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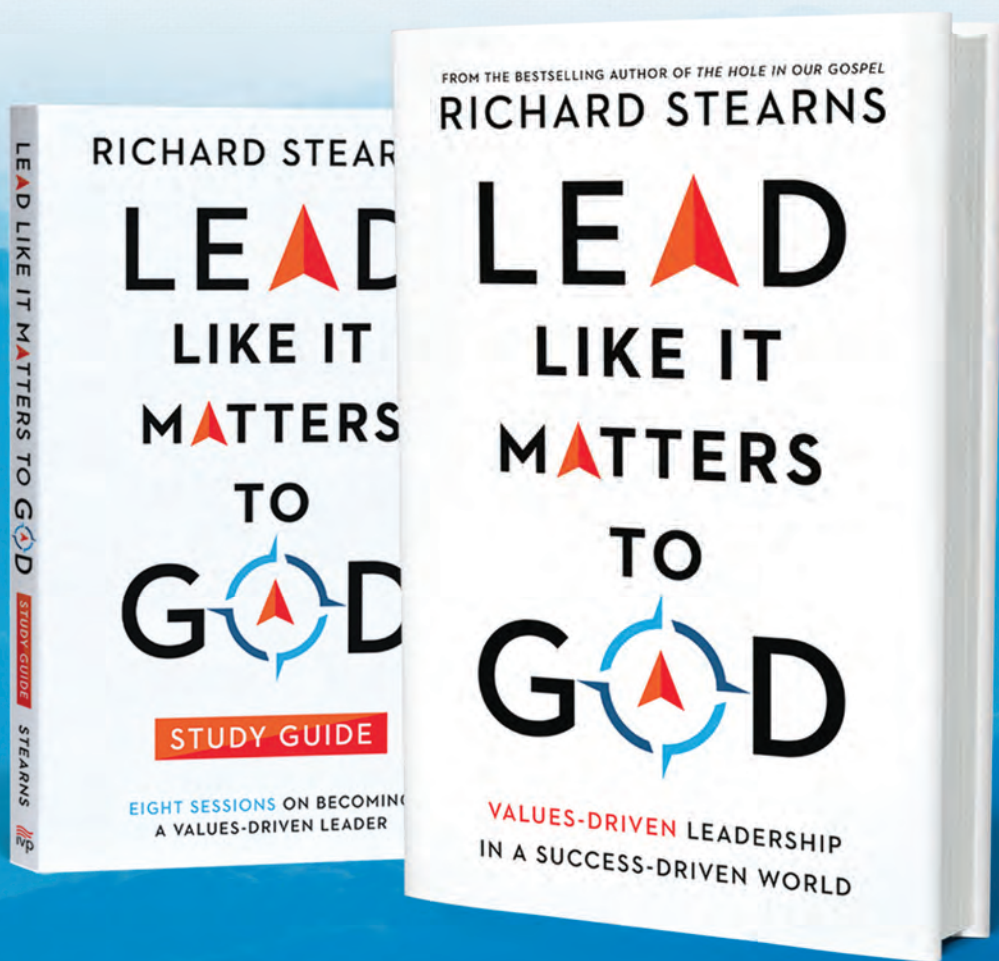
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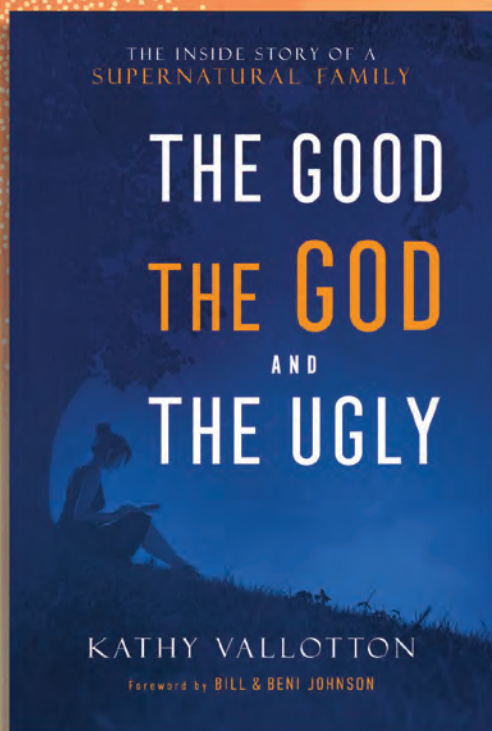
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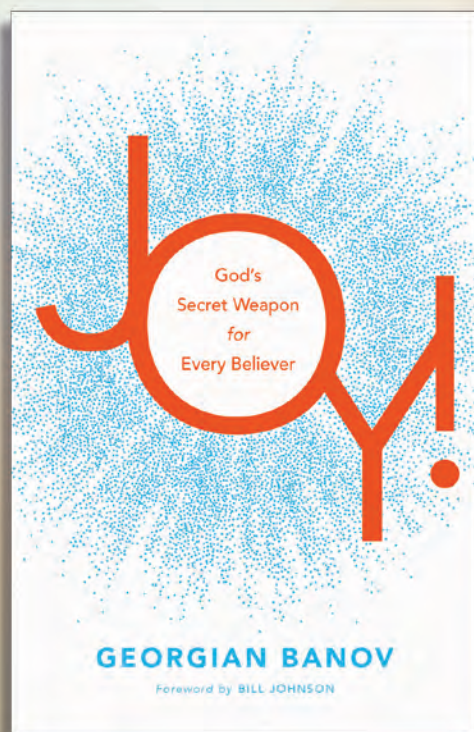
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Spirit-Filled Living

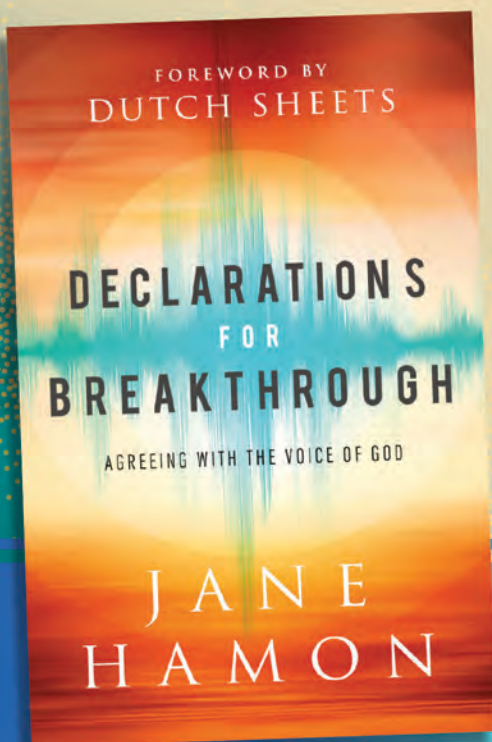


In this unfiltered and exciting narrative, Kathy Vallotton traces the joys and trials in her married life to an influential prophetic leader and how her faith grew in the midst of it all.
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"The cover story on Mike Lindell was truly mind blowing."

—Jon Thompson

FIND A CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR

Regarding "Your Divine Prescription for Hope for the New Year" by Fred Antonelli, Ph.D. (*Charisma*, January/February 2021): "I agree with Dr. Fred Antonelli that Christians who are suffering mental illness should seek help. I do, however, wish he had emphasized that Christians should make sure that any mental health expert they consult is a Christian counselor. I have known cases where a non-Christian counselor has done serious harm."

Irene Eggers
Wheat Ridge, Colorado

EDITOR'S NOTE: In Dr. Antonelli's article, he advised people to seek out a "licensed clinical Christian counselor."

INSPIRED BY MYPILLOW'S MIKE LINDELL

Regarding "What Are the Odds?" by Stephen Strang (*Charisma*, January/February 2021): "The cover story on Mike Lindell was truly mind blowing. I have several ideas for business or entertainment or evangelizing, and reading all of that

inspires me to pray more about it and do something about it. I wanted to say thanks for the great story."

Jon Thompson
Austin, Texas

LIFE-CHANGING GOD

Regarding "What Are the Odds?": "Praise God for His transformation power. God is still changing every one of His followers."

Benjamin Pang
facebook.com/charismamagazine

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Regarding "God Has Pushed the Reset Button" by J. Lee Grady (*Charisma*, January/February 2021): "What stood out to me was his suggestion for every possible excuse. What challenged me was the suggestion to use a hard copy instead of an e-Bible. While I do use both and acknowledge the importance of those precious bound pages, I enjoy the convenience of devices to cross-reference, define, and study out the Scriptures."

Tracy Sonnier
Houma, Louisiana

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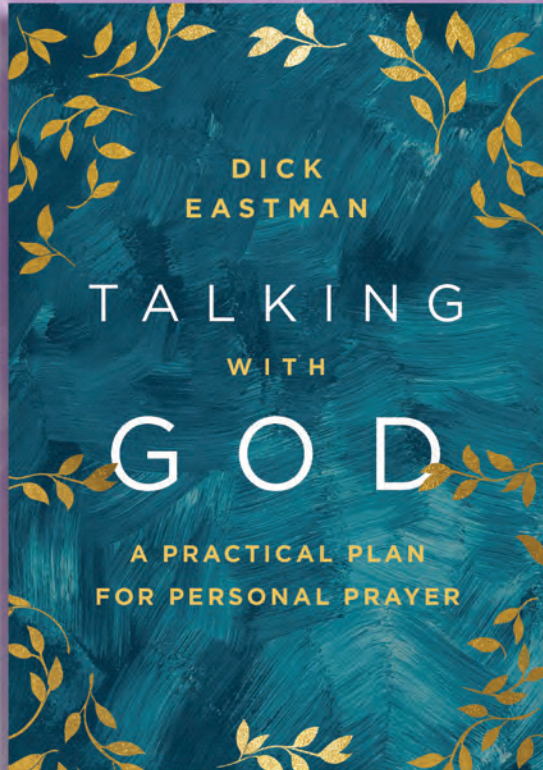
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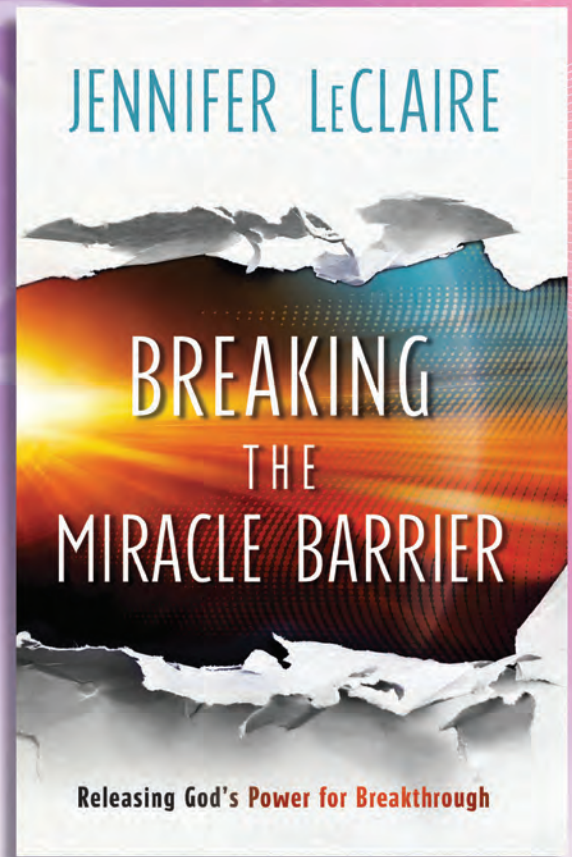
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Breaking the Miracle Barrier by Jennifer LeClaire



I Shall Not Be Moved

How our faith can remain firm in a season of doubt

The question of the hour seems to be “What do we do now?” What do we do now that we have a new president in the White House? What do we do now that things didn’t go as many of the prophets told us? What do we do now that we’re still fighting COVID-19?

I don’t know about you, but I know what I’m going to do. My intent comes through the words of one of my favorite old hymns: “I shall not be moved.”

My faith is not rocked by man’s error. Even though many charismatics and evangelicals supported one candidate, that candidate did not become president. Even though a number of prophets believed they heard from God, changes came in the opposite way they predicted. Even though leaders gave us various dates when the pandemic might end, more than a year has gone by, and we’re still coping with its effects.

But my faith or trust in the Lord has not been moved. Nothing in the natural world has the power to do that. I will continue to say, “Like a tree planted by the water/ I shall not be moved.”

That’s my answer. It’s the only answer I have. It’s the only answer I need.

During my 10 years as a senior pastor, I repeatedly asked one question to the congregation: “What will move you away from the cross? To another church? Out of your home? To another job?”

It seems important for me to know what rattles my cage. It’s why I pray throughout the day, “Lead me not into temptation.” In the catacombs of my heart, I know that whatever happens, I shall not be moved. Not the president, not the prophecies, not even the pandemic can move me away from the cross. I shall not be moved.

More than 300 years ago, the Pilgrims first set sail for America to seek religious freedom and to seek revival. They wanted more of God.

We need modern-day pilgrims who will stand up for religious freedom, who will seek real revival and press us to seek more of God. We need godly leaders who will encourage us to stand firm in our faith. We need a forest of trees planted by the water.

Of course, waves of doubt will rush in. But the tide ebbs as God’s Word compels us to stomp our feet on solid ground.

The book of Nehemiah provides powerful encouragement to those who find their feet in mushy turf. In Chapter 1, Nehemiah is far from his Jerusalem stomping grounds



“I must recognize all temptations to move away from the cross.”

but burdened by the “gloom, despair and agony” there. His response provides some guidelines for us to follow:

» **Fasting and Prayer (Chapter 1):**

Instead of remaining stuck in discouragement, Nehemiah turned to the Lord. He confessed and called on God’s mercy.

» **Respect for Authority (Chapter 2):**

When King Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah’s dismay, he asked about what troubled him. Nehemiah honored his leader by answering honestly and respectfully. And God used the pagan king to bring him back to his homeland with resources for rebuilding.

» **Thoughtful Leadership (Chapter 3):** As he examined the destruction of the wall, Nehemiah could have thrown up his hands and cried, “Woe is me!” Instead, he let the great task move him toward great leadership. He developed a positive plan to share the load.

» **Perseverance Under Pressure (Chapter 4):** Despite open taunts from their enemies, Nehemiah and his team persevered. They had determined not to be moved, and they completed the task. Nehemiah’s reminder to his fellow Israelites is surely a word for today: “Our God shall fight for us” (Neh. 4:20b).

Nehemiah had his own song about the position of his feet. When bad guys tried to convince him to come down from the wall he was dedicated to complete, he bellowed one of the most powerful replies in the Bible: “I am doing a great work and cannot come down” (Neh. 6:3, BSB).

Stable feet produce godly outcomes.

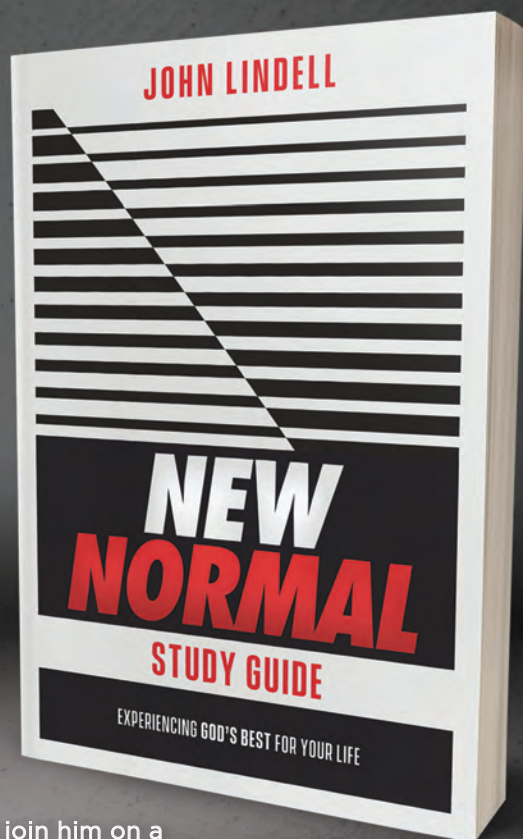
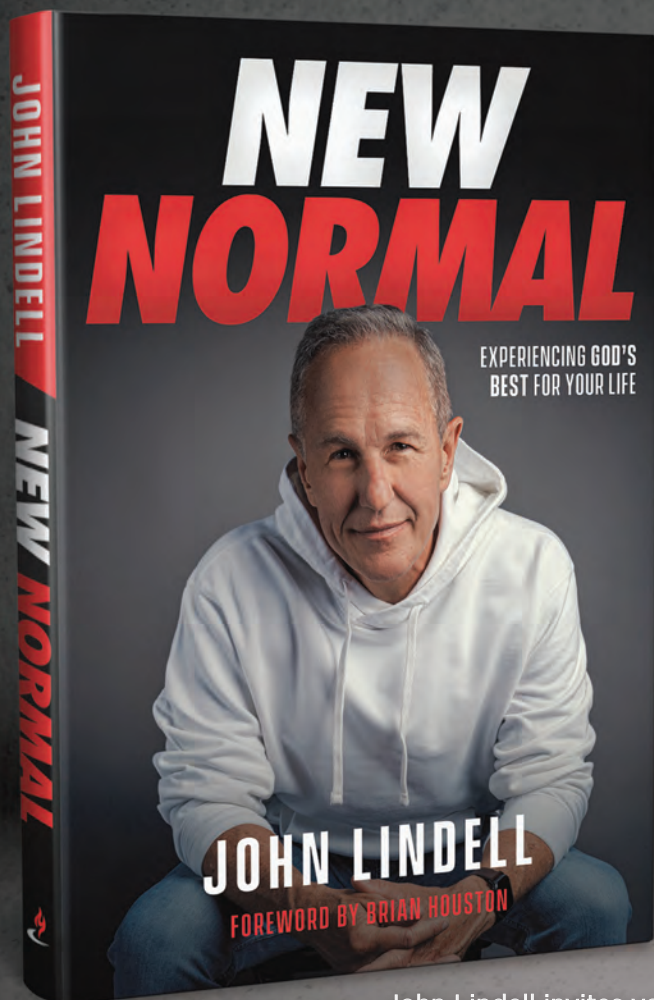
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What if what you have grown accustomed to is far less than what God has for you?

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Prophetic Words Are Never for Sale

I never thought I'd have to say this—but you can't buy a prophecy!

Years ago I met a flamboyant preacher from New York. He was very popular, but something about him was really creepy. He claimed to be a prophet, and he was applauded for his uncanny ability to “read people’s mail.” But he strutted arrogantly on the stage, spoke harshly to his staff and spent a lot of time taking up offerings.

Then he launched a website and encouraged his followers to register for “monthly prophetic words.” You could purchase these personal messages once a month or pay \$365 for a full year of prophecies. Once I called his ministry’s office and recorded this man making his “sales” just so I would have proof that he charged people a fee to hear from God for them.

I wasn’t sure which was worse—that a conniving minister could be that corrupt or that naïve Christians could actually trust a swindler to give them divine guidance.

That was more than 20 years ago. I thought these kinds of charismatic shenanigans had ended, but I found out recently that the disturbing trend continues in the era of PayPal. One ministry now encourages people to fork out \$30 a month for a regular prophetic word.

I believe in the gift of prophecy. Friends as well as strangers have shared powerful prophetic messages with me that brought encouragement and confirmation of what God was already saying to me. I have also given many words of prophetic encouragement to others. But every good gift has its counterfeit—and the devil stays busy offering cheap substitutes for the Holy Spirit’s anointing.

