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“By this everyone will know that you are
my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:35 – NIV



Keep being the Church.
We'll be with you every step of the way.

OKAY,

We don't have to tell you how tough the last year or so has been. But, looking back, we've learned a few things...

SO WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED

We've learned how to wash our hands the right way, and that toilet paper is the first thing to go when people start to panic. We've learned that some of us have pretty bad mask breath, and that children's ministry volunteers are superheroes.

We've learned some important things about the Church, too. We've learned that the Church is resilient. We've learned that the body of Christ can come together in worship, despite division. We've learned that we can still show our neighbors Christlike love and compassion, even from six feet away. At Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company, we've learned a lot, but mostly, the last year or so confirmed something we already knew – the Church is worth fighting for. We've been helping Christian ministries bear their burdens for more than a century. Through that time, we've seen the Church endure countless trials, standing firm in the faith and grounded in love. As we look to the future, we have hope, because we know that no matter what comes, the Church will endure.

So, keep being the Church. We'll be with you every step of the way.



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“Overall, I am beautifully in awe at the Holy Spirit breaking those long-standing bonds.”

—Tessa Gautreaux

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE?

Regarding “Reclaiming Biblical Manhood” by Tim Clinton (*Charisma*, March 2021):

“The true question that needs to be answered is ... How do we get the guys off of the bench and encourage them in the correct way? The answer is to stop pointing out shortcomings. Believe me, we know it, and the enemy reminds us of it more than you know. We as Christians, both male and female, need to encourage each other.”

Ryan Rogers, Houma, Louisiana

JESUS WANTS ACTION

“I was completely astounded when I read AJ Hall’s story in the March issue of *Charisma* titled, “The War on Gender.” How is it that our society has evolved into this? And what is the church doing to combat this? Are we turning to Jesus Christ, or are we simply pointing fingers at our culture? It’s high time for the church to stand up and take this problem to task. After all, Jesus wants action from us, not just words.”

Terry N., Orlando, Florida

HOLY SPIRIT GOOSEBUMPS

Regarding “How I Learned to Fight Hate With Love” by Joshua Lindquist (*Charisma*, March 2021):

“I got Holy Spirit goosebumps when reading about the revival in front of the George Floyd memorial. ... Overall, I am beautifully in awe at the Holy Spirit breaking those longstanding bonds on so many people; the foundations of generational curses in these communities were shaken to the point of destruction, so all that was left is the cornerstone to build their lives back on. I love hearing testimonies of what God is doing!”

Tessa Gautreaux, Houma, Louisiana

DO GOD’S WILL

Regarding “God Has Plans and Purposes We Don’t Understand” by Stephen Strang (*Charisma*, March 2021): “Mr. Strang is right. We need to do God’s will and obey our leaders. We need to pray for unity in our country before it’s too late.”

Susan Elizabeth Davis,
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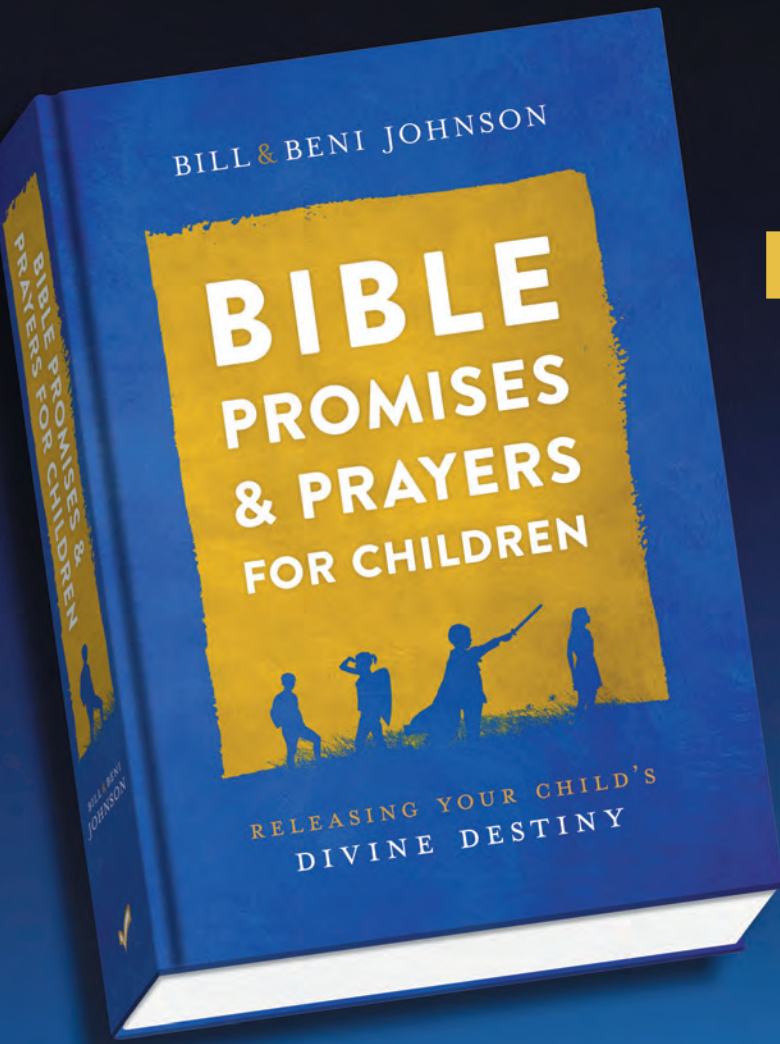
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The Mind of Christ

Preserve the unity of the Spirit with this key element

We make a subtle choice when we enter a meeting. We choose unity or division by our words and body language.

Pause for a moment to consider how Christ would join our meeting. We don't have to stretch too far to understand the impact of that question.

Add this verse to your consideration: "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16b).

A tiny personal pronoun Paul includes here rocked my thinking. "We" have the mind of Christ. When I'm working, I walk into rooms filled with people who are Christ-minded. We work together with the mind of Christ.

When I walk into a room in my home, I see people who have the mind of Christ. The same is true when I enter my church. The truth is, I really don't care to walk into a room that isn't occupied by the mind of Christ.

But I realized I may have been praying this verse with the wrong mindset. As I pray, I ask God to help *me* think with the mind of Christ. I also hope everyone thinks the way I do because I love short meetings.

How many meetings have you attended where confusion springs up and small spats spark? Voices rise and tensions heighten. Suddenly, more people talk and fewer speak.

