentiles’ Savior (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 1:16; 10:14-17). Evidence of God’s existence and power can be seen in the created world and reflected in our inner consciences. Both should motivate everyone to repent and worship this Creator God.

Paul explained to the Romans that even the ancient neighbors of Noah (“since the creation of the world”) “knew God,” in this universal, existential way, but were not thankful to Him nor did they worship Him. Consequently, they and we “are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20-21). The closing verses of this revealing chapter (verses 29-32) describe a society—like our own, today—totally rejecting moral purity and rebelling against God, our Creator and sustainer.

Perhaps Eugene Peterson makes it clearer to us in The Message paraphrase:

Since they didn’t bother to acknowledge God, God quit bothering them and let them run loose. And then all hell broke loose: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious backstabbing. They made life hell on earth with their envy, wanton killing, bickering, and cheating. Look at them: mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers. Bullies, swaggerers, insufferable windbags! They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. They ditch their parents when they get in the way. Stupid, slimy, cruel, cold-blooded. And it’s not as if they don’t know better. They know perfectly well they’re spitting in God’s face. And they don’t care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best (Rom. 1:28-32, MSG).

Only What’s Done for Christ Will Last

Those of that ancient world may have been acclaimed by their own for their gross sins but those of us, in this age, who have righteously run our race and are finishing our destiny for this life before God, the Bible assures us that our “labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58b). Nothing done for Him will be overlooked. We shall be rewarded in this life and the life to come!

Death, for believers, either now or at the “harvest” or “gathering” at the end of time, is to be a blessing, as we are released to receive two precious promises, as shared by John in Revelation 14:12-13:

1. Eternal Rest: No more tears, death, sorrow, crying nor pain (Rev. 21:1-7).
2. Eternal Rewards: We become jewels in His crown. We will be rewarded according to our own labors. Our rewards will be tested and purified by fire, as an inheritance worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we serve (Mal. 3:17; 1 Cor. 3:5-17; 15:58; Col. 3:24).

May “we who are alive and remain” until the harvest of the righteous (1 Thess. 4:17-18; Rev. 14:12-16) recommit—even now—to persistently keeping the commandment of Jesus (Rev. 3:10) and of God, His Father (Rev. 12:17), patiently enduring trials and tribulation (Luke 21:16-19;) and boldly testifying of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:11, 13:10, 14:12), even “to the end” (Matt. 24:13, Mark 13:13).

In so doing, we can claim Paul’s prayer that our God will: “count you worthy of this calling and with power fulfill all your good desires and works done by faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:11b-12).

May all the saints say, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20b). {eoa}

Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of *The Church on The Way*, the Van Nuys, California Foursquare Church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog at and frequent articles for digital and print platforms. Gary and his wife live in Southern California and have two married daughters and five grandchildren.

Farsi-Language Gospel TV Broadcast Launches in Iran as Spiritual Hunger Rises Higher Than Ever

Dr. Michael Youssef, founder and president of Leading The Way Ministries, has launched a new Farsi-language version of his *Leading The Way* television program to reach audiences in Iran. The daily, 30-minute program appears on the Nejat television platform.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is home to more than 84 million people and is a predominately Shia Muslim country that remains hostile to Christianity. The 800,000 Christians in the nation face persecution by their government. Church services and evangelism are illegal activities punishable by imprisonment and even death.

Despite all this, Dr. Youssef says there is greater spiritual hunger in Iran than ever.

“That’s why this Farsi-language broadcast is an essential part of our outreach to Muslims there and abroad,” Youssef remarks.

“By partnering with Nejat TV, we will be able to tell millions of Muslim men, women and children about a God who loves them and wants to have a relationship with them.”

Leading The Way's regional field teams are available to respond to viewers who have questions about Dr. Youssef's message or Christianity in general. *Leading The Way* field teams are a crucial spiritual lifeline, and they report speaking with viewers who say Jesus appeared to them in dreams, with others asking for help connecting to other Christians.

“Our field teams are the church for those who have none,” says Youssef. “For many viewers in Islamic countries with limited access to the gospel, our field teams are sometimes the first Christian they have ever talked to about Jesus and the only means for them to get answers to their questions.”

Leading The Way's partnership with Nejat TV expands its own far-reaching broadcasting capabilities throughout the Middle East through The Kingdom SAT, a satellite TV channel founded by Dr. Youssef that reaches 195 million Arabic-speaking homes in the Arab world.

Watch Dr. Youssef's daily programs on Nejat TV and find more information on the network [here](#).

Learn more about Dr. Youssef's Muslim World Outreach and support its mission [here](#).

Why Signs and Wonders Are Not

Enough

Through the years I have found that the charismatic church greatly limits the purpose for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is often limited to what took place on the day of Pentecost, thereby limiting the work of the Holy Spirit to enable one to preach in power and perform signs and wonders. Unfortunately, many churches and networks build their whole movement on just signs, operations of the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

However, when we unpack the implications of Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you," we realize that the Acts narrative illustrates much more than just signs and wonders. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is also to give us wisdom to practically carry out and implement the will of God on the earth. One of the greatest tragedies in the global Pentecostal church is the lack of knowledge of the applied Word of God through wisdom and strategic implementation. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to know how to navigate the troubled waters during this present crisis!

My friend, Jeff Reed, inspired me to write this article with his important encyclical on global Pentecostalism (see).