Please don’t fall for this trick! If you or someone you know has come under the spell of a charlatan, please take note of these simple principles:

1) God wants you to hear from Him directly. If you are a born-again Christian, you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you—and He wants close fellowship. People in the Old Testament had to visit a priest to obtain God’s guidance as well as forgiveness of sins. Today, because of what Jesus did for us, we have direct access to God. We are all priests (see 1 Peter 2:9).

It is idolatry to put a man in the place of God and expect him to show you the future or trust him to guide your life. That doesn’t mean the Lord will not sometimes use a person to teach, mentor, correct or give you a message from God. But we must never worship the human vessel God uses.

Instead of chasing a prophet for a word (or paying him or her for it), read your Bible and pray. Expect God to speak to you. If you need a prophecy, God knows where you live,



“It is idolatry to put a man in the place of God.”

and He can send His messengers to you. And the best part? It’s free!

2) There’s no biblical basis, ever, for charging for a prophecy. Before the prophet Samuel died, he reminded the people that he had never cheated or swindled anyone. The apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders the same thing in his farewell message. He said, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothing” (Acts 20:33).

Samuel and Paul reminded us that genuine Christian leaders are humble servants of God, and they never exploit for personal gain. When ministers in the New Testament preached, healed the sick or prophesied, they did it without expectation of reward. And when people give tithes or offerings to a church or a preacher, the money is never payment for a spiritual gift. It is blasphemous to suggest that God’s guidance, healing or favor can be bought.

3) People who sell spiritual gifts have corrupt character. After Elisha prayed for Naaman’s healing, Naaman tried to give Elisha an offering—but the prophet refused to take it. Then Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, went to Naaman and lied to him—telling him that Elisha really wanted him to give him a gift. Gehazi came home with two big bags of silver and some fancy new clothes, but God judged him for his greed.

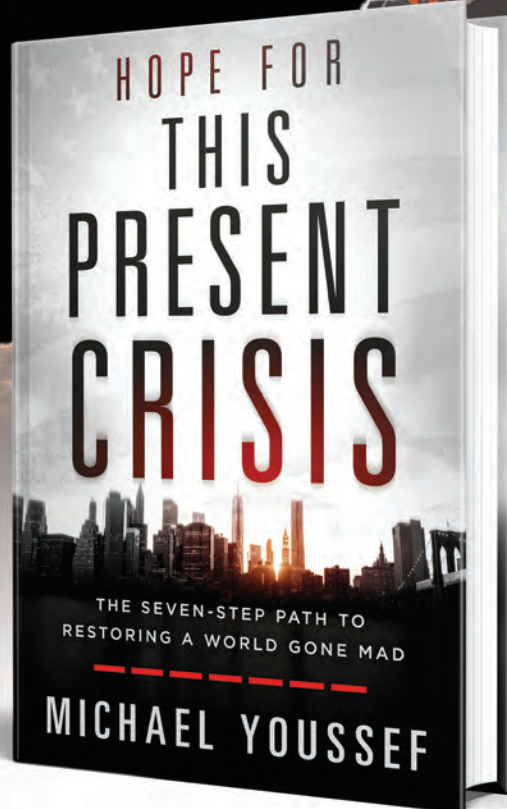
The moral of this story is simple: Never try to profit off of the Lord’s miracle power! We still have Gehazis in the church who think they can turn the Holy Spirit’s anointing into a get-rich-quick scheme. No matter what kind of payment plan they offer or how spiritual they sound, stay as far away as possible from charlatans and sorcerers.

J. LEE GRADY was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as contributing editor. He directs *The Mordecai Project* (themordecainproject.org), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest book is *Set My Heart on Fire* (Charisma House).

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The Holy Spirit Wants to Heal You

When God restores your soul, you become whole and can help others

It's wonderful to know that, as believers in Christ, we can live in close fellowship with God. Jesus said in John 16:7b (AMP) that when He went away, He would "send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]."

When Jesus walked the earth, He could be in one place at a time, but the Holy Spirit can be everywhere, all the time, and He lives *in* those who have accepted Christ as their Savior. Being with Jesus is good, but having the Holy Spirit in us is even better. We don't have to go looking for God because He's as close as close can get!

When we receive Christ as our Savior, it literally means that God—through the power of the Holy Spirit—comes to live inside us. He makes us new on the inside, and as He works in us, the fruit of what He's doing is seen in the way we live and does some good for the people in the world around us (see 2 Cor. 5:17, 21; John 14:17, 26; Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:22-23).

John 16:7 tells us that the Holy Spirit is our Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor, Counselor, Strengtheners and Standby. John 14:26b (NIV) says He "will teach you all things." The Holy Spirit is *the* teacher, and He guides us into all truth.

Think of this from the standpoint of recovering from things in the past that have hurt you. God wants to help us and heal us—spirit, soul and body. He wants to bring restoration to us so we can become whole in Christ and go on to help someone else. Our healing comes as the Holy Spirit leads us to truth one step at a time and gives us His strength to confront things that are hard to face so we can get victory over them.

In my journey with Christ, He's brought so much healing and restoration to my soul—my mind, will and emotions. My father sexually abused me throughout my childhood. When I left home at 18, I thought, "That's over! I'm putting that problem behind me." But I took the problem with me because the wounds of the abuse were still in my soul.

The pain of my past affected my thinking, how I operated emotionally, all of my relationships and even my will. I was rebellious and stubborn and promised myself no one would ever hurt me or push me around again.



"Our healing comes as the Holy Spirit leads us to truth one step at a time and gives us His strength to confront things that are hard to face so we can get victory over them."

I was born again at this time but didn't know I could have the power of the Holy Spirit working in my life. Years later, after I started seriously studying the Word of God, I realized the Holy Spirit could heal me.

It's so important to understand that we cannot do this on our own, but as we lean on the Holy Spirit for the strength to face our problems, we can overcome them.

If you have hurts from abuse, disappointments, an injustice or any other kind of mistreatment, you will have to face them with the help of the Holy Spirit to be healed of them. Anything you run from has a certain amount of power over you, and until you face it, every time it raises its ugly head, you have to run some more. Thank God, you don't have to do it alone!

In my journey to wholeness in Christ, I had to face some painful things I had been avoiding and at times, running from. I had to face the fact that my parents didn't know how to love me ... that I had been abused ... that there was a lot of pain in my life because of it all ... that my dysfunctional behavior was rooted in the mistreatment I had experienced, and I couldn't blame it on the people in my life now. I had to take responsibility for my wrong attitudes, mindsets and behavior, and lean on God for the wisdom and strength to change.

Recovery and restoration of our souls takes time, so be patient with yourself in the process. I want to encourage you today to trust God's love for you—He wants to help you and heal you. The truth is, you can't heal yourself, but you can be completely healed and whole in Christ, because all things are possible with God!

JOYCE MEYER is a *New York Times*' bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. She has authored 130 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and her newest devotional, *Quiet Times With God (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit joycemeyer.org.



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FOREWORD BY DR. CRAIG S. KEENER

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By taking you into the private worlds of these men and women of God, Merrill helps you feel the quickening pulse of fearless obedience to the Holy Spirit. Let their stories fill your own heart with courage for the road ahead.



Simultaneous Global Revival

How Christians across the nations are being united in the storm

I was in intercession a number of years back when the Lord showed me a vision displaying a map of the world on a chess board. As I watched, chess pieces came from heaven and were strategically placed. When the final piece was put in place, the entire board ignited with revival fire. The Lord said, “A time is coming when you will no longer need to run to one country to experience my revival. Rather, I will gather My people through a simultaneous global revival.” When I look into the Spirit today, this is exactly what I see happening in the church.

What we are about to experience as a church is what our forefathers prayed and decreed for centuries. In fact, for the first time since the charismatic renewal, we see the church evolving across tribes, nations and tongues. The lockdown restrictions we see in the American church are the same for the South African, Mexican, Canadian and Swiss church! Christians are no longer scattered throughout the nations. Rather, the Lord has united us for the first time in decades to change and stand.

We have indeed finally become a peculiar nation, haven't we? In our losses, persecution and suffering, we have lifted our voices to pray and seek God together for answers man can no longer give us. Gone are the prayers of “more for me, Lord.”

No, we are too desperate to pray for more gifts and glory. Rather, we are on our faces crying out to the King of kings to save our nations and our loved ones. Through this, the heart of the church has begun to beat once again.

It is when there is darkness over the earth that the light can shine. So it is time to stop complaining about the darkness. It is time to thank God for the darkness because it positions us to be the source of light that will draw kings to our rising (Isa. 60).

So, yes, church, a storm is coming! A deep darkness will cover the earth. In amongst this though, the Lord is gathering His remnant from all nations. Just as the early church was scattered amongst idol worshippers and immorality, so are we as believers surrounded by darkness. Never before have we had such an opportunity to be the defining difference between darkness and light.

Church will no longer be restricted to Sunday services but will be spread to the workplace, the entertainment industry, political parties and social media.

“For indeed I have closed the doors on you,” says the Lord. “My church, I have closed the



“Never before have we had such an opportunity to be the defining difference between darkness and light.”

doors to the throne rooms where you have gone to worship, so that I might invite you to come and worship at My feet.

“I call upon my bride now to usher in the move that my prophets are birthing. I call all—great and small—to receive a fresh impartation from Me for the times that lie ahead. For you will soon see the value in the treasure that has been placed in your earthen vessel. So do not fear when you see storms and the ground shakes in your life. For this is a call to My presence. It is a call to move in signs and wonders that will reach beyond platforms and church walls.

“So watch as I unite Christians across nations. Watch as I send out men of renown to unfamiliar lands. Watch out for my Peters and Pauls who will do for my present-age church what they did for my New Testament church. Amen!”

My grandparents first experienced the Holy Spirit during the charismatic renewal. As a child, I would listen to their stories in awe. They spoke of tarrying meetings. They shared with us how every believer would come to know Jesus in His power.

Today, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren see their endless intercessory prayers come to pass. This move of God has been in the making for decades, and we have the honor to participate.

So allow the Lord to position you. Shake off the discomfort of being plucked out of your comfort zone. When we get used to the uncomfortable and embrace the new, we will become part of something our forefathers would have given anything to see!

COLETTE TOACH is originally from South Africa, and with ministry divisions in South Africa, Mexico, Switzerland and California, *Apostle Toach is foremost a wife and spiritual mother. She established a prophetic training school that has been in place since 1999. Apostle Colette and her husband, Apostle Craig Toach, work with their fivefold ministry team to raise up leaders across the globe.*

We can only truly see America's enemies through 'Supernatural' vision



Wiles of the Devil 2020, by bestselling author **Neill G. Russell** supplies the reader with perfect 'supernatural' vision to see the intricate - **Ephesians 6:12** - planning and scheming that went on over the past 2 decades in the spiritual realm to bring America to its present state of political, moral and spiritual destruction.

To get a copy of the E book or paperback of *Wiles of the Devil 2020* go to: newtonsriddle.com or togodsglory.pub





Texas has been on the forefront of the anti-abortion effort.

Pro-life activist Abby Johnson

Texas Slashes Medicaid Funding From Planned Parenthood

Abby Johnson launches pro-life initiative, expecting to see the end of Roe v. Wade soon

With a recent ruling in Texas, Planned Parenthood will no longer receive Medicaid funding for abortions in the state.

Texas is the 24th state to prohibit taxpayer money to fund abortions after Missouri became the first in January 2021.

Former Planned Parenthood director-turned-pro-life-activist Abby Johnson shared her dream of this momentous event at the 2021 Texas Rally for Life.

"We're done," Johnson says. "We want to end abortion here in the state of Texas. We want to do everything we can to protect innocent life in the womb."

Seeing this come to fruition is a huge win for

the broader pro-life community, but particularly in Texas.

Johnson spoke with CBN about Hurt After Abortion, a new initiative she started to care for women who have suffered the often-extreme repercussions after having an abortion. She has partnered with the nonprofit legal organization Thomas More Society as well as Support After Abortion, an emotional support group for women facing physical or emotional consequences after abortion.

With these significant prayerful efforts, Johnson's next dream may well come true: "I have full confidence that soon Roe v. Wade will be a thing of the past."

Born-Again Christian Actress Cicely Tyson Dies at 96

She won two Emmys for her work in 'The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman'

Born-again Christian and actress Cicely Tyson died Jan. 29, 2021, at 96.

Tyson's manager, Larry Thompson, announced the death on behalf of her family.

Tyson was honored as the first recipient of the International Faith and Family Film Festival Award at Bishop T.D. Jakes' 2017 Legends Awards.

When Bishop Jakes presented Tyson with the award, she said, "I am absolutely speechless, breathless. My cup runneth over."

Tyson earned an Oscar nomination for her role as the sharecropper's wife in *Sounder* and a Tony Award in 2013 at age 88 for the revival of Horton Foote's

The Trip to Bountiful. She touched viewers' hearts

with her starring role in the 1974 television drama *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. She also won two Emmys for playing a 110-year-old former slave in that drama. A new generation of moviegoers saw her in the 2011 hit *The Help*.

Tributes from Broadway and Hollywood poured in, including from Tracie Thomas who thanked her for paving the way. "A queen and a trailblazer indeed," she wrote on Twitter.



Francis Chan Encourages House Churches in China

Pastor and bestselling author Francis Chan returned to the U.S. after authorities in Hong Kong rejected his visa in early 2021.

The video he shared with his supporters highlighted his desire to ensure the well-being of the house churches he and his family planted in Hong Kong since they relocated there in 2020.

Chan said he prays new church leaders and members can gather in a secure place. But even in the "unexpected," he reminded those listening,



Ben Carson Launches Conservative Think Tank

Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and famed neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson has launched a conservative think tank, the American Cornerstone Institute.

In a RealClear Politics op-ed, Carson announced, "ACI will focus on promoting and preserving individual and religious liberty, helping our country's most vulnerable find new hope, and developing methods to maximize government's efficiency and effectiveness to best serve all our nation's citizens."

Carson says the goal of ACI will first be to promote common-sense solutions to our nation's biggest problems.

Working with government leaders, ACI aims to help improve America's cities.

He urged Christians to remember Matthew 12, that a house divided cannot stand.

"There have been many calls to heal the divide that has polarized our great nation," he says. "The American Cornerstone Institute will be a leader and part of the solution. Our goal is simple: heal, inspire and revive America."

"God is sovereign. He's in control."

Chan also highlighted the peace that has fallen upon everyone affected.

He closed the video update with an encouragement to embody the presence of the Holy Spirit so others may see the Lord's goodness.

"The most important thing is that people see that I really have peace, really have joy," Chan said. "This is no surprise to God. And I just think, *what a great opportunity we have.*"

Christian Singer Carman Dies at 65

Souls saved are his greatest legacy

Singer Carman Licciardello, known throughout his 35-year career as “Carman,” died at 65 in a Las Vegas hospital Feb. 16, 2021, after complications resulting from surgery to repair a hiatal hernia.

As Charisma News reported Jan. 28, Carman requested prayer after his recent surgery led to pneumonia and other issues. His bouts with cancer proved the willingness of his fans to support him in prayer, and they rallied to intercede for him once again in what would be his final illness.



Carman

Carman holds the world record for having the largest audience who came to see a single Christian artist. He set the record for the largest concert at Texas Stadium with more than 71,000 fans and led more than 80,000 fans in worship in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Billboard named Carman “Contemporary Christian Artist of the Year” in 1992 and 1995. In 1993, Billboard also named *Addicted to Jesus* the

Contemporary Christian Album of the Year.

Anyone who knew Carman knows he counted only this as the greatest achievement of his lifetime—winning tens of thousands of souls to Christ.

Pastor Ché Ahn Thanks Supreme Court for Ruling

But worship wars continue in California

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry by enjoining California’s total ban on indoor worship on Feb. 6, 2021. This was the second time Liberty Counsel appealed to the high court on behalf of these churches. The ruling also included South Bay United Pentecostal Church.

Pastor Ché Ahn thanked the Supreme Court: “I think that people can worship in perpetuity, so in future pandemics, they’ll think twice before locking down the church,” he said.

But later that day, California Gov. Gavin Newsom removed the total worship ban in Tier 1 and replaced

it with a 25% building capacity limit. Tier 2 also has a 25% building capacity, and Tiers 3-4 have a 50% capacity.

Liberty Counsel founder Mat Staver said: “This case is not over since Gov. Newsom continues to discriminate against places of worship. We will not rest until all of California’s discriminatory schemes are removed.”



Pastor Ché Ahn

Paralympian Encourages Others, ‘Never, Ever Give Up’

Swimmer drew attention to adoption with Super Bowl ad

Thirteen-time Paralympian Jessica Long was born with a defect that meant she had to have both legs amputated above the knee. Her story of faith, hope and perseverance was featured in a Toyota Super Bowl ad.

The winner of 23 Paralympic gold medals says she wants her courageous journey to be an encouragement to those in similar situations.

“My biggest hope is that young people see me, a girl without legs in the Paralympics, on TV, and think, *I can do that too*,” Long says.

Long was born with fibular hemimelia, a rare condition where the fibulas, ankles, heels and most of the bones in her feet are missing. Unable to care for her, her birth parents left her at an orphanage in Russia until Steven and Beth Long adopted her and her brother, Joshua.

Though Long’s faith was tested at times, the Lord drew close.

“I got through every single challenging moment of my life because of my determination that God gave me,” she says.

To those she mentors through the group Fight for the Fatherless, Long says: “I want you to embrace who God made you to be. To love every part of yourself, flaws and all.”

**BIBLE
READING
GUIDE**



Follow our daily reading plan in each issue of *Charisma* to read through the Modern English Version Bible in one year. The plan is also available online at brg.charismamag.com.

"Therefore BE IMITATORS OF GOD as beloved children. Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God." —Ephesians 5:1-2

Apr. 1	Judg. 11:12; Ps. 50; 2 Cor. 1
Apr. 2	Judg. 13:16; 2 Cor. 2
Apr. 3	Judg. 17:18; Ps. 89; 2 Cor. 3
Apr. 4	Judg. 19:21; 2 Cor. 4
Apr. 5	Ruth 1:2; Ps. 53,61; 2 Cor. 5
Apr. 6	Ruth 3:4; Ps. 64-65; 2 Cor. 6
Apr. 7	1 Sam. 1:2; Ps. 66; 2 Cor. 7
Apr. 8	1 Sam. 3:5; Ps. 77; 2 Cor. 8
Apr. 9	1 Sam. 6:7; Ps. 72; 2 Cor. 9
Apr. 10	1 Sam. 8:10; 2 Cor. 10
Apr. 11	1 Sam. 11:12; 1 Chr. 1; 2 Cor. 11
Apr. 12	1 Sam. 13; 1 Chr. 2:3; 2 Cor. 12
Apr. 13	1 Sam. 14; 1 Chr. 4; 2 Cor. 13
Apr. 14	1 Sam. 15:16; 1 Chr. 5; Matt. 1
Apr. 15	1 Sam. 17; Ps. 9; Matt. 2
Apr. 16	1 Sam. 18; 1 Chr. 6; Ps. 11; Matt. 3
Apr. 17	1 Sam. 19; 1 Chr. 7; Ps. 59; Matt. 4
Apr. 18	1 Sam. 20:21; Ps. 34; Matt. 5
Apr. 19	1 Sam. 22; Ps. 17,35; Matt. 6
Apr. 20	1 Sam. 23; Ps. 31,54; Matt. 7
Apr. 21	1 Sam. 24; Ps. 57-58; 1 Chr. 8; Matt. 8
Apr. 22	1 Sam. 25-26; Ps. 63; Matt. 9
Apr. 23	1 Sam. 27; Ps. 141; 1 Chr. 9; Matt. 10
Apr. 24	1 Sam. 28-29; Ps. 109; Matt. 11
Apr. 25	1 Sam. 30-31; 1 Chr. 10; Matt. 12
Apr. 26	2 Sam. 1; Ps. 140; Matt. 13
Apr. 27	2 Sam. 2; 1 Chr. 11; Ps. 142; Matt. 14
Apr. 28	2 Sam. 3; 1 Chr. 12; Matt. 15
Apr. 29	2 Sam. 4-5; Ps. 139; Matt. 16
Apr. 30	2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. 13; Ps. 68; Matt. 17



Household of Faith Senior Pastor Antoine and First Lady Dale Barriere, center, are joined by their family.