"In all labor there is profit, but mere *talk* leads only to poverty" (Prov. 14:23, author's emphasis).

"Yes, my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak right things" (Prov. 23:16, author's emphasis).

These verses build a case for opening every meeting with prayer for the mind of Christ to unify our hearts.

This is how we pass the test of Ephesians 4:3: "Be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The mind of Christ energizes our eagerness for unity.

Our meetings should be staffed with preservation agents. We should ask God to send us keepers of "the unity of the Spirit." I've attended meetings with security guards at the door, but true security in our meetings permeates when peace abounds. We need peace preservers more than we need life preservers.

Peace preservation matters even more as we leave a day of meetings to return to our homes. The most important minute of the evening is the first minute



"The mind of Christ energizes our eagerness for unity."

after walking in the door.

I experienced the consequence of forgetting this instruction one evening when, upon arrival, I Doberman-barked a message to my wife. Her response humbled me and informed right thinking:

"You need to turn around, go back to your car and leave your manager-voice in there somewhere, then come back home with a little love in your voice."

I've always been thankful God made me one with a peace preserver.

When our mind and spirit are right, we don't need to manufacture peace. It comes with the mind of Christ. I prefer to think peacefully and diligently preserve unity in the Spirit.

And unity seems to be the main catalyst for abundant living. "Preserve" becomes an action verb as we preserve the unity of peace. Is it better to live in peace or bask in our ability to win an argument? Sometimes being right is not such a big deal after all.

We must come to that place where we focus on preserving the relationship. If we work in the bond of peace, we'll have the mind of Christ.

When we do this at work, we can expect godly outcomes and godly growth. It's not about pounding our desk on behalf of the strategy. It's about pouring out our heart for peace.

When we do this at home and at work, we can expect godly relationships with God-glorifying outcomes. We don't labor to impress the neighbors. We make every effort to exalt Christ.

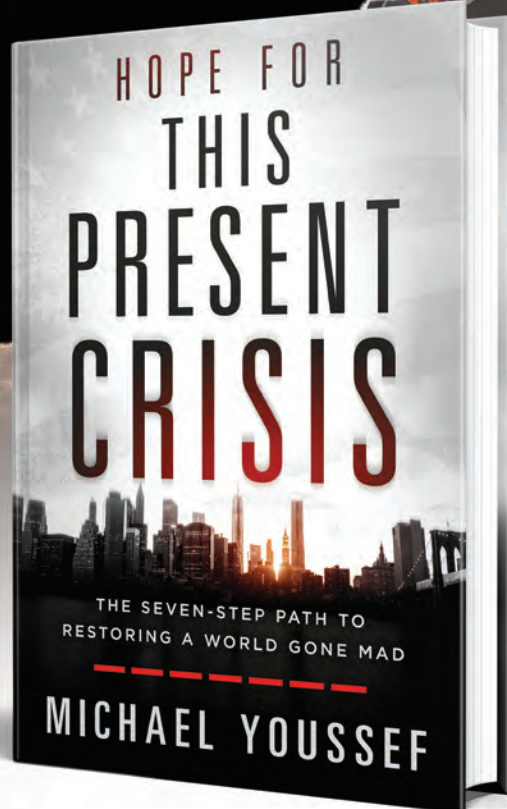
The mind of Christ produces peace.

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In These Dark Times, We Have the Hope of Heaven on Earth

Most Christians are focused on the here and now. We need an eternal perspective

Back in January, I watched one of my favorite movies, *The Hiding Place*. I've probably seen it 50 times. Near the end of the film, Corrie ten Boom goes to the crude hospital in the Ravensbrück camp to see her sister, Betsie, through the ice-covered windowpane. Betsie can barely lift her head, but she waves and tries to smile. Corrie knows it might be the last time she would see her.

I choked up at that point in the film because the scene reminded me of the last time I saw my 92-year-old mother through the glass door at her nursing home. Even though her facility is 10 minutes from my house, I'm not allowed to visit her because of a COVID-19 outbreak there.

When we know a loved one is close to death, we naturally feel sad. But I was reminded that even though Corrie experienced unspeakable loss when Betsie died in that awful Nazi camp, the two sisters are now reunited. They both loved the Lord. They are together now—and there are no lice, filthy barracks or sadistic guards with whips.

The sad goodbye in that horrific hellhole in Germany was followed by a joyful reunion in the presence of Jesus in heaven, where all tears are wiped away.

Have you ever wondered if you will see your loved ones in heaven? Of course you will, if they are followers of Jesus. When we are raised to life in Christ, we will still have our identities. I will still be me. You will still be you. And if we have a friendship now, we will have a friendship in heaven. And we will make many new friends from all over the world—including the Christians who died long before us.

Whenever life gets tough, I remind myself that something so much better awaits me. I know I have more work to do on this side of heaven, and I am praying for fresh strength to fulfill my assignment. Jesus gives me supernatural joy to face any trial here on earth. But I am also filled with hope that a glorious future awaits all who love Jesus.

I read the book *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn at the beginning of 2021. It's my favorite book on the topic because it clearly shows how much the Bible says about our eternal life with God after this world has passed away.

Alcorn writes: "If you're a child of God, you do not just 'go around once' on Earth. You don't get just one earthly life. You get another—one far better and without end. You'll inhabit the New Earth! You'll live with the God you cherish and the people you love as an undying person on an undying Earth."

Most Christians are focused on the here and now—until we attend a funeral and get



"Thinking about heaven ... is the best kind of therapy."

a quick reminder of how short life really is. We lack an eternal perspective.

In previous generations, Christians sang often about heaven. Today, our music avoids the topic. That's why I've added a classic gospel song to my playlist. Vestal Goodman's version of "The Holy Hills of Heaven" is old-fashioned, but it makes me cry every time I hear it. One compelling part of the song says: "I see loved ones over yonder/Tears are gone and hearts are free/ And from the throne King Jesus beckons/ Oh the hills of home are calling me."

Colossians 3:1b (GNT) says, "set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne." We should sing about heaven more and preach about it constantly. It is the greatest hope we have.

Thinking about heaven is not escapism; it is the best kind of therapy. When I grow weary of this world—the corruption, racism, political divisions, viruses, cancer, tyranny, hatefulness and injustice—I remind myself that Jesus will one day re-create this world to be the sinless paradise He always intended for us.

In heaven there will be no hospitals, nursing homes, masks, ventilators or social distancing. There will be no pandemics, murders, riots or funerals. I have read the last chapters of the Bible. Revelation 21:4b (NASB) says: "There will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain."