First of all, one of the manifestations of the Spirit is the word (or fragment) of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8). The word of wisdom is not just a prophecy, or healing and miracles. The gift of wisdom is broader and has to do with making prudent decisions for the future. This supernatural gift is connected to problem-solving ability. Unfortunately, most Christians think the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost only to grant us the power to move in miracles and speak in tongues (Acts 1:8). However, a closer look at how the church walked out in the power of the Spirit in the Acts narrative illustrates that His power was also manifested through supernatural wisdom and strategies.

7 Examples of the Spirit of Wisdom and Strategy in the Book of Acts

1. Wisdom and strategy are illustrated through the boldness of speech. Peter and the apostles demonstrated this in spite of the fact they lacked traditional Jewish training. Acts 4:13 says: "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were illiterate and uneducated men, they marveled. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Hence, they walked with Jesus and were empowered by His Spirit, which produced wisdom inside of them.

2. Acts 6 illustrates the challenge of Grecian widows being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Acts 6:1-4 says:

Now in those days, as the disciples were multiplied, there was murmuring among the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were overlooked in the daily distribution. So the twelve called the multitude of disciples together and said, "It is not reasonable for us to leave the word of God and serve tables. Brothers, look among yourselves for seven men who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over this duty. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Thus, the Spirit of God granted wisdom to Peter and the apostles to know how to deal with ethnic inequality, which resulted in an inequitable distribution of food. In Acts, we find that every challenge was an opportunity for God to solve a problem and bring the church to another level of effectiveness. The result of solving this problem was significant! Acts 6:7 says, "So the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples grew rapidly in Jerusalem, and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Never focus on the problems you face; focus on receiving the solutions. With every problem there is an opportunity for you to go to another level of maturity and responsibility. In life, people are usually remunerated commensurate to the level of problems they solve.

3. The wisdom of the Spirit came upon Stephen as he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 6:8-10 says, "Now Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then some men rose with Stephen. But they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke." This passage connects faith, power and wisdom together as a mark of being Spirit-filled.

4. The wisdom of the Spirit was demonstrated through the Antioch elders as they heard from the Spirit to release Paul and Barnabus as apostles to the Gentile world.

Acts 13:1-4 says the following:

"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers... As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit..."

When the leaders of the early church created space for God to speak to them through fasting, worship and prayer, the strategy for the first missionary movement was imparted to them.

5. The first general council of the apostles discerned God's mind through the Spirit. The following passage is the conclusion of the first-ever general council of the church. This council was called in order to determine the standing of non-Jews, who expressed faith in the

Messiah. The question being settled was the basis for the books of Galatians and Hebrews. They address why Gentile believers did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. Acts 15:28-29 says as follows:

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to put on you no greater burden than these necessary things: Abstain from food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from strangled animals, and from blood. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Thus, this illustrates how the apostles and elders spent considerable time in dialogue so they could discern the mind of God through the Spirit. This is why they ended this important council by saying, "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit." If it weren't for the strategic mind of the Spirit being manifested to the early church, then the gospel would have been mixed with required adherence to the ceremonial laws of Moses.

6. The Spirit guided Paul through his missionary endeavors.

Acts 16:6-10 shows how the Holy Spirit led Paul and forbade him from going into certain parts of the world when on his missionary journey. It shows that the Spirit of God would not allow Paul to prematurely preach in the province of Asia but instead directed him to preach in Western Europe. Eventually, Paul planted a burgeoning church planting movement in Asia Minor in the city of Ephesus (Acts 19).

7. The Spirit's strategic function as taught by Jesus: The gospels give us a totally different picture of the function of the Holy Spirit than the typical contemporary charismatic caricature. The following passages show how the Holy Spirit is not merely some force, impersonal presence or energy that grants us good feelings and supernatural abilities. Rather, God the

Spirit is the third person in the Trinity.

In John 14:15-17, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of truth." The fact that He is referred to as the Spirit of truth illustrates that He does not only embody the power gifts. Rather, the Holy Spirit's primary role is to disclose wisdom and strategy, and illuminate truth to the church. He is not just relegated to biblical truth, but truth as it relates to every problem, challenge and situation, which affects all of life.

In John 14:25-27, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the counselor who gives wise advice. He also functions as a teacher who brings the Word of God to our remembrance. Thus, the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom in proportion to the amount of the Word of God that has been imprinted on our hearts. In the context of this passage, we also see that having His wisdom is a prerequisite for walking in the peace of our Lord.

In John 15:7-8 we see that bearing much fruit proves you are a disciple. This amazing passage illustrates the fact that Jesus expects His followers to be effectively related to their earthly endeavors and assignments despite the challenges they would have to face in the world.

In John 16:13-15, Jesus again referred to Him as the Spirit of truth who tells us about things to come. This is because wisdom has to do with knowing and being prepared for what we need to do in the future.

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, the apostle Paul teaches us that the Holy Spirit enables us to enter into the mind and truth of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 Paul writes, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." The Holy Spirit enables believers to connect to the Creator of the

universe and even understand the deep things of God. Verse 11 says the following:

For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Likewise, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God.

Consequently, the Spirit of God is the bridge to the wisdom of God in this natural world! Paul goes on to say in verses 15-16, “‘But he who is spiritual judges all things. Yet he himself is not judged by anyone. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.” This amazing section of Scripture teaches us that believers have a monopoly on the mind of God. The world does not have the access we do because they lack the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 4:3-4). This access to the mind of God is not only to understand the Bible, but also refers to having the wisdom to walk out our God-given assignment in this world.

As we conclude this article we should realize that true Christ-followers not only have the power of Christ inside of them, they have the mind of Christ. This enables them to walk in wisdom, obtain strategy and apply knowledge correctly so they can be the greatest problem-solvers, cultural creators and influencers that the world has ever seen!