New Orleans Church Pay Power Bills in the Community

A New Orleans church has paid \$125,000 toward its congregants' electricity bills.

Supporters started the fundraiser to provide for Household of Faith Family Worship Church International members' needs in a tangible way, as extended periods of time at home and the temperature drop have increased homeowners' bills.

First Lady Dale Barriere told *The Christian Post*: "Our prayer was how can we help those who are hurting, and

He said [give] \$100 [checks] towards Entergy bill[s]." Pastor Antoine Barriere said they gave generously for one simple fact: "Because God said so."

The church raised the first \$50,000, and the energy company, Entergy, matched their donations. The community of Harvey, Louisiana, in which the church's three campuses are located, donated an additional \$25,000. Overall, the "Power Is Present" outreach impacted 1,250 families.

Jack Hibbs Says Rapture Is Real

Pastor Jack Hibbs says many believers are not excited about the imminent return of Jesus because they don't believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. In a message to his congregation, he says that is one of the reasons for the prevailing apathy that exists in the church.

But, Hibbs says, Scripture makes it "absolutely clear" that the rapture will take place. The only questions are: When will it happen, and what will we do to prepare for the coming of Christ for His bride?

"The validity and necessity of

the pre-tribulation rapture view of the church can be found in Colossians 3," said Hibbs, the lead pastor of Calvary Chapel Chino Hills in Chino, California. "It says, 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.'"

The rapture is the believers' "blessed hope," he says, and will be until Christ's return.

"How could you not get excited about that?" Hibbs asks.

THIS GENERATION

“And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” Luke 21:29-33

Is this the generation which will see the return of Jesus Christ? Consider for yourself the amazing prophecies of Jesus as He tells his disciples about the coming destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. They ask him when these things would be, and Jesus gave them many signs that would be fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. The first 23 verses of this chapter are signs Jesus gave concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Then in verse 24 Jesus said, **“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”** Only forty years later, Jerusalem and the Temple were completely destroyed by the Roman armies. Every sign Jesus gave was fulfilled to perfection, and Jerusalem fell under control of the Gentiles for 1897 years, until June 6, 1967.

On June 6, 1967, during what is now called “the six-day war,” the nation of Israel took control of Jerusalem for the first time since 70 A.D. This is the event which is commonly called *“the budding of the fig tree.”* According to the words of Jesus, this marked the end of the times of the Gentiles, and the beginning of the generation which He said **“... shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.”**

The first sign Jesus gave of this generation was... **“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars...”** Luke 21:25. This generation was only two years old when a man walked on the moon for the first time. Unmanned space exploration in the years since that time has reached the planets, and even beyond our own solar system.

“... and upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” Luke 21:25-26.

I’m sure that you can easily fill in the blanks concerning these signs which we have repeatedly seen during this generation: the incredible instability of the nations, the strange weather patterns, and the fears of so many things to come, from a nuclear holocaust, to bacterial warfare, financial disaster, and more recently the incredible fear of the Covid 19 virus, which has infected millions of people. Over 500,000 Americans have lost their lives in the first year of this plague. Politically, it feels like the spirit of antichrist has seized control of our nation. As I write this, the entire nation has been paralyzed by an ice storm.

Many years ago I dedicated most of my ministry to warning of these things on our *“Awake to Righteousness”* radio broadcast. We continually cried out against the sins of this generation, and

warned of the soon coming of Jesus. As time passed, however, I began to wonder if 1967 really did mark the beginning of the last generation. Had I misunderstood the prophecy? Were the times of the Gentiles really fulfilled, and was the clock really ticking the countdown to the return of Jesus? Time was moving so fast, and the implications of these things were overwhelming to me. Then I discovered something in the Bible that I need to tell you about.

I was preaching a message I called *“Are We Better than They,”* taken from Romans 3:9. Paul was talking about the advantage the Jews had over the Gentiles. The main advantage was that God had revealed Himself to the nation of Israel as to no other. God had chosen the Jew in Abraham, set His great love upon them, spoke to them audibly from Mount Horeb, and manifest Himself to them through great signs and wonders. Now, in Paul’s day, almost 1500 years after Moses, with all the advantages of the Law and the Prophets, the question is asked *“Are we better than they”* Romans 3:9. Sadly, the answer was *“No, in no wise.”* God’s chosen people were just as sinful as the heathen nations around them. It was proven that both Jew and Gentile were under sin, which is the reason Christ came and died to *“take away our sin”* John 1:29. As I was researching the advantage of the Jew, my mind went all the way back to Abraham, and I wondered how many years had passed from Abraham until Calvary. I found that Abraham was circumcised in the year 1900 B.C. (plus or minus 2 years). Circumcision was the “token” of the covenant with God, and every Jew entered the covenant when he was eight days old through circumcision. When Abraham was circumcised, the covenant was confirmed, and the Jew was chosen in Abraham. The times of the Jew had begun. From that time until Calvary was 1930 years. I noticed that Abraham’s life was almost as many years before Calvary as we are after Calvary. Then, I recalled a most incredibly accurate prophecy which the angel Gabriel brought to the prophet Daniel.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” Daniel 9:24

For the sake of simplicity, we will change the seventy-weeks, which are actually seventy weeks of years, into 490 years. Gabriel was telling Daniel there were 490 years remaining for the Jewish people, and before those years were finished there would be made an end of sins, reconciliation for iniquity, and everlasting righteousness would be brought in. Each of these were fulfilled at Calvary in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ just 3½ years before the end of the 490 years, or in the middle of the seventieth week of the prophecy. Gabriel told Daniel the exact time the 490 years would begin. A decree would be given to restore and build Jerusalem, which was given by King Artaxerxes in the year 457 B.C. According to the promise, one called *“The Messiah, the Prince”* would appear exactly 483 years later, which would mark the beginning of the 70th week of the prophecy.

This “seventieth week (seven years)” began when Jesus of Nazareth was baptized by John the Baptist, and confirmed as “The Messiah (the Christ)” when the Holy Ghost came upon Him as a dove, and the Father spoke audibly from heaven, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” Matthew 3:16-17. Three and one half years later, in the middle of the 70th week of prophecy, Jesus “the Christ” was crucified, thus fulfilling every promise of redemption. The 70th week continued another 3½ years as God “poured out His Spirit” Joel 2:28 in Jerusalem and the regions of Judea. This marked the end of the 490 years determined upon the Jew, and the gospel began to go to the Gentiles. The year was 33½ A.D.: The prophetic time of the Jew was fulfilled, and the times of the Gentiles were just beginning.

Understand the significance of what I say now. From the time circumcision was instituted by God with Abraham until the end of the seventy weeks prophecy to the Jews was 1933½ years. From that time until June 1967, the end of the times of the Gentiles, was exactly 1933½ years.

God gave equal time to both the Jew and the Gentile.

A coincidence? It could hardly be so. Sadly, both Jew and Gentile rejected Jesus Christ, and the “*times of the Gentiles*” ended on June 6, 1967. Since that time the nations have been in moral decline, as evidenced by institution of “legal” abortion, pornography, drugs, gay marriage, and the fact that in this generation America has become an idolatrous nation. This generation has brought the greatest “falling away” and “apostasy” since the dark ages. “*Another gospel*” II Corinthians 11:4 has been preached, and “*another spirit*” has been received. Professing “believers” have been taught “how to speak in tongues” and “prophecy.” At the same time, sexual impurity has become rampant in many churches, with 68% of the men regularly watching pornography, according to one survey. Most “believers” today believe sin is the norm for a child of God. What is most amazing to me is the fact that “Christian ministers” are preaching to the largest crowds in the history of the world, while at the same time we are “losing ground” in the nations. There is much evidence that the “spirit of antichrist” is presently taking control of our national government. Sadly, it had to find a place in the church before it could come to our nation.

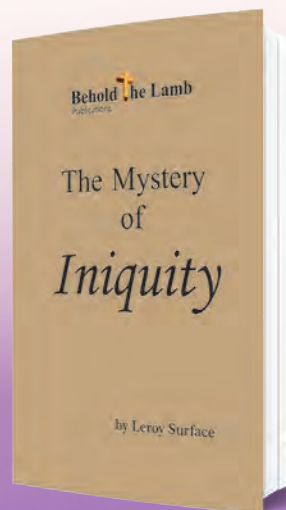
“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” Luke 21:28. *“So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away”* Luke 21:31-33. *“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.”* Luke 21:34-35

Jesus said **“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not”** Luke 12:40. I can remember when Israel became a nation in 1948, and there was a great revival. People were “*getting ready*” for Jesus

to come. Again, in June 1967 during the six day war in Israel the churches filled up with people who were “getting ready.” Across the nation people gathered in all night prayer meetings, crowds filled the churches, believing that at any moment Jesus would come. Perhaps some can remember the phenomenon of 1988. A man wrote a book titled, “*Eighty Eight Reasons Why Jesus Must Come In 1988.*” Multitudes around the world were convinced. Again the churches filled to capacity with people seeking to “*get ready*” for Jesus to come. In each of these cases the multitudes soon cooled off, and people went back to their self-centered living, seeking the things of this present world rather than the things of Heaven. The next alert came in the year 2000, and vast multitudes were again “*getting ready.*” Vigils were held, while others made a pilgrimage to Rome. Still others made the trip to Jerusalem to meet Jesus when He came. Everyone with any Christian belief at all was “*getting ready.*”

Sounds good, right? Except for one thing. Jesus did not say, “*get ready,*” but rather He said, “***be ready.***” He did not say He would come when the multitudes expect Him and prepare themselves, instead He said He would come “***...at an hour when ye think not.***”

Even though very little has been said about the return of Jesus in recent years, He is still coming. This is still the generation which Jesus said “*...shall not pass away until all be fulfilled.*” Jesus is coming! One thing is certain, those who wait to “*get ready*” will not “*be ready*” when He comes. The unfaithful servant who said in his heart “*My lord delayeth his coming*” Luke 12:45 was not ready when his lord came. The foolish virgins slumbered and slept without oil in their lamps Matthew 25:3. They had prepared for an earlier time, but he came in an hour that they thought not. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the acceptable hour. Tomorrow will be too late for many. Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus.



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Jesus

ON THE SMALL SCREEN

'The Chosen' is the first-ever crowdfunded TV series. We went behind the camera to find out how God is using this program to bring many people to faith in Jesus.

BY DEWAYNE HAMBY

Even though we have thousands of television channels today, and even more streaming options online, many Christians are perplexed by today's lack of wholesome entertainment options. Families are avoiding platforms like Netflix, Showtime or HBO because of explicit content—and current TV programs seem to be pushing an agenda that's hostile to Christian values.

Maybe that's one reason *The Chosen* seemed like water in a media desert when it began airing in 2020. No one expected an obscure, crowd-funded TV series about Jesus Christ to be the sleeper hit of the pandemic era. But God is using a creative team of producers, actors and screenwriters to re-introduce the message of the gospel to a new audience that has never heard the greatest story ever told.

As the COVID-19 pandemic stalled Hollywood productions and closed theaters last year, viewers migrated to the small screen to watch a fascinating retelling of the gospel. Some see this hit drama as a bona fide miracle, not unlike the miracles of Jesus that are depicted in each episode.

Pentecostal leader Samuel Rodriguez is one of many Christian leaders who have given *The Chosen* five stars and two thumbs up. “[*The Chosen*] offers viewers a glimpse into what the daily and extraordinary life of Jesus Christ and His disciples might have looked like 2,000 years ago and invites the viewer into His story,” Rodriguez told *Charisma*. “As a producer myself, I’ve seen the power film can have to promote the Lamb’s agenda of love, truth and justice. *The Chosen* does that in an incredibly compelling way.”

Dallas Jenkins, son of bestselling author Jerry B. Jenkins (*Left Behind*) and director of the faith-based comedy *The Resurrection of Gavin Stone*, is the creator, director and co-writer of the multiseason drama. Raising \$10 million, season one, available to watch on its own *Chosen mobile app*, is the highest crowdfunded TV or film project of all time. The series also earned a 100 score on the Rotten Tomatoes entertainment review site and the highest-rated faith film project on the Internet Movie Database.

Viewed by nearly 50 million people, the show's success has been attributed to its unique way of highlighting lives impacted by Christ. In the first eight episodes, viewers meet the supporting characters of Jesus' ministry before they encounter Him, creating dramatic tension and highlighting the transformation their encounters provoke. Matthew is collecting taxes. Mary Magdalene is vexed by demons. Those familiar with the biblical account will know what might happen next, but *The Chosen* paints a well-crafted prologue grounded in realism while delivering intrigue.

continued »

**Jonathan Roumie in
his role as Jesus in
"The Chosen"**



“Jesus doesn’t make for a great main character of a drama,” says Jenkins, who spoke with *Charisma* while working on season two. “With any good drama, the protagonist has to learn something and has to overcome some challenges to become a better person. Jesus is perfect. He starts perfect. So one of the things that has made it difficult for Jesus movies and miniseries is that Jesus is the main character. But if you can see Jesus in the eyes of those who actually met Him, you can be changed and impacted in the same way they were.”

Like a traditional television show, *The Chosen* presents an ensemble of characters that viewers get to know across several episodes and seasons, making the show “much more impactful,” according to the director.

Messianic Rabbi Jason Sobel (*Mysteries of the Messiah; The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*) who serves alongside a Catholic priest and evangelical scholar as a consultant on the series, assists in providing what Jenkins calls “guardrails” to ensure the stories—some of which occur outside of scriptural accounts—authentically

“I think we both feel a tremendous weight of trying to portray Jesus, and we both had to learn how to empty ourselves and surrender.”

—Dallas Jenkins

reflect the culture and time period. Sobel, who declares “the Holy Spirit’s on it,” credits a renewed personal zeal for spiritual authority to his involvement with the show.

“Seeing some of the powerful encounters that occur, whether it’s casting the demon out of Mary, whether it’s the turning the water into wine, the great catch of fish, the healing of the leper, those things are just powerful,” he says. “It’s powerful to see on the screen, to really understand the power and authority that Jesus carried and the power and authority that we’re still called to carry today to do the ‘greater things than these’ than He did that He said we could do.”

Sobel also believes the “richness

of the Jewish context” is critical, specifically focusing on the Jewish wedding, the sacredness of the Sabbath and “what that world would have looked like.”

“I think people like the Jewishness, the authenticity of it, the creativity of it as well, that it’s quality faith-based entertainment that’s impactful,” he says.

Miracles On and Off Camera

The show highlights the miracles that accompanied the life of Christ, but those miracles also extend off camera. The pivotal moment of the first four episodes, the “miracle of the fish,” was plagued by a variety of challenges. A few days out from filming,



A Roman Centurion stands guard during a crucifixion.



Dallas Jenkins directs a Roman soldier during the shooting of a scene of "The Chosen."

crew. Jenkins documents many of them in a dedicated YouTube channel for the project, where he shares behind-the-scenes stories for more than 700,000 subscribers with more than 44 million views.

"One of the more beautiful things about this project is how God has just consistently put us in this spot where we're at the edge of the Red Sea, and the only way forward is if God opens the waters, and He has done so over and over and over again," Jenkins said.

Expanding upon the impact of *The Chosen* and applying principles to the lives of those watching, Sobel is also doing a companion teaching series (see sidebar) airing on TBN, using clips from the project. The rabbi and bestselling author, a former hip-hop DJ from Brooklyn led to the Lord by *The Harbinger II* author Jonathan Cahn, says for him, the commanding performance of lead actor Jonathan Roumie is transformative.

"I love Jonathan's portrayal, how He really reveals the Father's heart," he says. "I think that's really powerful to show His compassion, His care, His concern."

Roumie deflects those accolades, insisting that anything good from his portrayal is driven by divine intervention and keeping his ego in check. In an interview with the *Rick and Bubba* radio show this summer, he explained the process behind portraying the Son of God, which includes getting out of the way as much as possible and being directed by the Holy Spirit.

"It's not about me; it's about serving God; it's about emptying the role, emptying myself of all the things that would get in the way of allowing the Spirit to reach people," he says. "The way I prepare is I do a lot of praying. I do a lot of reading and meditating on the Scriptures. I try to listen to what it is that God's telling me as I'm looking at these scripts."

Jenkins and Roumie met seven years ago on a smaller film about Jesus, and the director was blown away by his performance, considering it the finest portrayal of Christ he'd ever seen. The two became close friends through a series of other

the boat was still being built, the lake wasn't at the proper levels, and there were no fish.

"I was powerless, and it's a scary place to be where you're powerless," Jenkins says.

The morning of filming, while the paint on the boat was still wet and every possible avenue to provide the fish had fallen through, the crew relied on a last-minute attempt. The visual effects team worked with a "green burrito," a large green tarp where they would render computer-generated imagery fish. After several less than desirable and unrealistic results, one of the artists had a middle of the night epiphany that pulled all the efforts together and created the epic visual moment.

"It turned out that a scene about the miracle of the fish became its own miracle of the fish," Jenkins says. "God again provided a solution that was better than the plans that we had."

It's one of multiple times where God has intervened in the project, providing miracle moments for the



projects, culminating in *The Chosen*.

“I think we both feel a tremendous weight of trying to portray Jesus, and we both had to learn how to empty ourselves and surrender,” Jenkins says. “I think the reasons behind the impact *The Chosen* is having are Jonathan’s willingness to portray it in this manner and surrender to the process and to the Holy Spirit’s leading.”

Faithful in Small Things

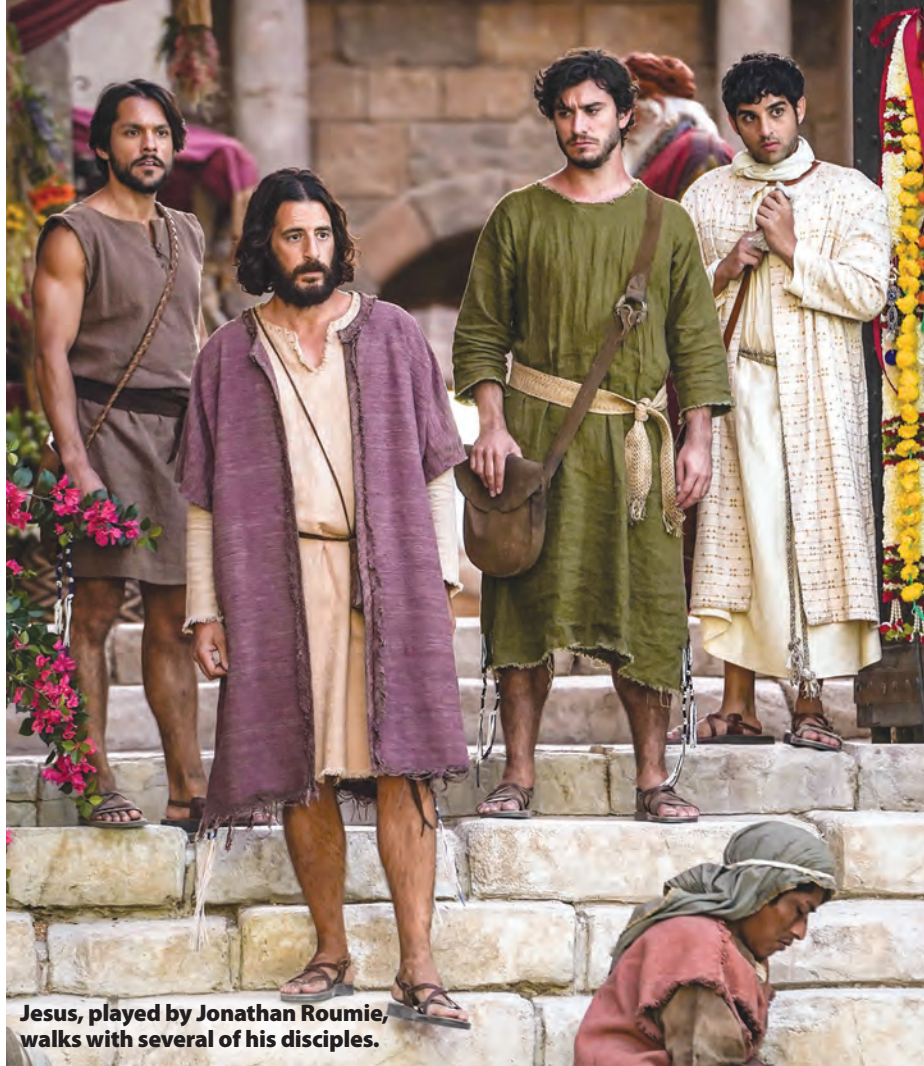
Although Roumie deflects praise and attention based on his performance, Jenkins also has a grounded perspective on the series’ success. Leading into the 2016 release of *The Resurrection of Gavin Stone*, the future of the aspiring writer-director was being mapped out with long-range plans of releasing more faith-based films through Lionsgate Studios. When that film didn’t perform as expected, those offers dried up, and his future in entertainment hit a roadblock.