If you are a believer in Jesus, you have the sure promise of a home on the other side. Think about that often, sing about it and tell everybody else about the source of your joy.

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 WRONG SPIRIT

One Sunday I shared a dream which I received that same morning. In the dream I was visiting with some Christian people when someone said, "Sister (I do not recall the name) had a demonic fit yesterday, but she is alright, because today she was in the Spirit." I did not know if the demonic fit was that she was throwing herself on the floor in convulsions or if she cursed someone out, but in the dream, I spoke up, saying, **"If she had a demonic fit yesterday and was in the Spirit today, it is the wrong spirit!"**

A lady was visiting in that service, and her brother shared this with me. He said, "My sister has been the pianist in another church for years, but just recently God truly saved her. Everything about her has changed, yet for some reason the other ministers in her church are now separating from her. My sister told me, 'My pastor recently cursed me out, but the next service my pastor was in the pulpit and seemed all spiritual. I do not know what to think about it.' Then you told your dream where you said, '...if someone had a demonic fit yesterday and was in the Spirit today, it is the wrong spirit!'"

The Apostle Paul told us *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* Romans 8:16. The words *"beareth witness with"* come from a Greek word which means *"testify jointly."* In other words, our spirit and the Holy Ghost both present evidence in unison that we are the children of God. But what does it mean when the witness of one seems to contradict the other? This was the case with the pastor mentioned above.

In promising redemption, God said, *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."* Ezekiel 36:26. The receiving of this *"new heart"* and *"new spirit"* is the essence of what it means to be *"born again."* John 3:7. This happens when God sends the Spirit of Christ into our hearts.

The first evidence of this new birth is an unquenchable thirst for heavenly things, which is in fact our *"new spirit"* reaching out for communion with God our Father. Paul describes this, saying, *"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."* Galatians 4:6.

The next great witness of this new spirit is *"love."* When a person is born of God, they become overwhelmed with love and compassion for others. Love is such a powerful evidence of being born of God that the Apostle John wrote, *"He that loveth not knoweth not God..."* I John 4:8. Yet, love is not the only evidence of knowing God. John also told us that *"whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."* I John 3:6. John uses these things as the testimony our spirit gives as to whether

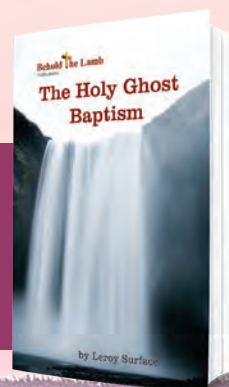
we are God's children or not. He says, *"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."* I John 3:10.

The manifestation of the nature of Christ in our heart and life is the *"witness"* our spirit gives that we are children of God. Yet Paul speaks of a second witness, saying, *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit..."* When the Spirit of God fills a child of God, there is a second witness which begins to be given. The Spirit of God begins to anoint, work through, and lead the person in a supernatural way. Speaking in tongues, the gifts of the Spirit, the anointing to preach, miracles, and many more such things are witnesses being given by the Holy Ghost that this person is a child of God. Yet it is important to remember that the Spirit of God will only *"testify jointly"* with those who also have the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:9. The Holy Ghost will never bear witness with a sinful heart.

This next paragraph may shock some, but it is important to understand. If a person's spirit is manifested by uncleanness, hatred, profanity, covetousness, or any other such things, although they may speak in tongues or prophesy, you can be certain their tongues and prophesy are not a witness from the Spirit of God. **Only a wrong spirit will give witness in unison with an unclean heart.** The same goes for those who preach, teach, or even seem to work miracles. If the witness of their spirit is not the nature of Christ, the spirit that works with them is not the Spirit of God. It is the wrong spirit!

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There's Amazing Freedom in Self-Control

Why this fruit of the Spirit can bring you what you truly want

Most of the time when people hear the words “discipline” and “self-control,” they groan. It makes us think of depriving ourselves or being denied the things we desire and enjoy. But I've discovered that self-control is actually my friend because it's the key to having the things I truly want in life.

Self-control gives me an amazing freedom to say yes to what I truly want and no to what I really don't want.

In John 8:31-32b (NIV), Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” It's important to understand that it's not just hearing the truth that makes us free; it's applying the truth to our lives that makes us free. And doing this requires some discipline and self-control.

Having real freedom doesn't mean we can do whatever we want, whenever we want, with no negative consequences. The truth is we will reap what we sow.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

When the Bible talks about the flesh, it's referring to the desires and cravings of our body and soul apart from the Holy Spirit. Many times our flesh wants something that the Holy Spirit says is not good for us; however, as we learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we become truly free to do what we really want to do.

The question is what do you truly want?

I say “truly” because sometimes we want two things at the same time—the flesh wants instant gratification, and the spirit wants what is best for long-term results.

Here's a personal example about self-control and eating. Dave and I ate at a restaurant that has really good lobster bisque. It's *so good*—smooth, creamy and with just the right amount of flavor—but it's also very fattening.

Now, I know what I can eat and still maintain the weight that is best for me; I can't eat everything I'd like to have all the time and do that. So I ordered a salad, but I asked Dave to order the soup so I could have a taste of it.

This morning, I was thinking, “Maybe I'll get a bowl of that soup for myself today.” My flesh wanted the soup, but my spirit was saying no. I had to stop and think about what I really wanted because what I wanted in the moment was not what I would be



“Self-control is freedom, not bondage. It's Spirit-led management of your life!”

happy with later on.

The amazing thing about the fruit of self-control (Gal. 5:22-23) is that it gives me the freedom to do what I really want to do—not to let my flesh control me and dictate what I do. I'm free to overcome the temptation to do the things that will give me bad results and put me in a place I don't want to be.

This is why self-control is freedom, not bondage. It's Spirit-led management of your life!

Self-control is also about controlling *myself*, not others. I'm responsible for my own choices. There have been times when I've wanted to change my husband or my kids or anyone else around me who wasn't doing what I thought they should do. But only God can change people, and my responsibility is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and let Him help me do what's right.

I want to encourage you to ask God to help you do what's right—what's best for you and not just what your flesh wants you to do in the moment. Stop and think: *If I do this now, what will it mean for me later on?*

Remember that every choice you make is a seed you sow, and every seed comes with some kind of harvest, or consequence, in our lives. I've seen so many people make poor choices that have led to devastating results, destroying their lives. But with the Holy Spirit living in us as born-again believers in Christ, we can have godly wisdom in every decision we make (John 15:5).

Spend time with God every day in prayer and Bible study. Follow His lead, and He'll show you how you can have the life you really want!

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.

2 Crucial Ways God Is Revealing Himself in This Season

Let's take these lessons forward and release the power He intends

If I receive more input from social media than I do the Word of God, my discouragement is self-inflicted. I owe myself a better approach to life than to live under the influence of what the devil thinks and does.

The enemy of our souls loves our attention—even negative attention. It is strange to me that many believers consider themselves spiritual for chasing the devil around from place to place. He is not worthy of being our focus.

Jesus didn't live in reaction to the devil or his works. Instead, He lived in response to the Father. He did only what He saw His Father do and said only what He heard His Father say. In doing so, He effectively destroyed the works of the devil without ever making him the center of His attention.

Living in denial isn't the answer. Real faith doesn't deny the existence of a problem. It denies the problem a place of influence. We are called to live conscious of the one who gave us the honor of living in a time of crisis. Some were never given this privilege. We must grab our moment with hope and great joy.

It's critical that we learn His approach to our day, as we are bombarded by the opinions of anyone with a computer or a phone. Exposing ourselves to these distracting voices erodes our hope and eventually undermines our faith. People become more convinced of the devil's success than of the power of the gospel. The enemy's aim is to keep me distracted, because in the distraction, my affection for Christ is diluted. But anchoring my soul in the promises and presence of God has the opposite effect.

God often reveals Himself opposite to His surroundings. In the wilderness, He manifested Himself to Israel as a pillar of fire at night when it was cold and dark and as a cloud during day when it was hot and bright. How then does God reveal Himself in a pandemic, a recession or racial conflict? He reveals Himself as the solution, the *cure-all*.

In the uniqueness of this past season, two vital things stood out to us. First is the power of two or three gathered in His name. God has been trying to convince us of the authority carried in the small gathering of the saints, but we've been slow to learn. The pandemic—and the closure of so many churches and large gatherings of believers—gave us another opportunity to learn this truth.

I still prefer being together in as large a group as possible. But the governmental authority of heaven rests upon the two or three gathered in His name. Discovering that reality increases our confidence for workplaces and neighborhoods to be His focus for divine activity simply because His representatives are there in agreement. The gates of hell



“People become more convinced of the devil’s success than of the power of the gospel.”

cannot stand under the weighty influence of those who yield in unity to displaying God's heart.

Second, and equal in importance, is that “He sent His word and healed them” (Ps. 107:20a). This is the power of the declared word as depicted in Matthew 8:8b (NIV) when the soldier told Jesus, “Just say the word, and my servant will be healed.” The lessons are many in this wonderful story, but for us in the pandemic, with all the meetings on TV, Zoom, FaceTime, YouTube and more, the lesson was and is the power in the declared word. Saying what He is saying releases power!

As a result of that declared word, we have seen people come out of comas, tumors disappear, bedridden people healed and celebrating—all because He sent His word and healed them through a yielded servant. A friend of mine has seen two resurrections from the dead, including one person who had a doctor's signed death certificate. How? The declared word. From hundreds of miles away, a word was spoken via technology, and the miracle happened.

Learning these two truths well positions us for this next season of extreme breakthrough because we cooperate with God's design. The large gatherings will resume. The privilege of being together will be celebrated in full force once again. But can we take the simplicity of the gospel found in the declared word, coupled with the governmental power that rests on the small group, and learn to incorporate that into the large gatherings? I hope so. Then exponential power God intended for us will be released, enabling us to gather in the billion-soul harvest.

As a fifth-generation pastor, BILL JOHNSON lives a life rich in the things of the Spirit, using heaven as a model for his life and ministry. As the senior pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, California, he is the author of several books, including Hope in Any Crisis.

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Compiled by Nadia Joy Schult



Convoy of Hope brought much-needed relief to the citizens of Texas who suffered through Snowpocalypse 2021.

‘Such a Blessing’: Convoy of Hope Partners With Churches to Meet Needs After Texas Storms

The Snowpocalypse of 2021 left millions of people without water, electricity and in the aftermath, massive cleanup from burst pipes.

Texans and some Oklahomans in this overwhelming situation received help—63 tractor-trailer loads of it—from faith-based humanitarian organization Convoy of Hope, which partnered with local churches and some municipalities to meet needs in affected areas.

“I cannot tell you how much Wolfe City appreciates Convoy of Hope,” reads a text the nonprofit received. “Such a blessing—the work that Convoy of Hope does. We appreciate you more than you will ever know. ... God bless everybody at Convoy of Hope.”

In turn, Ethan Forhertz, vice president of public

engagement for Convoy of Hope, cites the blessings brought by the nonprofit’s great relationships with churches across the country. He continues, “We have volunteers we can call on at any time to come help out with the distributions and parking, traffic control—all that sort of thing—so we can quickly get the supply out to the people who need it.”

Now, as in every other disaster situation, Convoy of Hope remains grateful for its donors, who sacrifice so the nonprofit can continue meeting needs in the name of Christ. “We have loyal supporters who know the mission of Convoy of Hope,” Forhertz says. “And we’re just so grateful for how they support us, so that we are then able to help people during these times of crisis and give them hope whenever things are bleak.”

Unexpected Holy Spirit Outpouring Floods Florida Church

The Gathering Apostolic Center is experiencing a fresh revelation of the Holy Spirit

Leaning into the things of the Spirit in great expectation has become the norm for The Gathering Apostolic Center in Tarpon Springs, Florida, as the church experiences a fresh revelation of the Holy Spirit in its monthly revival healing services and prophetic nights.

"[They are] things we can't figure out. But God is just doing it," lead pastor Cindy Stewart says. This great outpouring has manifested in major healings, testimonies and anointings.

This dedication to partner with God in ministry has blossomed from the congregation's desire to give Jesus room in their hearts. Building connections with the heavenly realm has done more than lay a strong spiritual foundation; it has also fostered deeper connections with the members themselves.

The Gathering's web church has embodied the words of 2 Corinthians 3:18b in carrying the anointing outside of its hometown: "transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord."



Pastors Ester and Bill Ilnisky

Longtime Assemblies of God Pastors Bill and Esther Ilnisky 'Walked Together Into Heaven'

Longtime Assemblies of God pastors Bill and Esther Ilnisky died March 1 from complications of COVID-19. Bill was 88, and Esther was 92; they died 15 minutes apart in the same hospital room. Together, they pastored the Lighthouse Christian Center (formerly Calvary Temple Assembly of God) in West Palm Beach, Florida, for many years.