“In just a couple hours, I went from being a director with a very bright future to a director with no future,” he says. “I got to a place where I was ready to not even be in the business anymore, if that’s what God wanted; I just didn’t want to be disappointed anymore. And I felt like God maybe was trying to tell me I just didn’t belong in this business.”

Instead, Jenkins directed a small film about Jesus for his local church, which went viral and provided the fuel that would become *The Chosen*.

“Even though it felt like a significant step down, I just wanted to do what God had for me,” he says. “And I wasn’t worried about the future and wasn’t worried about the results or the size of it or anything like that.”

Viewed in more than 180 countries, *The Chosen* has united believers and garnered praise from different faith traditions and denominations. Although it has been translated into more than 70 languages, Jenkins recounts a story of a family in China who viewed the entire first season and connected with it even without being able to understand the dialogue. He’s also been encouraged by reports of parents who have been able to bond



Jesus, played by Jonathan Roumie, walks with several of his disciples.

with their pre-teen and teen children through the show.

The ministry of Jesus, he believes, is a unifier, and many of the theological disagreements that divide denominations and scholars are based on “things that took place after Jesus was here.” With that in mind, *The Chosen* has become a common ground for many.

Considering the positive feedback and millions of views, Jenkins is intent to keep a measured look on the show’s success. He’s careful not to let that distract him from his mission: making *The Chosen* the best series it can be while remaining faithful to the Scriptures.

“The success is extraordinarily gratifying and beautiful, but I can’t think about it when I’m writing on the blank page for season two or for season three,” he says. “I still have to come up with new stuff. But I think it’s an affirmation that when we’re focused on Jesus, He removes the scales from the eyes of those who

are watching and is able to make an 8-year-old understand it in the same way a 60-year-old does.”

New Faces and Challenges

Although seven seasons are planned for *The Chosen*, the immediate focus is the highly anticipated second season. In season one, the production was based in Utah and the already built Jerusalem backdrop and then moved to Texas for a smaller one. Now the production is “starting to build its own things,” and the crew created its own “bubble” to continue filming even after the COVID-19 pandemic had shuttered many other sets.

“If there’s an outbreak, we have to shut down, and no one wants that,” Jenkins says. “So we have to kind of just stick together, and so having the opportunity to have a job when not everyone does during a time like this makes us all more grateful and certainly increases the intimacy.”

At the end of season one, Jesus

had just proclaimed that He was the Messiah, and He had a group of seven disciples. The new season will continue the story, adding new characters to the group and continuing the biblical account. With new people, new relationships are formed; some relationships are strained, and divisions are possible. Jesus' increasing popularity will also land Him in the crosshairs of other newcomers.

"There are also enemies coming, and people who are threatened," Jenkins says. "That increases the danger quite a bit."

If the "miracle of the fish" was a pivotal moment in season two, another well-known event will soon follow that will no doubt require its own divine intervention.

"We're probably going to be gathering 4,000 people in Texas in February to film Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount," he says. "So that's its own big matzo ball sitting out there."

Whatever challenges and whatever response, for his part, Jenkins is laser-focused on producing seven seasons that cover the life of Christ and all of the major events in His life. He sees himself in the story, offering his own talents and abilities to God, who, in turn, does all the heavy lifting.

"When that boy gave Jesus five loaves and two fish, for him, that's where the transaction ended," he says. "Jesus deemed his gift worthy of acceptance. What happens after I produce a short film for my church is really none of my business. The success of *The Chosen* has been extraordinary. It's beautiful, and I'm grateful for it. But my story would be the same. If *The Chosen* did not have the same success, I would still be content to be wherever, wherever God wants me." ◀

DEWAYNE HAMBY is a pastor and journalist who covers faith-based entertainment. His column, "Reel Faith," can be found at dewaynehamby.com

charismamag.com

The Holy Spirit Is Using 'The Chosen'

Rabbi Jason Sobel, a consultant on the set of 'The Chosen,' says this TV series is soaked in the Spirit's power

Rabbi Jason Sobel discusses the companion teaching series and why the series resonates with viewers.

» How did you get involved in *The Chosen*?

"When Dallas was looking to make the series, one of the things he really wanted to do was both have it be biblically authentic, but he also really wanted to make sure it wasn't a blond-haired, blue-eyed, out of context Jesus and disciples. They wanted to be really authentic to who Jesus truly was, as a Jew and as a rabbi, have the Hebraic understanding. So they brought me in to help with that. One of the things we did early on, before the show was ever filmed, was to take Dallas to Israel. We filmed different things in Israel and discussed different key aspects. One of the videos we did there on the deeper story behind the Christmas story went viral."

» When you read over the scripts, did you have much input?

"There have definitely been some very significant things that I've raised that have been changed or tweaked as a result of some of those discussions. One of the things that makes *The Chosen* unique is its focus. Most of the other things are about Jesus or focused on Jesus as this divine being. This is a very human Jesus, and the focus is on the disciples who encountered Him and how their lives were changed."

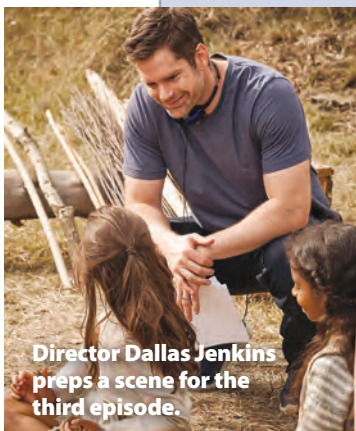
» How do you think the Holy Spirit can use it?

"I think the spirit of creativity is an aspect of the prophetic. The prophetic spirit and the creative spirit are intimately linked. And I think that's where you see even some artists who are not even professed believers, they tap into something. When you tap into creativity, whether you know it or not, you're tapping into an element of the prophetic aspect of the Holy Spirit. I believe God is raising up creatives and media to use as a prophetic voice to the culture. I believe that in 2021, one of the things we are in is a John 21 moment, where they were fishing all night and caught nothing, and God wants to bring this great catch. But before the great catch comes, the nets have to be prepared to catch. It doesn't come unless the nets are prepared. And I think part of that is God is preparing shows like *The Chosen*; it's creating these media nets. And they're going to be part of this great global revival that many of the prophets have spoken of and people have been praying into.

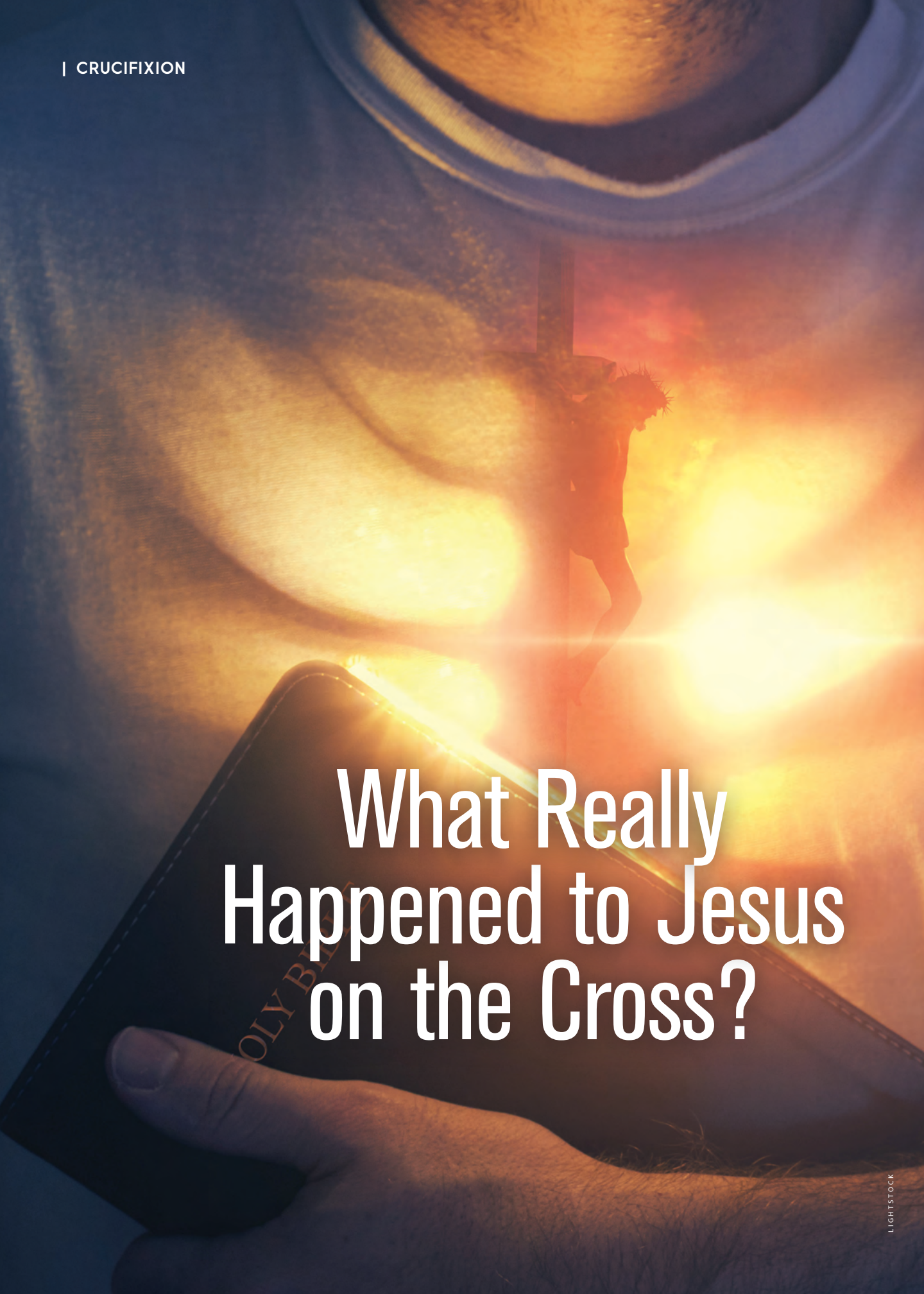
"I meet people all the time who have seen it and tell me how it has impacted their lives, how the Spirit has touched them. They've just wept as they saw Jesus so loving, so compassionate, and the miracles on the screen. It ignited in them a desire to see the supernatural. I think God is using it for salvation, for transformation and to cultivate the supernatural. It's been translated into so many languages to go globally around the world where maybe it's even hard to get missionaries in some of these places.

» When you read the scripts, do you go on set, or is it remote participation?


"It's been a combination. Most of my work is beforehand, reading the scripts and consulting beforehand. I took them to Israel beforehand, and we've done all these little videos around *The Chosen*. But one of the exciting things that's also happening is through my relationship with Trinity Broadcasting Network. TBN is going to be showing the entire first season of *The Chosen* leading up into the second season. I'm filming season one of a teaching series around each one of the episodes of *The Chosen*. That will air starting in February before and after every episode of *The Chosen*.



Director Dallas Jenkins
preps a scene for the
third episode.

A hand is shown holding a black Bible. The cover of the Bible features a glowing, golden projection of a crucifixion scene. The figure of Jesus is on the cross, set against a bright, fiery background. The overall lighting is warm and dramatic, with a strong orange and yellow glow. The text 'What Really Happened to Jesus on the Cross?' is overlaid in white on the Bible cover.

What Really Happened to Jesus on the Cross?



It was bloody. It was excruciatingly painful. And it was a miracle. This Easter, take some time to consider how Christ died for you.

BY R.T. KENDALL

Jesus “breathed his last” (Mark 15:37b, NIV).

These words describe the end of the most painful suffering of any human being in the history of the world. It is not possible for us to know which was greater for Jesus: His physical suffering, which includes the emotional and bodily torture He endured, or the spiritual suffering, when He was taken by surprise over the Father’s rejection when He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34b).

These words also describe the greatest joy of any human being in the history of the world. The joy consisted of the inexpressible relief from His suffering but also the indescribable ecstasy of seeing His Father at that moment. The writer of Hebrews refers to the latter as “the joy set before him” (Heb. 12:2b). Looking forward to that joy was partly what kept Him going, giving Him the determined will not to give up before the ordeal was truly over.

What kind of pain did Jesus endure?

1) Loneliness. Jesus attracted vast audiences, but it was a vacillating following. Five thousand wanted to make Him king (John 6:15), but His teaching resulted in the whole lot deserting Him. Only the 12 disciples stood by Him at that time (John 6:66-69). Jesus had His inner circle—Peter, James and John. He took them with Him on special occasions, including His agonizing time in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37).

Jesus knew in advance that He would suffer death by crucifixion and told this to His disciples (Matt. 20:18-19). He also knew that fulfilling the Law—which no one had ever done but which He promised to do (Matt. 5:17)—meant being God’s sacrificial Lamb. He spoke of finishing the work the Father sent Him to do (John 4:34). As the time of His horrible death drew closer, He said, “For this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27b-28a, ESV).

He knew, therefore, that His hardest days were at hand. Judas Iscariot, who became possessed by Satan (John 13:2, 27), betrayed Him. “My soul is very sorrowful,” He confided to His inner circle at Gethsemane, showing His emotional pain. “Remain here, and watch with me” (Matt. 26:38). He did not wish for loneliness in this dark hour. But they fell asleep. He said to Peter, “Could you not watch with me for one hour?” (Matt. 26:40b). His loud cries and tears in Gethsemane were directed to His Father, who could save Him from death (Heb. 5:7). He was totally devoted to the Father’s will. Succumbing to the fear of man or avoiding the Father’s will to avoid suffering was out of the question. However,

He did pray that, if at all possible, He might somehow be spared the ordeal that had been destined for Him: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). The “cup” referred to the cross. The cross was God’s idea. Jesus did not welcome it. He dreaded it. His agony brought sweat “like great drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44b). He tried once, then twice, to get His inner circle to be there for him. But they kept falling asleep. After a third time when pleading with them to stay awake with Him, He gave up. He concluded that not even one of His closest disciples would be there to comfort Him. “Sleep on now,” He said to them, “and take your rest” (Matt. 26:45b, KJV). Sleep on. Any hope of one of them going to the cross with Him was gone.

Moments later, owing to Judas’ betrayal, Jesus was arrested by the Jewish authorities. Peter, who tried to prove he was the most faithful of all (John 13:9, 37), denied even knowing Him (John 18:25-27). Indeed, all of His disciples forsook Him and fled (Matt. 26:56).

But the loneliness was suddenly intensified beyond all expectation. As we saw above, even His Father turned His back on Him. Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46b).

2) Silence. “Like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7b). “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man” (James 3:2b). One of the proofs that Jesus was perfect—that is, without sin—was His self-control with words. Indeed, “he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22). “He who rules his spirit” is better than “he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32). He was “tempted” (*pepeirasomenon*, Gr. “tested”) just like us, “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15c).

One unguarded comment or any retort that showed they succeeded in needling Him would have been a sin. They hoped that Jesus would lose control of His Spirit as a consequence

of their mocking Him, blindfolding Him, beating Him and demanding He answer them, “Who is it that struck you?” (Luke 22:63-64), would mean Jesus could not be our perfect substitute or sacrifice. Anything or any word that might cause Jesus to lose His temper was hurled at Him. The apostle Paul lost his temper years later when he called the high priest a “whitewashed wall” (Acts 23:3b). But Jesus never—ever—lost His temper or grieved the Holy Spirit by an angry word. King Herod, hoping to see Jesus perform a miracle, questioned Him “at some length,” but he “made no answer” (Luke 23:9).

Jesus was tempted to sin right to the end by what He would say. Satan motivated everybody—from Herod to Pilate, from the priests to the Roman soldiers—to catch Jesus with words. The chief priests together with the scribes and elders mocked Him at the cross, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself” (Matt. 27:41-42). “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross” (Mark 15:29b-30). Had He given the true explanation of His words—that He was referring to the temple of His body (John 2:21)—He would have sinned because that would have been an attempt to clear His name or vindicate Himself. He was in fact “vindicated by the Spirit” (1 Tim. 3:16b).

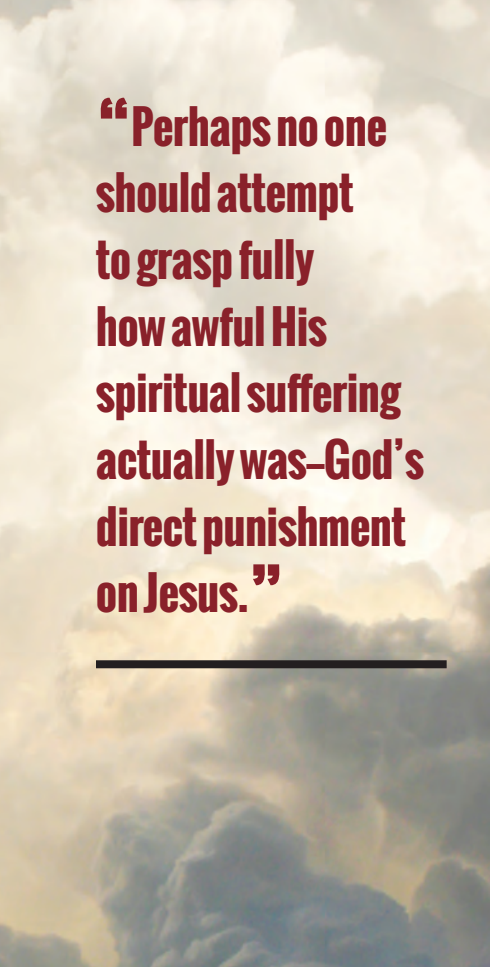
Jesus’ reply to all that was said to Him and about Him—not to mention what they did to Him—was an utter and brilliant silence. As for the Roman soldiers who literally nailed Him to the cross, Jesus looked to heaven and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34a). Was that a pretentious show or a genuine prayer? It was a genuine prayer to God for them to be forgiven. When Jesus told us to pray for our enemy, He meant for us to pray that they will be blessed! As G. Campbell Morgan put it, “I expect to see in heaven those very men who nailed the nails into Jesus’ hands.”



There was yet another kind of silence Jesus had to accept. He was not allowed to explain to anyone why He let the Jews arrest Him or the Roman soldiers crucify Him. Since He had raised Lazarus from the dead only a few days before, surely He could have stopped the entire crucifixion. He could have called 10,000 angels to stop the whole plan of the Jews to kill him.

If only Jesus could have said something to Mary Magdalene, one of His converts. She was only a few feet away and no doubt perplexed—possibly even feeling betrayed because of what was happening, not to mention sobbing her heart out. If only Jesus had been allowed to say, “Mary, it’s OK, I’m atoning for the sins of the world; all this is God’s plan.” But no. Part of His pain was feeling her pain and watching her grieve without being allowed to comfort her by explaining things.

3) Bodily pain. The ancient Roman crucifixion is regarded as the worst kind of pain ever devised in the mind of human beings. It was



“Perhaps no one should attempt to grasp fully how awful His spiritual suffering actually was—God’s direct punishment on Jesus.”

4) Punishment for sin. “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6b). This literally took place on the day Jesus was crucified sometime between noon and 3 p.m. There was an exact moment when He who knew no sin—never having sinned even once—became sin. It is what God intentionally did to His Son. God punished Jesus for what we did. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Surprising as it may seem, it even took Jesus by surprise. It is when Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46b).

He knew undergoing crucifixion would be hard. He knew it would be painful. It is what He dreaded most when He was agonizing in Gethsemane with those loud cries and tears. But He was not expecting this: for His own Father to turn His back on Him. He even addressed His Father as “God”—the only time we know of that He addressed Him this way.

It was retributive punishment—God getting even. It was not a gracious judgment, as God showed to King David for his adultery and murder (2 Sam.12:13). It was God Almighty—the most holy God—venting His anger toward sin by putting our sin on Jesus and then punishing Him for our sin.

Yes. That is what happened to Jesus on the cross. God punished Jesus for what you and I did.

You could say: “That’s not fair.” Agreed. It was not fair. Jesus did not deserve it. He is the only human being in history who never sinned. And what was the thanks He got for not sinning and perfectly doing His Father’s will and fulfilling the Law? Punishment. It wasn’t fair.

This explains Jesus’ pathos and bewilderment for being abandoned by the Father on the cross: “For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Jesus] we [you and I] might become [by faith] the righteousness of God [in God’s sight] (2 Cor. 5:21).

It was not fair. And yet it was nonetheless pure justice. It is why

we have the Bible in a nutshell: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). It took two things to satisfy God’s justice: Jesus’ sinless life plus the shedding of His precious blood. The reason God can be merciful and just at the same time is because Jesus satisfied the justice and wrath of God. God’s wrath was poured out on Jesus. He can now be merciful to us.

At the end of the day, perhaps no one should attempt to grasp fully how awful His spiritual suffering actually was—God’s direct punishment on Jesus. Was it worse than His physical pain? Almost certainly. But we will never know until we get to heaven.

Why did Jesus die? To pay our debt to God—yours and mine. “It is finished”—is the English translation of *tetelestai* (John 19:30), His words when He “breathed his last” (Luke 23:46b). *Tetelestai* was also a colloquial expression in the ancient marketplace that meant “paid in full.”

Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36a). It is so easy to forget this. The purpose of Jesus’ death was not to bring perfect conditions on earth—whether via politics or gifts of the Spirit; it was to make us fit for heaven. Never forget, too, that we get to heaven only by faith in Jesus’ blood. Not by our works. But only by what Jesus did for us on the cross.

“I need no other argument, I need no other plea/ It is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me.”—Eliza E. Hewitt (1851-1920) ♦

R.T. KENDALL is an author, teacher and preacher. He now has a number of books in print, including *We’ve Never Been This Way Before* and *Whatever Happened to the Gospel?*. He was the senior minister at London’s Westminster Chapel from 1977 to 2002. He has earned multiple degrees, including a Doctor of Philosophy from Oxford University and a Doctor of Divinity from Trevecca Nazarene University.

intended to be a gruesome spectacle, the most painful and humiliating death imaginable. For example, the flesh could be ripped off by the whipping before they even started the crucifixion. The nails were 5-7 inches long. Nails were driven into the wrists for extra pain in a way that caused little bleeding but severe pain. Nails were driven into the ankles to extend the suffering. The cross itself would continue to tear the skin off the victim’s back. Gravity was the real executioner: The body hanging was what killed the person. Exposure and dehydration would cause death if all else failed. As the condemned continually pulled himself up to breathe and then released in exhaustion, the person’s back would rub up and down against the raw wood of the cross.

The above is an attempt to envisage—in part—what happened to Jesus on the cross.

“We may not know, we cannot tell/ What pains he had to bear;

But we believe it was for us/ He hung and suffered there.”—C.F. Alexander (1818-1895)

STAYING PURE IN A SEXUALLY CONFUSED WORLD

How to lay the proper foundation
for victory over sexual sin

BY DAVID KYLE FOSTER

And without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

We live in a world of chaos—one result of man’s fall from grace, when Adam and Eve chose to rely on their own wisdom and righteousness rather than God’s. They operated in unbelief—giving priority to their desires rather than trusting in God’s promise to provide for all their needs.

In a sense, by eating the forbidden fruit, they revealed a hidden doubt about God’s goodness—a suspicion that He did not have their best interest in mind, and consequently, that He wasn’t perfect in all His ways.

Oswald Chambers once said, “The core of all sin is the doubt that God is good.” When we choose to sin, at some level deep inside, we have concluded that we know better than God, who in our estimation cannot be fully trusted. In that sense, we have declared freedom from all constraint.

When Adam and Eve sinned, the dominion God gave them was seized by Satan, who then became the “god of this world.” Fortunately, Jesus retook this lost dominion by His defeat of Satan on the cross. This lost dominion was retaken by Jesus Christ, God incarnate, who now offers to share it with those who surrender their life to Him as Lord and Savior.

Dominion and authority only work by faith, however. We must truly believe in God’s goodness and as a result, walk in obedience to His sovereign direction. For it was said of the great saints of old that “through faith [they] ... gained what was promised” (Heb. 11:33, NIV).

continued »







Left to right, David Kyle Foster, Cindy Murdock, Joni Lamb, Landon Schott and Joe Dallas visit on “Joni Table Talk” on the Daystar Television Network.

Where do you get such faith? It is a gift from God to everyone who believes—a gift that must be taken out of the box and used for kingdom purposes! For we are not only saved by faith, but we are sanctified by faith as well.

Lesson No. 1: Without faith in His pure and perfect goodness, it is impossible to please God. It is this faith that overturns the curse and opens the windows of heaven.

The Proper Focus for Obedience

“To know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10a, BSB).

While praying to His Father, Jesus spoke of the primacy of living from a single focus on God—a focus that naturally increases knowledge, faith, humility, intimacy, love and obedience. (Note: “To know” is to be intimate with, either spiritually or physically).

“This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3, MEV).

Since this world is grounded in performance-based righteousness, our instinctive response to being saved is to try to repay God by fashioning a holy life from our own wisdom and power. If we are strong-willed

“Despite having been one of the most sexually bound and broken people on the planet, for the last 40 years, I have never returned to sexual promiscuity, pornography or homosexual behavior.”

enough, that will work for a while, but eventually it will collapse from lack of divine power.

To make matters worse, instead of keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, we usually focus on the things that tempt us—trying to figure out how

to successfully resist them and achieve healing for the brokenness that fuels them.

It’s not that there’s anything wrong with trying to please God or in seeking help from godly counselors. The problem arises when we place our primary focus and hope for change in man’s wisdom instead of putting it in the revealed promises, power, love and person of God.

When I was saved, I told my new pastor that I was so hopelessly bound by sexual sin and brokenness that it was impossible for me to stop. His reply: “Let Jesus do it for you.” It turned out to be the most important lesson of my Christian life.

Newly saved and brimming with passion for Jesus, I’d had a sublime moment of childlike faith and simply believed Him. My life’s focus shifted from an examination of the intricacies of my sin to knowing Him in a deep, intimate way. The results were nothing less than miraculous.

In that place of intimacy, little by little, the Holy Spirit began to show me the roots of my vulnerabilities and challenged me to respond appropriately, but this time, by His power. He healed the brokenness behind the strongholds within me and empowered freedom. The result: Despite having been one of the most sexually bound and broken

people on the planet, for the last 40 years, I have never returned to sexual promiscuity, pornography or homosexual behavior.

“But we all, seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The Bible teaches that it is God who makes us stand firm in Christ—and it is God who works in us to will and to act according to His purpose as long as we seek Him for it, believe He will and sincerely want Him to (Phil. 2:13).

The psalmist tells us, “I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel ... I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be moved (Ps. 16:7-8).

One night, I was complaining to the Lord about a besetting sin: “Lord, you have set me free from sins far worse than this one. Why don’t you set me free from it?” He replied, “Because you still love it!”

You see, deep within our secret heart, we sometimes harbor a love for one sin or another. That is why a lifestyle of intimacy with God is so critical. He can see what is hidden in our heart and alert us to the problem.

Now knowing what the block was, I began earnestly praying for God to replace my love for the sin with a greater love for Him. In that instance, it was the key to freedom. And so, it is in our weakness and dependence on Him that we are made strong.

Lesson No. 2: We will find no lasting freedom from sin’s temporal grip until we learn to continually fix our eyes upon Jesus, turning to Him in faith for power over temptation. Place your focus on God rather than on your sin. The wonder of His felt presence will inspire obedience that will keep you from falling (Jude 24). In short, knowing why you are in bondage to sin helps, but knowing Him heals.

The Proper Motivation for Obedience

As for motivation, it must be love—not duty, guilt, fear or charismamag.com

other worldly motivations. Fear of punishment may have been the reason you turned to Christ for salvation, but love for Christ should be your motivation for obeying Him. For it is Christ’s love that compels us (2 Cor. 5:14). It is His kindness that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

According to the promise of Jeremiah 29:11-14, God calls us to

pursue Him with all our heart. It is then that He reveals Himself to us.

In essence, freedom from the tyranny of sexual sin and the healing of the brokenness that underlies it is a function of falling in love with Jesus at deeper and deeper levels. Our love emanates from direct experience of His love. We love Him because He first loved us. continued »

Testimony: Sex Addiction

Jonathan Daugherty is director of Be Broken Ministries (bebroken.com) of San Antonio, Texas, and he found freedom from sex addiction. Contact him at jonathan@bebroken.com.

The day my wife left in August 1999 was the day I was utterly broken over my sexual sin. After a 13-year journey of self-centered, lustful living, God met me in my brokenness and gave me a fresh experience of His grace as I sobbed uncontrollably on my living room carpet. I was finally ready to embrace godly sorrow and pursue Jesus Christ from a repentant heart.

Over the past two decades, I have discovered how God’s grace ultimately compels true obedience in the believer’s heart. Freedom from sexual addiction did not come by my power to “keep the law,” but rather, it came through daily surrender to God’s gracious gift of His Holy Spirit living within me. As my knowledge and experience of His love grew, so did my desire to faithfully obey—not as a means to earn or repay God, but instead as an expression of abiding gratefulness for His inexpressible love.

God has taught me that my body and sexuality are sacred and good, and that His design for sex is a beautiful metaphor of the intimate covenant love He has for His church. Sex is not a gift to be exploited; it is to be protected and preached as a gospel picture.

There have been many ups and downs on this journey of recovery and growth. Through them all, God’s Spirit has been faithful to exhort and correct. As I have learned to submit to Him, peace and joy have multiplied.

By God’s grace, my wife and I are still married—for 25 years. But the true highlight of my story is the love and faithfulness of Jesus Christ. He promised never to leave me. He keeps that promise to all His followers.

Will you trust Jesus Christ today? No matter where you are on your journey, His grace is sufficient to break any stronghold and transform you into his own likeness.



Jonathan Daugherty

When I was wrestling with the idea of surrendering my life to Jesus, I came across that promise in Jeremiah and said to Him, “Deal! I will seek You with all my heart and expect You to reveal Yourself to me.”

Suddenly, a supernatural aperture opened in my chest and an intense surge of “living water” poured into my heart. It was so intense that I knew that if it went on for even a few seconds more, I would die.

But here’s the rub: The raging river felt like liquid love. It was the living water that Jesus had promised (John 4:10, 13-14), and it put me on the floor. It stretched beyond my wildest imagination. God read my heart and gave me precisely what I needed.

When you see Him as He is—when you are dumbstruck by His

manifest love and glory—doubt about His goodness takes flight. And when you are tempted by sin, it seems ridiculous in comparison.

In this world, “love” is romance, affection, sexual pleasure and/or the mutual exchange of personal desires. But in God’s economy, love is obedience. It is love that produces the natural fruit of obedience (John 14:15, 24).

It all flows from the love of God poured out on the cross. As Harold St. John once said: “The Cross of Christ means nothing until it takes your breath away.”

Lesson No. 3: Freedom from sin does not come from trying harder! It flows naturally when we seek and experience the revealed love of God, which then enables and motivates us to love in return. God’s “love language” is faithful obedience.

“When you see Him as He is—when you are dumbstruck by His manifest love and glory—doubt about His goodness takes flight.”

God’s Blueprint for Sexual Expression

Sexual identity and expression were two of the more prominent areas that descended into chaos after the fall. Why? Because Satan made this area of life one of his main targets. Why? Because sex was designed to be a reflection of the image of God in man. To distort it is to mock God Himself.

One wag has noted: “Sex is not good. Campbell’s Soup is good—mmm, mmm, good! Sex is not great. Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes are great. Sex is holy! Sex is sacred!”

Sexuality was created by God to symbolize and prefigure the marriage between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25-32). Any departure from that holy, covenant union is forbidden throughout Scripture.

In combating Satan’s distortion of human sexuality, a great weapon in the believer’s arsenal is the knowledge of God’s purpose for sexual behavior—a purpose that is greater than mere procreation and is inapproachably brilliant in design. It lifts us above legal structures and into a glory realm of faith, wonder and praise. It provides a reason for adhering to God’s design, something this world sorely needs.

Since the union of a man and woman in holy matrimony is designed in all its parts to reflect the

Testimony: Homosexuality

Linda Jernigan is director of Linda Jernigan Ministries (lindajernigan.com) of Park Forest, Illinois. Contact her at lindablessed2@yahoo.com.

My path into lesbianism initiated from a lack of identity from my natural father, who abandoned me as a baby. My quest for identity caused me to become that which I longed for: a man.



Linda Jernigan

As a teenager, I altered my exterior to reflect a masculine persona. I wore masculinity as an armor to conceal the rejection and deep scar of abandonment rooted in my heart. As a result, I spent the next 20 years in the lesbian lifestyle, living as a transgendered man. Because I always felt different as a child, I wrongly equated that difference with sexuality, when, in fact, living as a man didn’t resolve my internal conflicts of gender confusion. An introduction to Jesus in August 2000 reversed my identity confusion, and my true identity as a woman was restored and embraced.

Since that time, my reliance on God’s Spirit has kept me from faltering.

My identity is solidified in Him. I now live a fulfilled, peaceful life through God’s love, which settled all confusion about my gender and identity; I am His daughter! I now know that I am created in God’s image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26).

Accepting Jesus into my heart over 20 years ago was the best decision I’ve ever made.

Testimony: Childhood Sexual Abuse

chaste and faithful relationship God intends to have with man, divorce, adultery, homosexual behavior and every kind of perverse sexual practice are an affront to the very image of God.

And so, it is our unbelief, independence, performance-driven self-righteousness and lack of trust in God's goodness that laid the foundation for the deepening bondage and blindness that envelops us all.

Lesson No. 4: God wants to marry you! As a part of the church, you are the bride of Christ. The parameters He has placed around sexual expression are there to protect the image of God, our eternal marriage with Him in heaven and the revelation of His glory (Rev. 19:7-9).

God's Help in Sexual Temptation

God has made some awesome promises regarding the way of escape from sin.

"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and excellence, by which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that through these things you might become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

After listing the qualities that can be produced in increasing measure through our participation in His plan, God says in verse 10b: "If you do these things, you will never stumble." Wow!

The Holy Spirit tells us in Galatians 5:16 that if we live by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Why? Because we have been crucified with Christ. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). By faith, we must reckon ourselves dead to sin so it will no longer be our master (Rom. 6:11,14).

We must believe these promises with childlike faith. As fallen human beings, our progress may be slow and punctuated by periodic

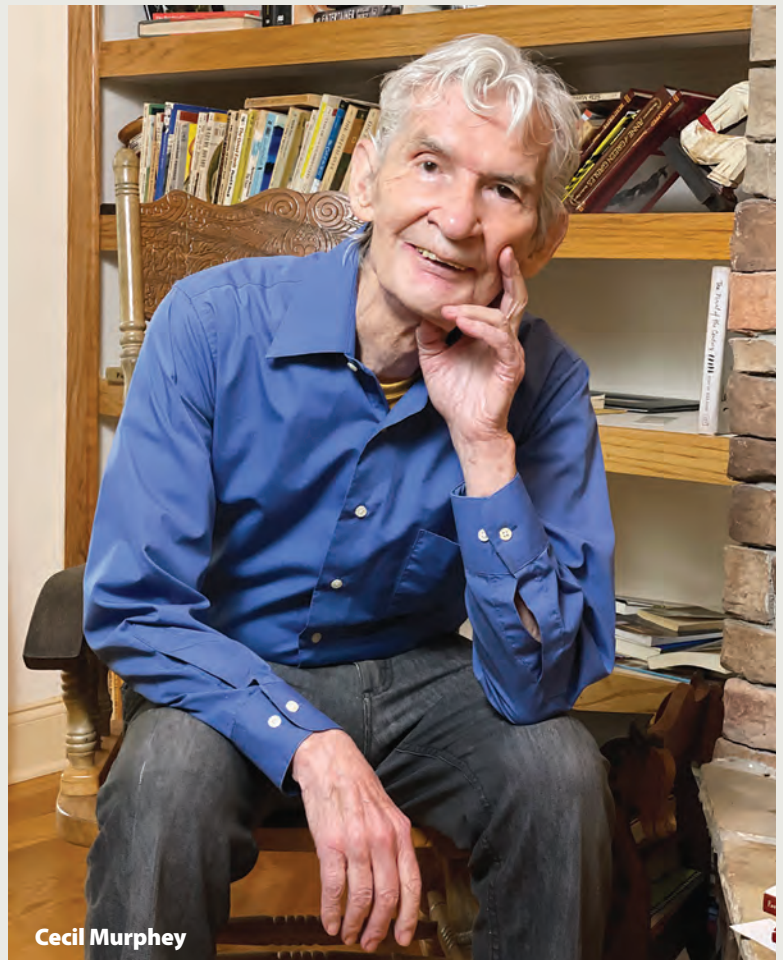
Cecil Murphey (cecilmurphey.com) has written or co-written more than 135 books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *90 Minutes in Heaven* (with Don Piper) and *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* (with Dr. Carson). Contact him at cec.murp@comcast.net.

My alcoholic father regularly beat me and called me lazy. From as early as I can remember, my role was to "take care of Mom," who was probably an undiagnosed bipolar. Her lack of affection made me feel unwanted, unloved and worthless. I never heard the word "love" from either of my parents.

When I was a preschooler, my parents rented a room in our house to an older man, and he showed me attention and affection. Several times a week, he offered me raspberry jam on soda crackers to come into his room. After gaining my affection, he sexually assaulted me and my mentally challenged older sister. My sister innocently told our parents what he did to her. Dad threw him out of the house.

My parents showed concern for my sister. But no one ever asked if our renter had touched me. I believed they didn't care.