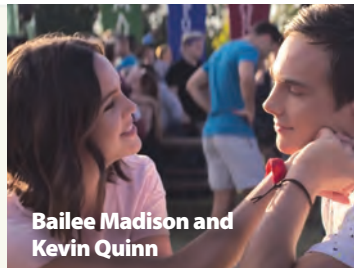
The couple attended Bible college together and then served as missionaries in Jamaica and Lebanon before their work in West Palm Beach. As founder of the Esther Network International Children's Global Prayer Movement and author of *Let the Children Pray*, Esther's vision was "to mobilize children worldwide to pray for revival in their generation."

Dr. George O. Wood, chairman, World AG Fellowship, wrote, "Bill and Esther Ilnisky walked together into heaven after their journey together on earth. I can envision a reunion in heaven with people they led to Jesus."

'A Week Away' Premieres as Netflix's First Faith-Filled Musical

When given the choice between being sentenced to juvenile detention or attending a Christian summer camp, Will Hawkins, played by Kevin Quinn, meets the camp director's daughter (Bailee Madison), whose faith encourages him to open his eyes to a world of belonging and community he didn't realize was even possible for a "troubled teen" like him.

The High School Musical meets church youth group story-type film—the first faith-centered musical to air on



Bailee Madison and Kevin Quinn

Netflix—features recordings of popular Christian songs by artists such as Amy Grant, For King & Country, Michael W. Smith and Steven Curtis Chapman.

Female star Bailee Madison, who got her start in *Bridge to Terabithia*, has long been vocal about her faith, saying at a young age, "If you have God in your life, if you just look to your heavenly Father, despite struggles and hard times, He is always watching over you."

Modern-Day Good Samaritans Rescue Abducted Girl

Worker credits Holy Spirit for quick thinking

Two sanitation workers in New Iberia, Louisiana, noticed a seemingly abandoned car in the middle of a field. Realizing it had been reported in an earlier issued Amber Alert, the Pelican Waste & Debris workers Dion Merrick and Brandon Antoine investigated, called the police and used their truck to block the driver from fleeing.

Their divinely inspired act resulted in the rescue of missing 10-year-old Jalisa Lasalle.

When he shared his miraculous story, Merrick credited the Holy Spirit for his quick thinking: “That’s God. That’s why I say that man is real. A lot of people don’t believe in Him, but they need to start believing in Him.”



Dion Merrick and Brandon Antoine with Jalisa Lasalle

Merrick went to say that it’s not enough to just be in the right place at the right time—taking action when he saw something amiss was how he fulfilled the biblical reminder “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, it is sin” (James 4:17).

New York Woman Takes ‘Feeding the 5,000’ Personally, Opens Food Bank

(excerpted from “New York woman loses job, leads pantry feeding thousands,” ©2021 The Associated Press)



Sofia Moncayo

While dozens of New Yorkers lined up outside Mosaic West Queens Church in the rain, shopping carts at the ready as they waited for free food, Sofia Moncayo led her team in prayer.

“We’re super grateful for these people here. In Jesus’ name we pray,” she said, and the group of women around her clapped, cheered and replied: “Amen.”

“Now,” she said, “let’s get to work.”



Former NFL Player Leaves Life of Luxury to Bless Others Through Farm Ministry

Former NFL player Jason Brown was, at the time, the league’s highest-paid professional football player, grossing \$37.5 million until giving it all up to follow God’s call to “live a more humble lifestyle” on First Fruits Farm in Freeland, Maryland, where the harvest is donated to those in need.

With no prior knowledge of farming, Brown knew his decision was a leap of faith, and he told the Lord, “All right, God, I’m going to walk by faith and not by sight. Everything that You’ve told me to do, even though I have no clue how it’s going to be accomplished, I’m going to keep walking in faith.”

Jason and his wife, Tay, trusted in God, even in insecurity, to lead them to their divine destiny. Brown says he had to remember, “In God there is no failure,” because “that’s how awesome and loving He is.”

During the coronavirus pandemic, Moncayo, who was born in Colombia, was moved to lead the food distribution by her Christian faith by memories of the food insecurity she faced growing up in New York.

“One of the things that we wanted to make sure is that we don’t look at people on the pantry line as people that need food, and really focus on, ‘hey, these are our neighbors,’” she said.

**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.

“NOW I ASK you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak in agreement and that there be no divisions among you.” —1 Corinthians 1:10

May 1	1Chr. 14-15; Ps. 132; Matt. 18
May 2	1Chr. 16; Ps. 106; Matt. 19
May 3	2Sam. 7; 1Chr. 17; Ps. 2; Matt. 20
May 4	2Sam. 8-9; 1Chr. 18; Matt. 21
May 5	2Sam. 10; 1Chr. 19-20; Ps. 20; Matt. 22
May 6	2Sam. 11-12; Ps. 51; Matt. 23
May 7	2Sam. 13-14; Matt. 24
May 8	2Sam. 15-16; Ps. 32; Matt. 25
May 9	2Sam. 17; Ps. 7; Matt. 26
May 10	2Sam. 18; Ps. 56; Matt. 27
May 11	2Sam. 19-20; Ps. 55; Matt. 28
May 12	2Sam. 21-23; 1Thess. 1
May 13	2Sam. 24; 1Chr. 21; Ps. 30; 1Thess. 2
May 14	1Chr. 22-24; 1Thess. 3
May 15	1Chr. 25-27; 1Thess. 4
May 16	1Kin. 1; 1Chr. 28; Ps. 91; 1Thess. 5
May 17	1Kin. 2; 1Chr. 29; Ps. 95; 2Thess. 1
May 18	1Kin. 3; 2Chr. 1; Ps. 78; 2Thess. 2
May 19	1Kin. 4-5; 2Chr. 2; Ps. 101; 2Thess. 3
May 20	1Kin. 6; 2Chr. 3; Ps. 97; Rom. 1
May 21	1Kin. 7; 2Chr. 4; Ps. 98; Rom. 2
May 22	1Kin. 8; 2Chr. 5; Ps. 99; Rom. 3
May 23	2Chr. 6-7; Ps. 135; Rom. 4
May 24	1Kin. 9; 2Chr. 8; Ps. 136; Rom. 5
May 25	1Kin. 10-11; 2Chr. 9; Rom. 6
May 26	Prov. 1-3; Rom. 7
May 27	Prov. 4-6; Rom. 8
May 28	Prov. 7-9; Rom. 9
May 29	Prov. 10-12; Rom. 10
May 30	Prov. 13-15; Rom. 11
May 31	Prov. 16-18; Rom. 12



Chadwick Boseman

Chadwick Boseman’s Legacy of Faith Endures With Golden Globe Award

In accepting his award, his wife highlighted his Christian beliefs

The late Chadwick Boseman has posthumously won the Golden Globe Award for best actor in a motion picture-drama for his work in *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, which his wife, Simone Ledward Boseman, accepted on his behalf.