I became a believer at age 21 and felt that if "God so loved the world," He had to accept me. I didn't feel loved. My wife loved me unconditionally, and through her help and prayers, I sensed that God truly loved me. After that, I was able to work through my childhood issues.



Cecil Murphey

failure, but the promise remains true: God offers forgiveness to those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9). Consequently, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

It is His grace that teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and makes us eager to do what is good (Titus 2:11-14).

The Bible teaches that the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. If the Spirit of God lives in you, it is your choice whether or not to be controlled by the sinful nature or by the Spirit (Rom. 8:6, 9a).

Take heart! The very reason Jesus came was to destroy the power of the enemy (1 John 3:8b). He is by your side, both in victory and

in failure. So keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning. Snakes will not go near fire! God has promised to keep you from falling (Jude 24).

Lesson No. 5: Through the Holy Spirit, God has provided power that, when used, conquers sin and temptation. Indeed, the mercies of the Lord are new every morning (Lam. 3:21-26).

Testimony: Gender Identity

Kathy Grace Duncan lived as a man for many years. She tells her story in the documentary *Tranzformed: Finding Peace With Your God-Given Gender*. Contact her at puregrace@q.com.

One night as I was preparing a teaching on identity, I thought about all the things the Lord had taught me about who I am. Then it hit how free I am. I was no longer attracted to women, and I had no desire to live as a man ever again. I searched my heart, but it just wasn't there. I didn't know when it had changed or how it had changed. I didn't even know how long I had felt this way.

I asked the Lord, "When did this happen? How did it happen? How did You change my thinking?"

I then saw the Lord put His head down and run His fingers over His lips—as if He were pondering my question. He looked up and said, "I don't know."

"Wait ... what? How do You not know?" I asked Him. "You were there with me; You saw me. I know You were there with me; I know You walked with me. How do *You* not know?"

Then Jesus said, "I never saw you that way." I was undone. He only ever saw me as the daughter He created me to be. He didn't see me through what I had done but who He created me to be.

Many years ago, I had given over the ownership of my gender identity to a belief that being a woman was bad, that it meant I would be hated and vulnerable. These beliefs convinced me there was no value in being a woman. They also controlled the pursuit of the lie that to be safe and acceptable, I must be a man. Eventually I transitioned into living as a man, and for 11 years, I suppressed my female identity with hormones. Thankfully, God called me back to the woman He created me to be. I said yes to Him and began to lay down my false identity.

I was focused on the physical changes that needed to take place, but the Lord was after my heart. He wanted to address everything that stood in the way of my view of who I was. Though I thought it was important to focus on going back to being the woman God created me to be, He thought it was more important I go forward into knowing my identity in Christ—how He valued me and how deeply loved I am.

Today I can confidently say I own both my gender and my femininity. I know He created me as a woman and wired me to be feminine, and I possess everything I need to live and thrive as a woman made in His image.



Kathy Grace Duncan

Complete Deliverance From Sexual Sin

Can someone who is trapped in sexual sin find freedom? Can they be healed from their wounds and delivered from the power of the enemy? Absolutely!

In my 40 years of ministry, I have known countless thousands of sexually bound and broken people—homosexuals, transsexuals, sex addicts, fornicators, adulterers and so on—who now live chaste and holy lives.

If we get these foundational issues right, permanent deliverance, freedom and transformation will be ours.

We are no longer who we used to be. Even though our "old man" continually tries to get us to believe in him rather than in the promises of God, our old man is dead. But in Christ, we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

"Put off the former way of life in the old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ... put on the new nature, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).

Practice these things, and you will do well. ◀

READ MORE: *To gain further perspective on God's desires for victory in this area, visit purity.charismamag.com.*

DAVID KYLE FOSTER, D.MIN., is the founder of *Mastering Life Ministries* (masteringlife.org) and author of *Sexual Healing: Reference Edition*. Listen to his *Pure Passion* podcast at cpnshows.com/show/purepassion.

SIMPLY CHRIST

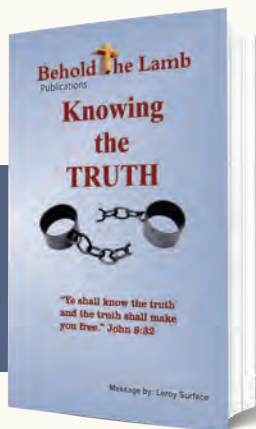


Sharing the simplicity
that is in Christ

SPIRITUAL DECEPTION

None of us want to be deceived, especially when it concerns the eternal destiny of our soul. Yet, spiritual deception is one of the foremost things Jesus and the early apostles warned us against. There is a simple and obvious truth which we tend to lose sight of. **"We are rarely deceived by those whom we believe are sent by Satan. Deception almost always comes through someone we believe has been sent by God."**

The Bible tells us before the return of Jesus Christ, *"that man of sin"* will be revealed *"sitting in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God."* II Thessalonians 2:3-4. Some believe this speaks of a person called "The Antichrist" who will sit in a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.



**FREE
BOOK**
Knowing the Truth

Yet, the Apostle Paul, who wrote these things, was adamant that the church is *"the temple of God."* I Corinthians 3:17. This being the case, Paul must have been speaking of something in the church which was not of God, but presented itself to be God!

Jesus personally warned us these things would happen before his return. He said, *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."* Matthew 24:24. In the phrase *"if it were possible,"* the words *"it were"* were added by Bible editors. What Jesus actually said is *"...if possible, they shall deceive the very elect."* We all must understand this one thing. **"It is not impossible for you, or I, to be deceived!"**

Paul said this *"man of sin"* who would be revealed sitting in the Temple of God, would do according to *"the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness..."* II Thessalonians 2:9-10. In other words, this *"man of sin"* would use signs, lying wonders, and every trick of Satan to deceive the people of God who also gathered in the house of God. It is certain this great deception which Paul warned of would happen in the midst of those who believed they were following Christ.

The apostle gave one primary reason this *"man of sin"* was able to deceive the people and cause them to perish. He said, *"...because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."* II Thessalonians 2:10. These are those whom God sought to reach, sought to warn, and sought to reveal the truth to, but they did not want to hear it. They seemed to love the deception. It told them things they wanted to hear. II Timothy 4:3. The truth did not matter. They loved the word of their favorite "messenger" more than they loved the word of God. So finally, the apostle said, *"...for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* II Thessalonians 2:11-12.

There is, however, another people spoken of in the scripture. These are those who *"love of the truth."* The truth matters more to these than personality, signs, or great phenomenon. These are like those in Berea who did not judge the gospel based upon their traditions or personal beliefs, but *"...received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* Acts 17:11. They are like the Apostle Paul, who weighed the record God gave in the scripture against the many voices who denied it, and wrote, *"let God be true, but every man a liar..."* Romans 3:4.

Sometimes the truth of God comes to us as the great treasure for which we have always searched, but sometimes it hits us like a freight train when it comes. Regardless of how it comes, *"the truth"* is the truth. The truth may not be what we presently want to hear, but it is always what we need to hear. It may seem difficult to "love" when it first comes to us. Yet, for those who love the truth because it is "the truth," it will deliver them from every work of darkness and certainly save their souls.

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THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

BY ADAM MORRIS

Pastor Nicolay Novik suffered persecution in his native country of Belarus because of his Christian faith. He was even fined for hosting church services. That's why he made the difficult decision to move to the United States 20 years ago.

In July 2001, he arrived in Philadelphia with his wife and seven children. He planted Word of Life Church, a predominantly Russian-speaking congregation. Today it has 800 weekly attendees.

"In the past, the Slavic church had only Jesus to rely on," Pastor Novik tells *Charisma*. "Our biggest treasure was our freedom in Christ. This gave us the joy and strength to go on. Christ was our source for everything. We had no one else to trust or to help us."

Today, Novik's church is not only reaching Philadelphia but also the Russian-speaking world. Many mission teams are sent out from Word of Life. And one member, an immigrant from a former Soviet republic, has planted dozens of Christian radio stations in Central Asia.

Alex Novik, 36, the pastor's oldest son, owns a graphic design business in Philadelphia. He was 16 when he came to the United States, and he and his wife have been leaders in youth and young adult ministry. The younger Novik sees God's hand in bringing so many Slavic Christians to America.

"Slavic churches can pray for hours without music and a cozy atmosphere," Alex says. "I believe the Slavic church is here in the United States for prayer and action. But Slavic Christians also need a deep encounter with God, just like all other Christians in America. It is easy to get used to a comfortable and easy life here. Endless opportunity can cause you to stray from the true calling and purpose God has for you."

All over the United States, pockets of Slavic Christians are building churches and spreading the gospel from their new home base. Most of them are Pentecostal or Baptist. The highest concentrations of Russian-speaking believers are in Jacksonville, Florida; Sacramento, California; Seattle; Boston; Philadelphia; St. Louis; and Dallas.

Why did God bring these immigrants to America? Perhaps God knew we in America needed some encouragement and reinforcement. I have done mission work in Russia, so I've had the opportunity to watch this Slavic movement grow in the United States. I believe in the same way one part of the body supplies

Thirty years ago, a wave of Christians came to the United States to escape Soviet persecution. Today, God is using these immigrants to bring revival to our nation.



Vik Fomenko declares freedom from dead works at Kingdom Movement in Vancouver, Washington.

another, the Lord calls one part of His church to strengthen and comfort the rest of the body of Christ for a season. And in this season, I have found exactly that in some up-and-coming Slavic-American leaders.

My friend Vik Fomenko, a Bible teacher in Vancouver, Washington, told me recently that he believes

Slavic leaders can help the church in the U.S. develop new vision during this intense time of shaking.

“God is restoring spiritual sight to the church today,” Fomenko says. “Between COVID and the recent election, so many people in the church are stuck looking at what’s happening on earth. The church

is deactivated when we see in the natural, but the Lord is revealing those who aren’t shaken by what they see in the natural. The Lord is sending leaders to raise the church’s vision so that we see His blueprint, from His perspective.”

I believe a major part of the next phase for the church in America is the refreshment and re-fire a small, but mighty group of young Slavic-American leaders bring to the table. These are young leaders who have come out of spiritually dark places in the former USSR, and whose parents were thrilled to immigrate to the U.S.

In many ways, they’ve kept what is good about the Slavic identity they’ve come from, while also taking on major aspects of America’s spiritual heritage and calling.

There will most certainly be other parts of the body, specialties or types of ministries that the Lord will also call to supply His family in America with what it needs, but when I see the fire and passion of many Slavic-American leaders, I believe the Lord has put something in them that can help spur us on as the church in America. The question is: Are we willing to receive it?

Passionate Faith

About a decade ago, an unbelieving professor made a point about the Russian soul that has stuck with me ever since. I had been studying the Russian language for a year at a secular university program. During one class, a drunk man stumbled by our classroom window and fell face first into the snow. The professor and I had been discussing the incredible sacrifice the USSR made to defend their land against Hitler when he pointed at the drunk guy picking himself up out of the snow and said, “If that man felt he had purpose, he’d be willing to push himself to the point of death in order to fulfill that purpose. Instead, he’s probably ruined his family and will never do anything good in life.”

That stung. While certain aspects of that statement can apply to all of humanity, my unbelieving professor opened up a revelation for me. I

realized that that was the key to the contrast between my believing and unbelieving Russian-speaking friends.

When they decide they don't need God, they tend to run as fast as they can from the Lord, but when they burn for the Lord, they burn red-hot. This infectious passion could act as a catalyst for so many in the American church today.

Meesh Fomenko, a powerful evangelist, is a young Slavic leader who burns with such a passion. "I believe I am called as a prophetic voice to this generation to reach, raise and release," he says. "Reach the world with the gospel, raise disciples in their identity and release influencers to transform the world."

As believers, it would be easy to wait until things calm down and don't feel as chaotic before deciding on our next steps in our relationship with the Lord or our plans for ministry. Instead, we should take more of Fomenko's example. While the enemy would like us to be on the sideline, waiting until things become easier or clearer, ministers like Fomenko aren't waiting for calm but striking back at the gates of hell in the midst of chaos.

We all need to be reminded from time to time of our basic marching orders as Christians, especially with the disappointment so many in our country feel after the 2020 election. Pulling on the passion of these young, Slavic leaders can help us reset our focus and reignite our hunger.

Vlad Savchuk, pastor of Hungry Generation church in Pasco, Washington, is another leader who exemplifies the passion of the Russian-speaking people. He shared with me his perspective on reigniting the passion in the American church, saying, "Churches now often grow through transfer growth instead of plundering the gates of hell. We've become houses of preaching instead of houses of prayer. I encourage the church in America to get radical in prayer, to burn again with a heart for the lost and to raise their expectations for the miraculous and for confronting demons."



Vlad Savchuk ministers at Awakening Nights, a revival gathering in Sacramento, California.

"I encourage the church in America to get radical in prayer, to burn again with a heart for the lost and to raise their expectations for the miraculous and for confronting demons." —Vlad Savchuk

What would we look like if just half the church in America burned with the passion Savchuk describes here? Let's take the passion of these leaders and have a moment to truly reset our vision on the Lord and His mission in our lives, seeking Him and His kingdom above all else.

Generations Working Together

One other area we as American Christians can glean from these young Slavic leaders is honor between the generations. Many of these leaders have fought to walk in a kingdom mentality in their ministries, and that has borne the fruit of a culture of honor, especially between the generations.

This isn't something only available to Slavic cultures. In fact, as Russell Korets, a Slavic-American pastor in Redmond, Washington, puts it, this type of honor goes against much of traditional Slavic culture.

If you look at those of us with a Russian and Ukrainian background, you can see that many of us with that background aren't ready to say thank you to our forefathers," Korets says. "We are anxious to do everything in a new way, and we often are too quick to abandon our past. But I think that we've gained so much in our faith in large part because of the faith of our forefathers. We must look at their sacrifice, thanking them

properly, and then move forward. They invested into us something very vital—holiness, seeking God and prayer. And when you add to this a ministry and passion for people, something supernatural begins to happen.”

Under communism, the government, in many ways, becomes everyone’s de facto parent. That is why Russia was known as one of the most fatherless countries in the world after the USSR fell. It had some of the highest numbers in the world in alcoholism, abortion, divorce and domestic abuse. When the state stopped directing and providing, it became too much of a burden for many Slavic men to provide for their families, causing them to abandon their families through alcoholism and suicide. You can probably imagine the wave of broken families that came out of such a broken system.

In the churches in these countries that were part of the Soviet Union,

“I learned community in Russian-speaking churches growing up, but I learned freedom in American churches.”

—Daniel Mironichenko

however, the families were able to stay more intact after its fall. Their faith helped to act as an anchor, even amid the hopelessness and poverty they saw all around them.

Fast forward to today, when most of the churches that were planted by the families who immigrated in the late '80s and early '90s are ready to transfer leadership to the next generation. These mothers and fathers

in the Lord have kept their way of doing church intact in many ways for decades, even down to the dress and song choice. They persevered under great persecution and want to hang on to the parts of their life and culture that were areas of victory.

But the young leaders are on fire and are anxious to reach their English-speaking communities. This type of transition between the generations can lead to a number of issues for many churches, Slavic or otherwise. In the case of Slavic churches though, coming from a culture not known for honor between the generations has created an extra barrier.

My friend Irina Kralenko is one of the directors of SOLD, a ministry school in Orlando, Florida. I asked her about this transition between the generations.

“[The older believers] have been through so many trials and so much persecution, and yet they remained faithful to their God,” Kralenko

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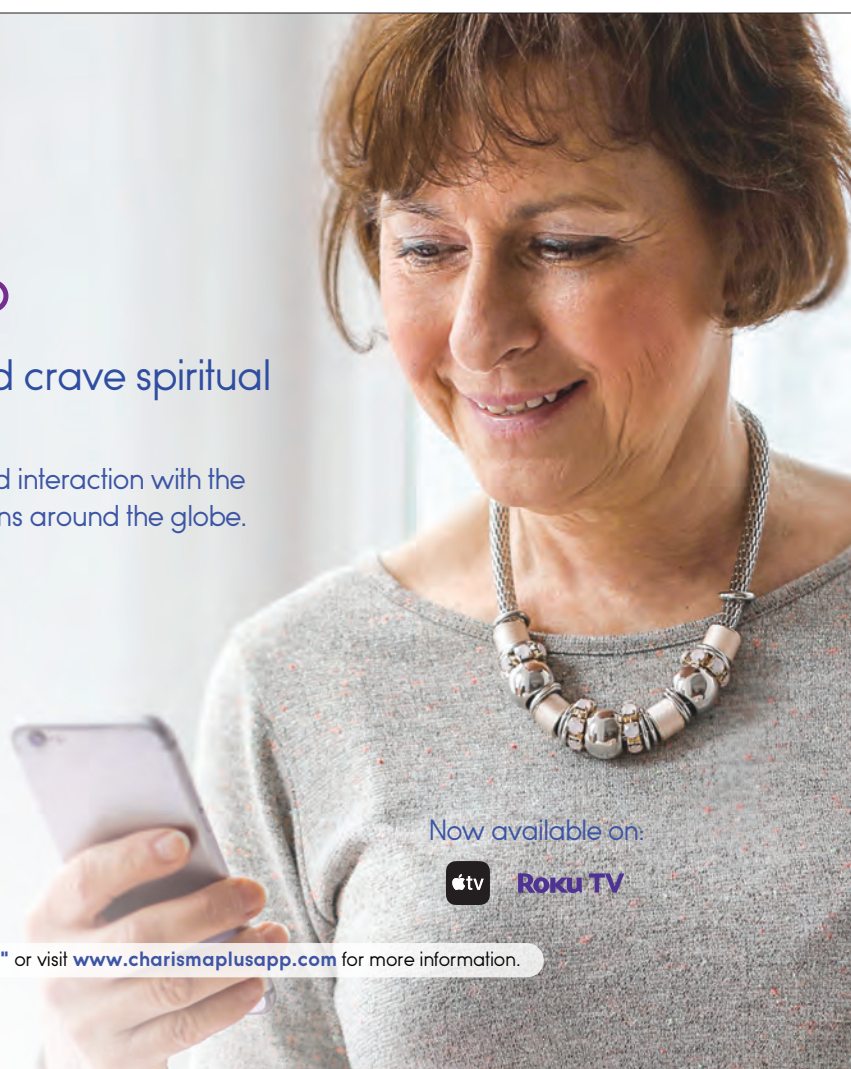
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says. “Through the years, they might have adopted traditions that could be irrelevant nowadays, so the younger generation is breaking free from certain traditions, stepping into their personal encounters and cultivating intimacy with the Lord. My dream, though, is that we would become a true family, to see the culture of honor established in communities between generations. My heart would be for the younger generation and older generation to come together in unity for the greater good in the Lord.”

The honor that Kralenko and other young Slavic leaders have cultivated toward the older generation while still moving forward into what the Lord has called them to do is truly admirable. It didn’t happen by accident though. They have fought to renew their hearts and minds to see other leaders, especially their spiritual fathers and mothers, from heaven’s perspective.

In some cases, the transition between leaders has still been messy. Some from the younger generation have pursued what they believed the Lord was calling them to and neglected what He was already doing around them. And some of the mothers and fathers have insisted their way of doing church is the only right way.

In the midst of some of the mess that has come from transition, these young leaders have kept their hearts in a good place toward their elders, even when those elders didn’t understand them and, in some cases, rejected them outright. But the young leaders also understand that dishonoring those who came before them would only cut off the fruit of the victories of the past, so they’ve fought past the rejection.

When I see the victory that these Russian-speaking leaders have fought for in the area of honor, I’m reminded of so many groups and individual leaders who could use that revelation in their own lives. If we could

unlock our hearts and receive a deeper revelation of honor, I believe thanksgiving and gratitude would replace grumbling and division. Keeping our hearts in that place of honor would help us to keep what has been gained in the areas of worship, healing, prayer and seeking the Lord’s face—without having to reinvent the wheel in future generations.