Through tears, she highlighted Boseman’s faith, saying, “He would thank God. He would thank his parents. He would thank his ancestors for their guidance and their sacrifices.”

Chadwick Boseman broke down barriers as a Black actor, best known for his role as King T’Challa in *Black Panther*, and in her acceptance speech, Simone thanked all who helped him reach great heights before his 2020 death at 43.

In addition to his cast and crew, Simone thanked a number of influential actors in her husband’s life, including his mentor, Denzel Washington. Speaking during the American Film Institute Life Achievement Award ceremony, Boseman quoted Ephesians 3:20, telling Washington, “May God bless you exceedingly and abundantly more for what’s in store than He ever has before.”

RELIGIOUS, BUT LOST!

Romans 7:14-25 Excerpt from "The Foundation" commentary on Romans by Leroy Surface

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. With this verse we must make some distinctions between "the Law of God" and "the Law of Moses." The Law of God is spiritual, and is written in the hearts of those who are "born again" of the Spirit of God Hebrews 8:8-13. The Law of Moses, which was "added because of transgressions" Galatians 3:19, is a carnal law Hebrews 7:16, 9:10, which was given to a carnal people. When God spoke from the mountain to give His Law to the congregation of Israel in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, they could not receive it because their hearts were "carnal." God defined the problem to Moses, saying, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always..." Deuteronomy 5:29. They could not, because they were "carnal, sold under sin."

The Greek word "sarkikos," which was translated "carnal" in this verse, means "similar to flesh" and was translated as both "carnal" and "fleshly." This was the state of Saul of Tarsus; He was "...fleshly, and sold under sin." The Greek word for "flesh" is "sarx," and speaks of "human nature" which was "sold under sin" by the first man, Adam. In the verses that follow, Paul lays out the proof that he was sold under sin. It is important to remember when reading this passage that the children of God are not "sold under sin" but are "redeemed from all iniquity" Titus 2:14. Saul of Tarsus had been one who was "sold under sin," but when he met Jesus he became one who was "bought with a price."

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. The apostle Paul continues speaking as Saul of Tarsus before his conversion to Jesus for the remainder of this chapter. He offers proof of Saul's carnality until the day of his surrender to Jesus Christ; "...what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." It is with these words he describes "the motions of sin which were by the law" which he spoke of in the fifth verse.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Saul recognizes that if righteousness is not in his heart, he must have a law to control his actions, therefore he consents that the law is good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Saul recognizes that if he is doing things he doesn't want to do, then something else is in control. It is not him, but sin that is in his heart and nature. The word "dwelleth" comes from the Greek word "oike" meaning "to occupy a house." An unwanted guest was occupying Saul's "house" and had taken dominion over Saul. He is a slave to sin. This is how he came to understand he was "sold under sin" as he said in verse fourteen.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. The word "flesh" as used in this verse does not refer to the physical "body," but rather to the "human nature" which controls the body. "For I know that in me (that is, in my human nature,) dwelleth no good thing..." Sin, through Adam's transgression, had made human nature its

dwelling place. It is Saul of Tarsus who comes to this realization, and the proof of it is, "...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." It was "in his mind" to serve God, but it was "in his nature" to serve sin. He had "the will" to perform, but he did not have "the way." What a sad predicament for people to find themselves in, but there are far too many "Christians" who are in the same predicament.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. This nineteenth verse proves the seventh chapter of Romans does not describe, as many say, "the normal Christian experience." The key to understanding this is found in the word "do," which is used one time in each phrase of this verse. These were translated from two different Greek words as "do," which serves to conceal the powerful statement Paul made about himself before he believed upon Jesus. Follow closely as we examine these words.

"...the good that I would I do not..." The word "do" in this phrase was translated from the Greek word "poieo," which is defined very simply by "Strong's Greek Dictionary" as "to make or do." This phrase is translated exactly as the Greek text says. I will show in the definition of the Greek word which was used in the next phrase that "poieo" refers to "a single act," which strengthens this phrase dramatically. Understand this phrase to say, "the good that I would I do not a single act," or, "I do not a single act of the good I want to do." This certainly speaks of a man who is a slave to sin, and cannot do good, even though he wants to.

"...the evil which I would not, that I do." The word "do" in this phrase was translated from the Greek word "prasso," which is defined by "Strong's Greek Dictionary" as "to practise, that is, perform repeatedly or habitually (thus differing from G4160 (poieo), which properly refers to a single act). This definition proves Saul of Tarsus could not do a single act of the good he wanted to do, but "the evil" which he did not want to do was his "habitual practice."

We are told by modern theologians that the children of God are still sinners, but they "do not practice sin." According to the Apostle Paul, before the day he believed in Jesus, that He is the Christ, Saul of Tarsus "practiced sin" (habitually sinned), even though he did not want to. Strangely, he was also "blameless...as touching the righteousness that is in the Law of Moses" Philippians 3:6, while at the same time he was "persecuting the church."

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Saul of Tarsus discovered even if he had never committed an outward act of sin, yet sin dwelt in him. This was proven to Saul because he began doing things he did not want to do, and they were his "practice." Human nature was not created sinful in the beginning. It was the entrance of sin through Adam's transgression that polluted human nature. Sin is described as an entity that is separate from human nature, but it abides in human nature and takes dominion over it. As Paul said, "...it is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Only the blood of Christ can wash the sin pollutant out of our nature. It is a shame in many churches today, the proof of salvation is *"you do not want to do the evil things you do."* This same religious struggle, which is called *"concupiscence,"* is what finally proved to Saul of Tarsus he was a slave to sin ...and lost.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. It is the nature of sin to resist the good and do the evil. As long as sin remains in the heart, he may struggle to do the good, and may even succeed in the working of good deeds, but sin is always present with its evil desires in the heart of the unregenerate man.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: The *"inward man"* of Saul of Tarsus was his mind and intellect. Intellectually, he loved the Law of God, *"but..."*

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

"Human nature," when contaminated with sin and left to itself, is no better or higher than the beasts of the field. It is the intellect that makes man to be above the beasts. The Law of God, being *"spiritual,"* was given to *"define"* the divine nature, but Israel could not receive it. The Law of Moses was given to *"control"* sinful human nature. Notice the level of some of the commandments: *"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them"* Leviticus 20:13-16. Sinful human nature, without the restraints of law, will descend to the level of the beast of the field. It is only the *"the restraints of law,"* whether religious or secular, that hinders the bestial activity of sinful human nature.

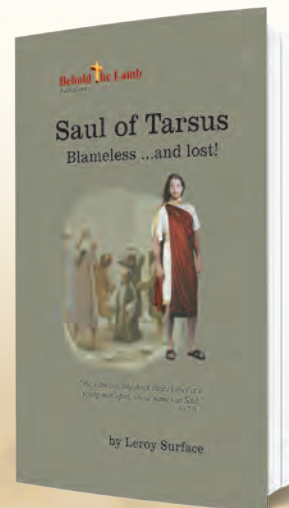
Saul of Tarsus was well disciplined by the Law of Moses. Such behavior as described above was out of the question, yet he, as does every unregenerate person, had sin dwelling in his human nature, seeking control of his members. The *"law in his members"* that warred against *"the law of his mind"* was simply sin dwelling in his *"human nature"* warring against his mind and intellectual desire to please God.

"...warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin..." This phrase brings to mind the methods of ancient warfare. A city with strong walls would come under attack by a powerful enemy. For a time, the walls would hold against the siege, but the city would be cut off from all supplies from without. Daily, the battering rams and the catapults would batter the walls, while inside

the city the food supplies would be rationed. The battering of the walls would continue night and day until the walls were breached, at which time the malnourished inhabitants would be taken captive and led away as slaves. This is the description of the warfare within Saul of Tarsus after *"the sin"* in his heart was discovered by *"the commandment"* (thou shalt not covet). His *"walls of defense"* which were built up by the Law of Moses were battered to the ground, and Saul could no longer keep himself. He was *"brought into captivity"* to that *"law of sin"* (sinful human nature) which was in his members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? It must have been during the time Saul of Tarsus was *"breathing out threatenings and slaughter"* Acts 9:1, and *"making havock of the churches"* Acts 8:3, that he became *"a wretched man"* in his own sight. It is very likely that his words *"the evil which I would not, that I do"* was speaking of his rage against the church. He who had thought himself to be perfectly righteous under the Law discovered in himself an uncontrollable hatred that dominated his every thought both night and day. From within, though never publicly, there came the cry, *"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death."* The term *"body of this death"* is used in the same way as *"the body of sin"* was used in Romans 6:6, and speaks of the *"entire body (or source) of sin and death."* It was his *"cry for deliverance"* that brought Saul of Tarsus into a direct confrontation with Jesus Christ Acts 9:3-5. There, he found the answer, given in the next verse, which is the basis for the gospel of Jesus Christ as the apostle Paul preached it.

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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Saul of Tarsus
by Leroy Surface

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BORN TO BURN

God birthed the church in a baptism of fire.
Let's tend the flame and see a new move
of God in our day.

BY J. LEE GRADY

A few years ago the Lord challenged me about my level of spiritual hunger. He showed me that even though I had stood in many prayer lines and repeatedly sung the words, “Lord, I want more of You,” I wasn’t as passionate for Him as I thought I was.

My church sponsored a conference on the Holy Spirit. At the close of one service, I was lying on the floor near the altar, asking God for another touch of His power. Several other people were kneeling at the Communion rail and praying quietly for each other.

Suddenly I began to have a vision. In my mind I could see a large pipeline, at least eight feet in diameter. I was looking at it from the inside, and I could see a shallow stream of golden liquid flowing at the bottom. The oil in the giant pipe was only a few inches deep.

I began a conversation with the Lord. “What are You showing me?” I asked.

“This is a picture of the flow of the Holy Spirit in your life,” He answered.

It was not an encouraging visual. It was pitiful! The capacity of the pipeline was huge—enough to convey tons of oil. Yet only a trickle was evident.

Then I noticed something else: Several large valves were lined up along the sides of the pipeline, and each valve was shut.

I wanted to ask the Lord why there was so little oil in my life. Instead I asked: “What are those valves, and why are they closed?” continued »



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His answer stunned me. “Those represent the times when you said no to Me. Why should I increase the level of anointing if you aren’t available to use it?”

The words stung. When had I said no to God? I was overcome with emotion and began to repent. I recalled different excuses I had made and the limitations I had placed on how He could use me.

I had told Him I didn’t want to be in front of crowds because I wasn’t a good speaker. I had told Him I didn’t want to address certain issues or go certain places. I had placed so many conditions on my obedience.

After a while I began to see something else in my spirit. It was a huge crowd of Africans, assembled as if they were in a large arena. And I saw myself preaching to them.

Nobody had ever asked me to minister in Africa, but I knew at that moment I needed to surrender my will. All I could think to say was the prayer of Isaiah: “Here am I. Send me” (Isa. 6:8b). I told God I would go anywhere and say anything He asked. I laid my insecurities, fears and inhibitions on the altar.

Three years later I stood at a pulpit inside a sports arena in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. As I addressed a crowd of 8,000 pastors who had assembled there for a training conference, I remembered seeing their faces in that vision. And I realized that God had opened a new valve in my life that day when I was on the floor of my church. Because I had said yes, He had increased the flow of His oil so it could reach thousands.

We Need More Oil

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, gasoline fell to record low prices. I paid \$1.25 a gallon in my home state of Georgia. Some states reported prices below a dollar a gallon.

There were two reasons for the dramatic price drop: Not as many people were buying gasoline because of the pandemic, and Russia and Saudi Arabia were engaged in a price war, causing the oil supply to swing

up. Market analysts said they’d never seen such a glut of oil on the market.

As I pondered this situation, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said: “Now is the time to fill up.” I knew He wasn’t talking about my car’s gas tank. Sometimes there are things in the natural world that send spiritual messages.

Jesus talked about the importance of having enough oil. The five wise virgins in His parable in Matthew 25 made sure they had enough oil for their lamps, while the five foolish ones weren’t prepared. They were locked out of the wedding feast because they didn’t consider oil an essential commodity.