Power in Unity

I’ve received powerful impartations in my life from individuals, ministries and movements. By honoring what the Lord is doing in these Russian-speaking leaders, we can unlock the spiritual treasure brought from their spiritual culture. I’ve been surprised by something the Lord has done in my heart though. As I’ve honored them, I’ve been reminded of what is so special about our own culture and heritage as American believers.

Daniel Mironichenko is a powerful

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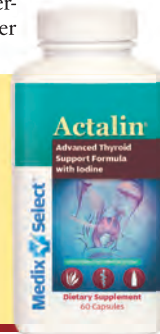
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young Slavic leader who is aware of what he has gleaned from both American and Slavic churches. I asked him about how he would encourage his brothers and sisters in the church in America.

“There is a lot of freedom that the Lord has empowered us with,” Mironichenko says. “I believe that the American church has so much to offer, so much to give. As a byproduct of both, I’ve been able to gain from both Russian and American churches. I learned community in Russian-speaking churches growing up, but I learned freedom in American churches. I’d want the American churches to be reminded of the freedom that I gleaned from them. That freedom is empowering, and it allows us to step out and dream and begin to reach the lost.”

Andrey Shapoval is another leader who walks in the best of both the Russian and American cultures. His powerful annual conference, Kingdom Domain, has become a hub for young Slavic-American leaders who are driven by the passion of the Slavic world paired with the freedom and empowerment they’ve learned in their American upbringing. The results so far have been glorious!

Getting to see the passion and honor these young Slavic leaders have combined with that freedom and empowerment has been a boost to my own faith. The Lord isn’t done with the church in America, and receiving from these leaders in this season has reminded me of that.

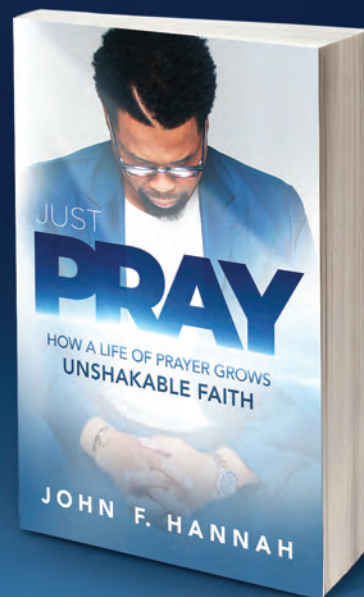
I believe His hand is on these young Slavic leaders and what they are bringing will help us reset our vision and combine the best testimonies of what God has done and is doing between the generations. In other words, the Russians are coming—and in this case, I couldn’t be more excited! ◀

ADAM MORRIS *has a passion for revealing the Father’s love and equipping believers to hear His voice. He and his wife, Katherine, were missionaries in Russia and are now itinerant ministers based in Jacksonville, Florida.*

THE ANSWER TO YOUR NEED IS UNLOCKED THROUGH PRAYER

While prayer has not been a “hot topic” for many Christians, it is the most substantive course one could ever enroll in. Pastor John Hannah shares insights on how prayer is the most under-utilized tool in the treasure chest of Christianity, and it is a MUST HAVE.

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| TESTIMONY

How a Chinese Atheist Found God

It was not until I arrived on a campus in the United States that I encountered Jesus Christ. Today He is using me to bring His supernatural healing.

BY HAO XU, PH.D.

Growing up in the '70s, I was taught daily that communism was the best thing that ever happened to China and that Chairman Mao, the “savior” from the East, was incapable of error. Around the age of 14, I recognized I was fed a lie and decided I would never be brainwashed again.

After college, I moved to Canada in 1994 to pursue my graduate training in biological sciences. I spent two years at the University of Waterloo (60 miles west to Toronto) and then six more years at the University of Toronto. I was a steadfast atheist (indebted to the indoctrination of the Chinese education system) who tried very hard to make it in academia. Two decades later, I would learn that one of the biggest revivals—called the “Toronto Blessing”—was taking place not far from where I lived, but at the time, the revival stopped short of impacting my world despite its vicinity.

In 2003, I had received my Ph.D. in biochemistry and was offered a postdoctoral fellowship at Dartmouth Medical School in Hanover, New Hampshire, across the Connecticut River from Vermont. Shortly after I arrived at Dartmouth, my first marriage fell apart. It was a shockingly painful experience, even though I was the one who instigated it (I foolishly blamed my marriage for my unhappiness and wanted the freedom to find my true love). I suffered panic attacks and insomnia for quite a period of time.

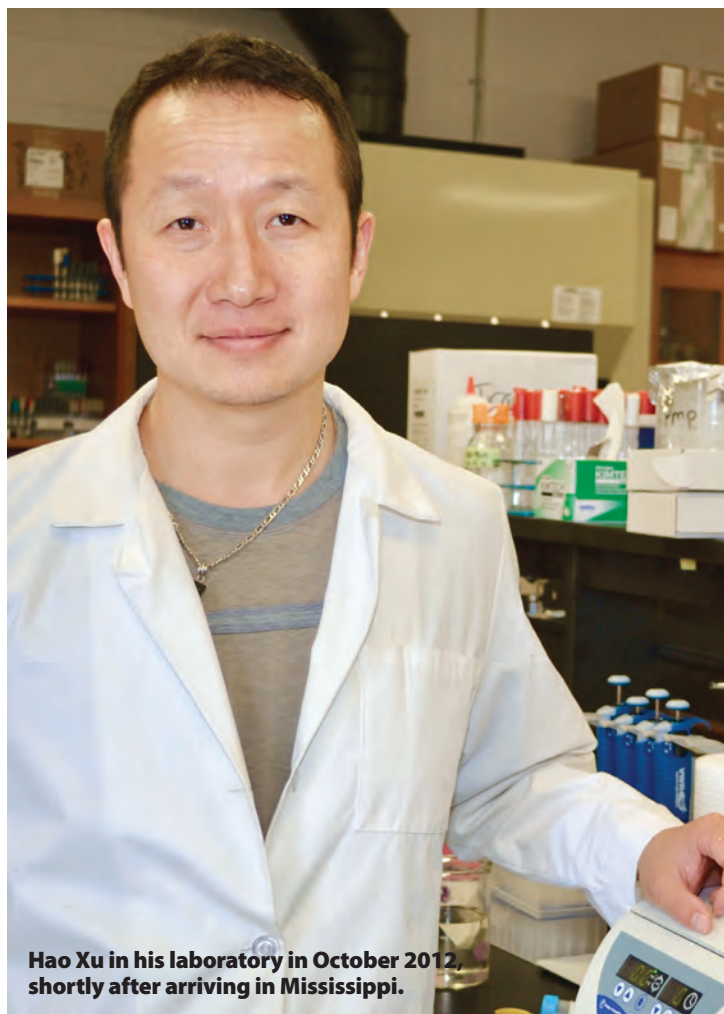
To deal with the stress and turmoil, I devoured self-help books, sought psychological therapy, attended life-coaching workshops, undertook Buddhist meditation, practiced Taoism Qigong, intermingled with medium and New Age healers, and eventually became a full-fledged New Ager myself.

As a New Ager, I had a very high opinion of Jesus, but I stayed away from Christianity for three reasons: I did not see the power of the gospel manifested in the marriage of my parents, both of whom were believers; the numerous denominations in Christianity convinced me the church had been corrupted; and Christians I encountered then did not have or accept supernatural experiences that I knew existed and were possible. Out of pride and ignorance, I considered my own spirituality superior to that of modern-day church goers. Meanwhile, I held dear a naive belief that my life would be filled with joy should I eventually find my soulmate.

A Dream Come True

I was still in the aforementioned condition in spring 2012 when The University of Southern Mississippi offered me a tenure-track faculty position. A few months after I arrived in Mississippi and a day or two before Thanksgiving, I had a dream. It was one of those unusual dreams in which everything was remarkably colorful and tangible.

continued »



Hao Xu in his laboratory in October 2012, shortly after arriving in Mississippi.

In the dream, I was dying of a terminal disease. Two of my former classmates were talking to Lily, my secret crush in middle school, hoping she would admit to me that she had always loved me. I was astonished because it never crossed my mind that the most beautiful girl in my school would like me. In the dream, Lily insisted it was not appropriate to voluntarily share her feelings with a boy. I remember walking right into their presence, and suddenly the scene in the dream was transformed; Lily and I were in our old age as husband and wife.

I woke up at once, unable to believe what I had was just a dream. I was persuaded that the girl whom I had barely spoken to since middle school must have liked me in reality. To find out, I messaged her via the Chinese social media platform WeChat (Both Lily and I were urged to join the same online group a month before, from which I learned she was a single mother living in Hawaii). This was how I got connected with Lily, who later told me that she had not harbored any romantic feelings toward me, nor was she interested in marrying a nonbeliever. The reason she allowed our relationship to develop was largely due to her own encounter with God.

A few days before I received my dream, Jesus spoke to Lily in an audible voice that she would meet the man for her and the dad for her daughter, Natali, at Thanksgiving. Immediately after Lily and I started to message each other, Jesus used a series of dreams and visions to show her that she and I would be perfect together and that I would be saved.

So by the grace of God, Lily and I were connected in November 2012, engaged on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2013, and married shortly afterward. When I was in Hawaii proposing to Lily, I had a conversation with her pastor, Pastor Ron, who asked if I would accept Jesus as my Savior. Knowing it was Jesus who brought Lily to me, I did not hesitate. I said the sinner's prayer, and several months later, Lily's spiritual mother baptized

“I was still pursuing my own success in the world while fighting insecurity and anxiety that had plagued my life since an early age.”

me in a swimming pool. Lily closed down her travel business, sold her apartment and moved to Mississippi along with Natali, who has since become my daughter.

The Path to Breakthrough

We joined a local church as I began my new life as a Christian. However, I was miserable. On the outside, I dressed up every Sunday to go to church, but on the inside, I did not experience any real change. I was still pursuing my own success in the world while fighting insecurity and anxiety that had plagued my life since an early age. Little did I know that I was on the path to three breakthroughs.

The first breakthrough came one evening when I was reading the Gospel of John. In verse 6 of chapter 14, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Shocked by what I had read, I immediately closed the Bible. That verse went directly after a core belief I had, that every spiritual path leads to the same destiny. After calming down, I opened the Bible again, but that verse was still there. I closed the Bible one more time and said out loud, “He did not say it. This cannot be right.” But an even louder voice from within me replied, “But you are not God!” The battle went back and forth. On one hand, I recognized that by accepting John 14:6, I would probably lose all my New Age friends who had supported and encouraged

me when I was recovering from the lowest point of my life. On the other, I knew I could no longer pretend to be a Christian if I chose not to accept the Word of God as it was written. Eventually but reluctantly, I gave in to the voice inside. With a heavy heart, I acknowledged the authority of the written Word of God. Looking back, that moment of surrender opened a door for many blessings to come.

The second breakthrough came after I stumbled upon a book titled *The Essential Guide to Healing*. Randy Clark and Bill Johnson, two people I had not heard of, co-authored the book. Johnson ended his testimonies with a reference to Matthew 10:8 (“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”) Without fanfare, he wrote, “Jesus did not command us to pray for the sick. He commanded us to heal them.” In my heart, something exploded. I started to wail uncontrollably for more than an hour. Released along with my tears were years of disappointment and unbelief. I felt as if the Spirit of God were reaching deep into my soul, tearing down some strongholds (established through my prior involvement in occult practice) while restoring what the devil stole.

My third breakthrough took place when I was wrestling with my lack of emotional connection with Jesus. In my head, I knew He died for me, but I did not feel or behave as someone who had been given a second chance. It bothered me for months. Then I found myself reading Chapter 17 of the Gospel of John, which described Jesus' visit to the Garden of Gethsemane. After praying for Himself, He prayed for His disciples, who were with Him. Then He said, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20). The eyes of my heart were suddenly opened: Jesus, the Son of God, was praying for *me* (and for *you*) right there, and right before He surrendered Himself for crucifixion! This is how and why I (and you) got saved! I burst into tears and was

Dr. Hao and his bride, Lily, celebrate at their wedding reception in Hawaii in May 2013.



instantaneously flooded with tender love from Christ Jesus. That day, the gift of salvation became personal.

An Invitation to God

My walk with Jesus became more authentic as a result of these breakthroughs that took place within a span of one year, but I still struggled with fear and insecurity. I was particularly afraid, after I read about Saul, Israel's first king, that God might zap me should I misstep. I was also anxious about my academic career. Every time my experiment failed to produce expected results, I would start to worry about my ability to publish and my chance to secure research grants and tenure. I knew worry was counterproductive, but I could not stop it.

In 2015, after learning that the Voice of the Apostles Conference was to be held in Nashville, Tennessee, I decided to take my whole family there. Two weeks before the trip, I asked Jesus to do something about my anxiety. I reminded Him that I was promised freedom according to His Word in John 8 (verses 31-32), yet I still felt like a slave. I then gave Him permission to rewire my brain if necessary (Now that I think about it, I was literally inviting God

to brainwash me). The conference turned out to be monumental in my life. Both Lily and I were blown away by what we saw and heard (for example, a woman sitting in front of me was delivered from demonic oppression when Heidi Baker was worshipping Jesus on stage). God used generals like Baker, Johnson, Clark, Reinhard Bonnke, John Arnold and many others to show us what was possible in Christ. During the five-day conference, Lily and I woke up every morning around 2:00, finding ourselves shaking nonstop under the presence of God. When the conference was over, I could not help but notice that the ugly spirit of anxiety had departed. More importantly, I received my new identity; I was no longer an orphan but a child of God.

The unexpected fruits of the Nashville trip include the activation of the gift of healing, a noticeable increase of authority and power in my prayer and a deeper hunger for God. I began to serve in the local homeless shelter and minister to college students who were distraught. By then, I was fully aware that Clark was used by God to catalyze the Toronto revival, which I had missed when I was a graduate student in Canada. Therefore, in 2016,

I attended the summer intensive at his Global School of Supernatural Ministry, where I received the gift of prophecy and a specific calling on my life. I was also blessed with the opportunity to connect with many men and women on fire for God, including guest instructor Lee Grady, who would become my spiritual father.

Today, I am a tenured professor teaching genetics and cell biology while conducting National Institutes of Health-sponsored biomedical research. As meaningful as my career may be, my deepest passion is to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted and set the captives free. I have co-labored with the Lord at a homeless shelter, a local prison and more recently a Christian halfway house. Every time I travel and minister with Grady, God grants me greater access to His love and power. I never dreamed this could happen, but I *am* living in my destiny, and I thank God for revealing the true Savior to me. ◀

HAO XU, PH.D., is an associate professor and cell biologist at The University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Hao also manages a website that publishes testimonies of Jesus (templehearsgod.com).

The Miracle of the Chinese Church

The Chinese church continues to grow in spite of persecution. This is a short summary of recent developments.

The persecution of the Chinese church has been impossible to ignore, perhaps due to its sheer size and repeated political upheavals, including the Communist takeover and the anti-Christian purges that followed.

When I first moved to China in January 2003, the general feeling was that ministry was getting easier and that the infamous rules restricting Chinese churches were no longer enforced as they once were. In fact, for many years, I did not personally know even one Chinese Christian who had been arrested. When visitors would ask about that kind of thing, I would always repeat the one story that I personally knew to be true: A native Chinese missionary (a friend of a friend) in a nearby Muslim town felt guilty for not sharing his faith and determined to do something. So he wrote out his testimony, printed hundreds of copies and went boldly into the streets sharing them with the Chinese Islamic inhabitants of the town. He was quickly arrested, not primarily for his (illegal) evangelistic efforts, but rather as protection from being attacked by angry Muslims. He was locked up for a couple of years for “disturbing the peace.”

Unfortunately, the years of relative freedom soon came to an end, replaced by a regime that harks back to the early days of Chinese communism. For much of the past decade, another wave of persecution has risen that as yet shows no signs of cresting. A few years ago, it was common to find that many of “viral” persecution stories coming out of China had actually been recirculating in various forms since the ‘80s or ‘90s. However, recent years have brought a cascade of legitimate persecution reports.

Here are a few of these disturbing trends:

Church leaders arrested: Wang Yi, pastor of Early Rain Covenant Church, was arrested at his home early Sunday morning, Dec. 8, 2018, just hours before his church was forcibly closed. As an outspoken pastor with great connections, thousands of Christians around the world heard about his arrest and began interceding for him. But thousands of other pastors throughout China have also disappeared in recent years, and only a handful are known beyond their congregations. Not since former Chairman Mao reigned in Beijing have Chinese pastors faced the kind of danger they are experiencing today.

Christian symbols removed: Any Christian who has been active on social media in the past few years has surely seen one of many viral videos showing the demolition of Chinese church buildings or the forced removal of crosses from churches. It used to be that just one such event would circulate on social media for years, making it seem like this kind of thing was happening more often than it really was. Now, however, for every video that gets smuggled out, hundreds of other churches are defaced or destroyed in secret. We know that buildings and crosses do not make a church. Yet, these losses diminish the public witness

in a community. The largest church in my former city used to have four large Chinese characters flanking the cross, visible blocks away: For God So Loved the World. If this is ever removed, the loss will not merely be aesthetic.

Forced state idolatry: It is hard to imagine a more wicked form of persecution than the one that attempts to coerce poor, elderly or otherwise vulnerable Christians to blaspheme. This can take many forms, from being told to replace the Christian calendar on the wall of your living room with a portrait of “Great Leader” (or else forfeit your social security stipend) to being compelled to put your children in communist schools or else lose your job or home or both. Forcing Christians to choose between serving the state or going destitute is the crux of evil, and only the Holy Spirit can give believers the boldness and wisdom to navigate such waters. And in many cases, there is only one way out: “But when they persecute you in this city, escape into another” (Matt. 10:23a).

Technological intimidation: The modern Chinese state has technological tools at its disposal that would make even Chairman Mao nervous. Facial and gait recognition cameras are literally everywhere, apps are tracked, and online content is culled and censored. The Communist Party has become an expert in using its ever-present eye to pressure the people to fall in line. Stop gathering with fellow believers or have your power cut. Stop emailing sermons to family and friends or lose your internet connection. Stop contacting “troublesome” Christians with your cellphone or lose permanent access to the system.

Pray for yet another miracle: Taken alone, each instance of persecution can feel like a defeat, like a loss of ground. It was common in the ‘90s and early ‘00s to hear of older Chinese Christians “praying for persecution.” These old-school believers, who had suffered through the Cultural Revolution crucible, were worried that the next generation of Christians had grown too weak and complacent due to their relative peace and prosperity.

Well, it seems God has heard their prayers. There is a great pruning going on. But God’s purpose in pruning is to bring about a healthier, stronger tree. Let us pray that the Chinese church remains faithful in this season of trial, resulting in a stronger, more Christlike church. That is the miracle we all long to see!

MATT (NOT HIS REAL NAME) is a missionary with the *International Pentecostal Holiness Church*. Learn more at give.iphc.org/project/china-nw-missionary-support.





A leading Jewish-American is speaking out.
He sees a war against Christians in court and the media.
Their goal: **to destroy Christianity in America**

“**Dark Agenda: The War to Destroy Christian America**,” is David Horowitz’s extraordinary look into the left’s calculated efforts to create a godless, heathen American society.

Horowitz argues that even Jews – and anyone who believes in God – will be in danger if Christians are not protected.

Now Horowitz is warning that the new Biden-Harris administration poses dangers for Christians.

Horowitz is a *New York Times* bestselling author and leading conservative thinker.

Horowitz argues that Judeo-Christian values are at the very root of America’s democracy and success. Kill off such values and all of our freedoms could perish. Everybody could be in danger.

He warns that Obama’s anti-Christian and anti-religious agenda will be resurrected by a Biden-Harris administration.

In “**Dark Agenda**,” Horowitz reveals:

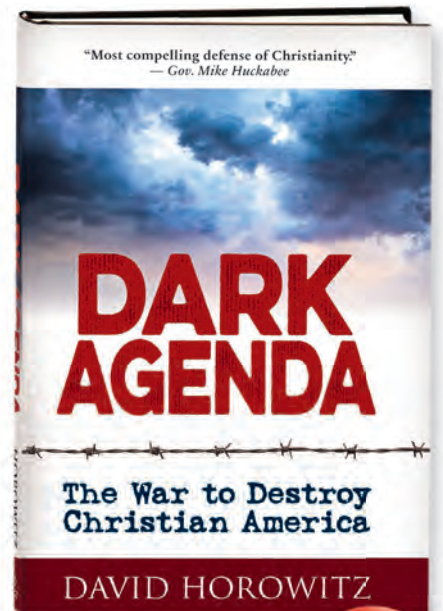
- **The real agenda of the “New Atheism” and how they used a war on radical Islam after 9/11 to begin an attack on Christianity.** (*Chapter 1, Page 7*)
- **The shocking way Congress scrubbed every mention of God from The U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.** (*Chapter 4, Page 37*)
- **Why Hollywood stars like Bill Maher, who belligerently states “religion must die in order for mankind to live,” are finding a huge following among the Democratic left and Millennials.** (*Chapter 1, Page 6*)
- **The real story of Obama’s relationship with Saul Alinsky, a man who openly said Lucifer was his role model.** (*Chapter 10, Page 128*)
- **The true facts about Donald Trump’s faith – and the real reason evangelical Christians and Catholics rallied behind him.** (*Chapter 12, Page 98*)
- **The shocking and violent manifesto of Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger who even advocated using dynamite to promote “revolutionary**

solidarity.” (*Chapter 7, Page 47*)

- **How Barack Obama has become the hero of the anti-God, anti-religious left.** (*Chapter 10, Page 75*)
- **The New Jersey middle school on trial for inexplicably trying to convert students to Islam.** (*Chapter 5, Page 36*)

“**Dark Agenda**” brings vital insights into the war against Christianity and names the global radicals, leftist Democrats, and fat cats of Hollywood and Wall Street responsible for it.

Finally, a clear and sensible American voice — one that is Jewish, that makes an impassioned plea warning of the grave danger to our freedoms and our very lives if we let the secularists win and Christianity is destroyed.



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“Most compelling defense of Christianity.”

Compiled by Nadia Joy Schult

Brave
Sissy Goff
Bethany House/Baker Publishing Group

For teen girls and their parents, cultivating a life of courage in the face of 21st-century adversity is challenging. Growing up in the age of social media and a culture given to comparison makes standing strong in one's identity in Christ difficult. Author Sissy Goff brings to *Brave* both the energy needed to engage with the younger generation and the wisdom to encourage parents to lead their daughters to spiritual maturity. Teen girls will also benefit from the book's self-discovery exercises.

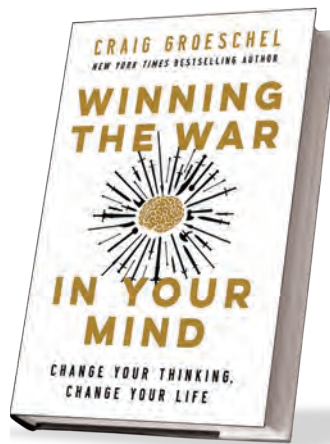


Sissy Goff



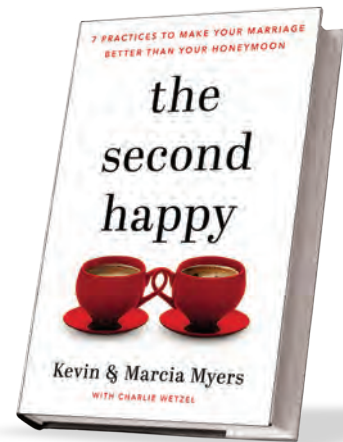
Woven
Angie Smith
B&H Books

Angie Smith's *Woven* helps readers unfamiliar with the Bible understand it as a seamless story. But the average reader can get lost in its seemingly disjointed storylines. For those who want to relate to God's love letter to His church in a more personal way, *Woven* moves their experience of the Word from detached to deeply engaged.



Winning the War in Your Mind
Craig Groeschel
Zondervan

Life.Church Senior Pastor Craig Groeschel knows if you can change your thinking, you can change your life. Using Scripture and brain science, his latest book, *Winning the War in Your Mind*, helps readers find rest in God's peace. He encourages those ready to embrace freedom in their life with Christ to employ his four practical life strategies.



The Second Happy
Kevin and Marcia Myers
Nelson Books

When society values quick fixes in relationships over hard work, it's no surprise so many marriages leave spouses unhappy. But Kevin and Marcia Myers are out to change that statistic. *The Second Happy* highlights biblical principles they have used to make their marriage God-honoring and to help couples restore what once may have been lost.



Better Than I Found It
Phil Joel
Inpop Records

The New Zealand-born singer's release of his "quarantine album" highlights the thought-provoking lyrics Joel has become known for, as well as content he says would make even John Lennon smile. The former Newsboys member offers this album to those who want to see God's will done in the earth and who value unity and kindness to their fellow man and God's creation.



Clouds Are Clearing
SEU Worship
Essential Worship

SEU Worship has garnered a unique following for mixing traditional worship sounds with pop influences that allow for crossover into the secular world. In this, their second installment of a "mixtape project," the college-based group features contributions of contemporary worship artists like Alexander Pappas of Hillsong Young & Free and Christian hip-hop singer Hollyn.

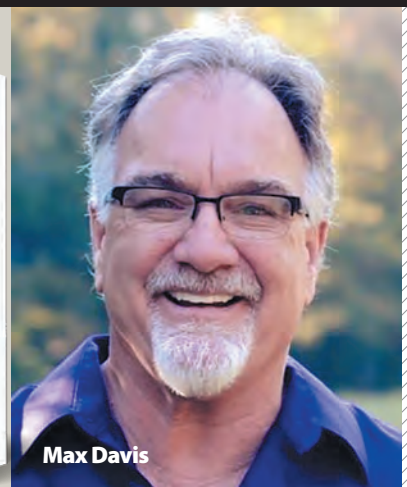
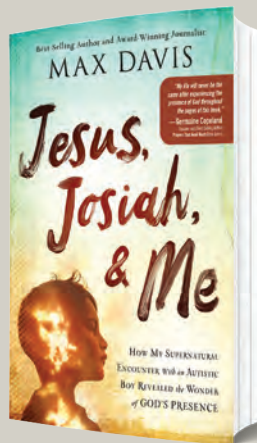


My Hope Has Come
Vineyard Worship
Integrity Music

Blending both Spanish and traditional worship influences, Vineyard Worship artists have compiled the best of their monthly releases from 2020 into an album that chronicles the movement of one of the strangest times in music history. The signature sound fans have come to know and love from these artists adds a familiar element to the otherwise fresh and unique blend of tracks.

Jesus, Josiah and Me
Max Davis
Charisma House

Many people—including journalists like Max Davis—base their worldviews on cold, hard facts, failing to allow for the miraculous. But when Davis met a 9-year-old nonverbal, autistic boy named Josiah Cullen, he restored Davis' faith in the work of the Spirit. The prophetic messages and prayer-filled visions Davis received allowed him to experience the Spirit in new ways.



Max Davis

Where Prayer Becomes Real

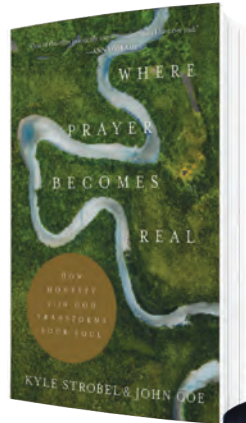
Kyle Strobel and John Coe
Baker Books/Baker
Publishing Group

When looking for spiritual self-help books, readers might think they need a lengthy, deep resource. But spiritual formation experts Kyle Strobel and John Coe offer a brief, yet powerful tool in *Where Prayer Becomes Real*.

For those looking to deepen their prayer life, or for those whose prayer times feel stilted, forced or even required to have “right” standing with God, Strobel and Coe offer challenging questions and solutions from their own personal experiences.

Part workbook and part reflection, *Where Prayer Becomes Real* is an entirely unique take on spiritual formation through prayer. The authors’ goal of being honest with God to deepen both spiritual and personal awareness strikes a chord in this reader’s heart. If one is willing to do the work of self-reflection, the spiritual intimacy that comes is well worth any uncomfortable moments.

Cultivating a healthy prayer life is a long road, but one that *Where Prayer Becomes Real* makes sweeter and less lonely. And for anyone feeling out of their depth, consider the authors’ poignant



Kyle Strobel

questions: “Am I open to this deeper journey with the Lord? Do I really want a deeper life of prayer, or do I simply want something to ‘fix’ my praying and make it ‘work?’” Then grab a copy of *Where Prayer Becomes Real* and get to work. —Nadia Joy Schult

Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly

Pat Barrett
Bowyer & Bow

For those who consider what poetic Bible verses might sound like set to music, Pat Barrett’s new album is worth a listen. *Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly* is a stirring compilation of both personal reflections on life and musical expressions of Scripture. The album combines a wide range of musicality with the accessibility of God’s Word. Even listeners not usually drawn to Barrett’s unique sound can relate to his work on this hefty 17-track album.

“Heavenly” is the first track that caught this listener’s ear. The playful piano accompaniment seems to illustrate the lyrics and reminds listeners of the joy that awaits in heaven.

At first listen, Barrett’s love song to his wife, Meg, “To Have and to Hold,” appears to veer away from his biblically-inspired tracks. But the argument could be made that it relates to Song of Solomon 3:4—in which case this listener found her favorite song. “So Real” is another standout track with its coffee-shop ambience and thought-provoking reverie: “But if me is all you want/ and

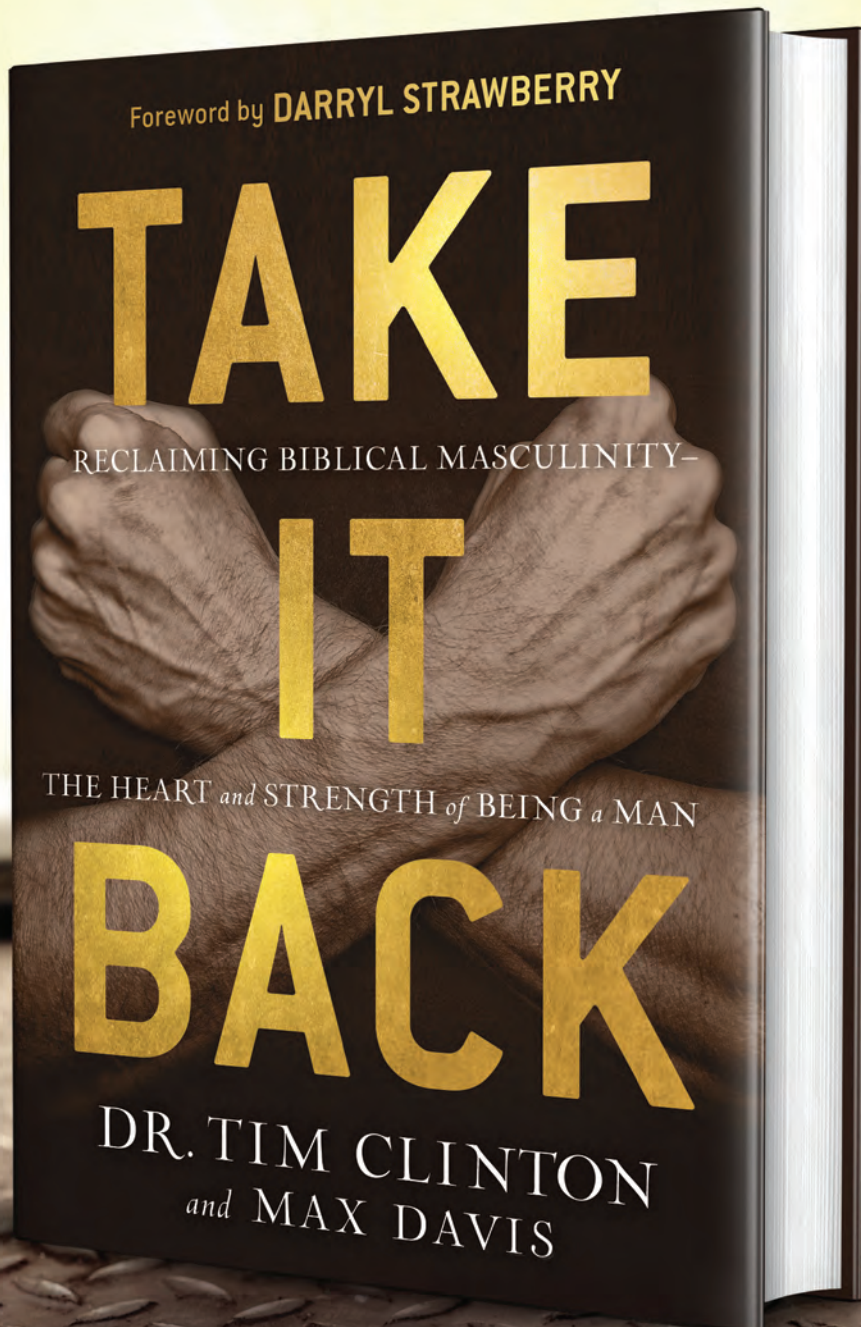


Pat Barrett

picture perfect is overdone/ I was swept up in a lie/ cause true religion’s camera shy.”

In all, Barrett’s work offers a timely reminder to seek Holy Spirit’s fresh revelation in a culture that often dismisses the relevance of Scripture. —Nadia Joy Schult

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Frederick K.C. Price Leaves Legacy of Faith, Integrity

This beloved minister lived out the Spirit's power

Frederick K.C. Price was one of the greatest men I have ever interviewed. Called "Apostle," he began one of the best-known Christian TV programs—*Ever Increasing Faith*—and built the 10,000-seat FaithDome in Los Angeles. He died in February at age 89 from complications of the coronavirus.

I'd seen him on TV in the early 1980s, then attended a leaders meeting where I heard him talk openly about the issues addressed. Barely 30, I was eager to learn, so I went to him privately and asked questions. He told me he started with nothing except lots of debt and had little success in the ministry. His ministry was transformed after someone gave him books by John Sherrill, John Osteen and Don Basham.

Price saw he needed to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but he also saw that many who had done so were negative and lacked power in their lives. He felt there had to be a missing element to putting the Spirit's power into action. Kenneth Hagin's *The Authority of the Believer* opened his eyes. The key was faith. It was like the transmission to a beautiful car, he said, that wouldn't run without it.

A year later I flew to Los Angeles, where I spent time with Price and his lovely wife, Betty. I attended their burgeoning church on Crenshaw Avenue when they were just talking about building the FaithDome. The result was a *Charisma* cover story in May 1985 called "The Ever Increasing Faith of Fred Price." In my career I've interviewed and written about many great Christian leaders from Kathryn Kuhlman to Oral Roberts to Reinhard Bonnke to T.D. Jakes. To me, Fred Price was a giant among giants. His passing leaves a great hole in the body of Christ, but he also leaves a great legacy of faith and integrity.

When I learned Price had died I looked up that old article in our archives. I was fascinated with how an article written 36 years ago seems relevant today. After I reached out to his daughter Angela Evans, now CEO of her father's ministry, to offer my condolences, I sent her a copy. Her reaction: Her daddy was "the same yesterday, today and forever." That was my reaction too. Fred Price was always the same, never wavering, not prideful like so many ministers who have great success. More focused on teaching the Word than raising money.

The article is so good I've put it online at price.charismamag.com so you can read it and reminisce. I also found a 1998 editorial called "Let's Join Fred Price's Crusade." Back then a controversy was swirling over a leading charismatic ministry that taught people should only date those of their own race. The Bible clearly says the only restriction on marriage is to marry a fellow believer.



"To me, Fred Price was a giant among giants."

I also believe—like my friend Dr. Alveda King—that there is only one race, the human race.

No one defened the ministry that criticized interracial dating, but few spoke up in support of Price, who was taking enormous heat. To his credit he went to that ministry behind the scenes, but they wouldn't issue a public apology. So Price did what Scripture commands—he "went to the church" through a lengthy sermon series about race and religion on his TV program.

I wrote my editorial because I wanted the charismatic community to know I supported Price. I said Christians should be bolder than anyone else to oppose racism. That's especially true of us from the Pentecostal tradition, which came out of the Azusa Street revival, led by a Black man, William Seymour. (I'm talking about real racism, not the way the Left throws the word around to apply to anyone who doesn't agree with their politically correct views.)

I wrote: "The issue to me is that most white Christians don't care. And few white leaders are speaking up. Why must a Black man—Fred Price—be the one to speak up on television, while white preachers talk instead about the Second Coming or how to get out of debt?"

On a *Strang Report* podcast with his daughter Angela Evans, we talked about not only the millions of television viewers or the tens of thousands who attended his church, but also the many ministers he influenced, teaching and training them on faith and how to pastor, but more importantly providing a role model of integrity. To me, that integrity and the way he finished strong are his greatest legacy.

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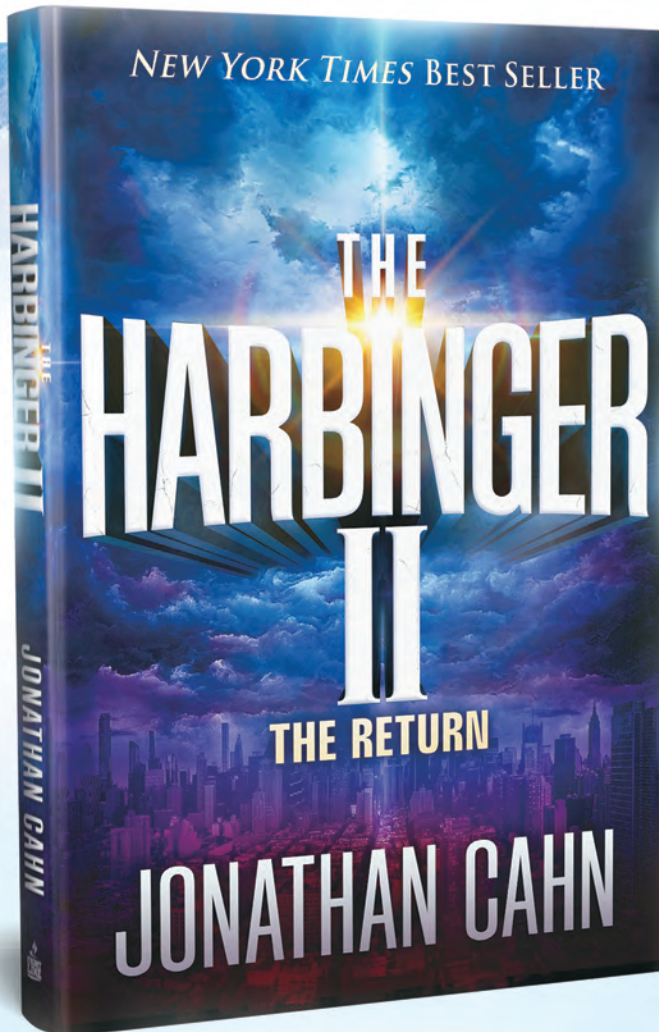
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