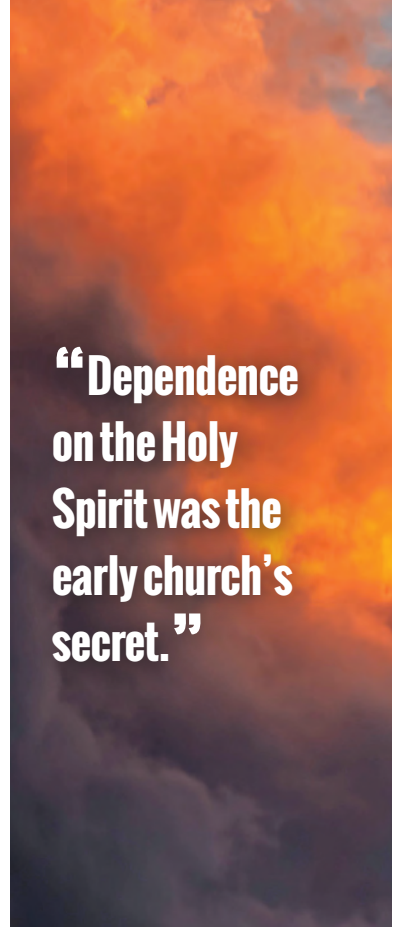
This same is true today during this strange international crisis. God wants us to be ready for what’s coming. We need more of the Holy Spirit’s oil.

We’ve been much like the foolish virgins. The oil of the Holy Spirit hasn’t been important to us. We can take it or leave it. We don’t think we need God’s supernatural power because we have technology, comfortable church buildings, economic prosperity, eloquent preachers and slick contemporary worship.

We figured out a way to do church without God’s help. We even have books and church growth gurus to teach us how to manufacture a cool vibe, entertain people for 60 minutes and get them out quickly. Revivalist A.W. Tozer said it this way: “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference.”

Many churches today are devoid of the Holy Spirit’s raw power. Conversions are rare. Baptismal tanks are dry. Altars are empty. We don’t hear many testimonies of healings. And how long has it been since someone was freed from a demon? Our processed version of Christianity doesn’t resemble the book of Acts.

This must change. What if God wants to send a global awakening of the Holy Spirit after this coronavirus pandemic ends? Do we have enough oil in our lamps to handle



“Dependence on the Holy Spirit was the early church’s secret.”

the next revival?

Dependence on the Holy Spirit was the early church’s secret. The Spirit anointed the first disciples to heal the sick, discern evil spirits and carry the gospel boldly to difficult places. How did we ever think we could do ministry without that power?

When Paul went to Ephesus, he met some men who believed in Jesus in an intellectual way, yet they had never been born again. In fact they didn’t know there was a Holy Spirit (see Acts. 19:1-7). This reminds me of many American churches. We go through the motions of church, but we are clueless about Pentecost.

Many of us have a habit of asking for more of God’s power and anointing. We love to go to the altar for a touch from God. We love the goosebumps, the shaking and the emotion of the moment.

We love to fall on the floor and experience one filling after another. But I am afraid some of us are soaking up the anointing and not giving it away. Our charismatic experience has become

inward and selfish. We fall on the floor and vibrate; then we get up and live like we want to.

But Pentecost is not a party. It's not about us. If we truly want to be empowered, we must offer God an unqualified yes. We must crucify every no. We must become a conduit to reach others, not a reservoir with no outlet.

Search your own heart today and see if there are any closed valves in your pipeline. As you surrender them, the locked channels will open, and His oil will flow out to a world that craves to know He is real.

Lord, Send a Fresh Pentecost

On Feb. 17, 1967, more than 54 years ago, a miracle happened near Pittsburgh that the world has largely ignored. It happened at a small Catholic retreat center called The Ark and the Dove, where a group of students from Duquesne University had gathered for a weekend of prayer. Suddenly and without any warning, those students were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Patti Gallagher Mansfield, one of the first students to experience this outpouring of the Spirit, says she knew something remarkable and otherworldly had happened.

“Within the next hour, God sovereignly drew many of the students into the chapel,” she writes. “Some were laughing, others crying. Some prayed in tongues, others like me felt a burning sensation coursing through their hands.”

Gallagher had prayed a simple prayer prior to experiencing her personal Pentecost. She prayed, “Father, I give my life to You. Whatever You ask of me, I accept. And if it means suffering, I accept that too. Just teach me to follow Jesus and to love as He loves.”

The world was in turmoil in February 1967. Israel was on the verge of war with Palestinians. Racial tensions in the United States were triggering violence. Young protesters were demanding an end to the Vietnam War.

Few people noticed what happened

to those students at Duquesne, but the fire that fell on them spread quickly to other campuses. Within a year, the Catholic charismatic movement spread to millions—and it jumped the theological firewall to touch Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans and believers from all denominations.

It became the largest Christian movement since the Protestant reformation. Today, 70% of all Christians in Latin America are part of the neo-Pentecostal movement. Similar growth has occurred in Africa and parts of Asia.

The wave of supernatural renewal

“We are in desperate need of fresh fire today.”



that swept across the United States in 1967 continues today. The Holy Spirit has not withdrawn from us. He longs to fill us, refresh us and empower us in this new season. But if you want to experience your own Pentecost, you must surrender as Gallagher did. You must want more of God.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He told His disciples to stay in spiritual lockdown. He said in Luke 24:49 (NASB): “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

The disciples didn’t know what they were waiting for. They had no idea what “clothed with power” meant. Jesus didn’t give them a church bulletin with specific times, and He didn’t warn them that they might experience wind, fire or strange languages. All He told them was “Stay put.”

I imagine some of the more impetuous disciples were eager to venture out and tell others about Jesus, since they had seen Him after His Resurrection. But they obeyed the Lord. They went to the upper room in Jerusalem, and there they were “continually devoting themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14a, NASB 1995).

And the waiting paid off. Several days later, the promised power arrived. Suddenly, the heavens opened. Just as Elijah left his mantle for Elisha, the glorious mantle of Jesus came upon His followers. Every person in the upper room was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they were transformed into blazing spiritual torches. Before the day ended, 3,000 people believed in Jesus and were baptized.

This is the message of Pentecost. Prayer comes first, then power.

Our tendency is to run ahead of God. We like shortcuts. Or we

arrogantly assume we can do a better job with our money, education and technological savvy. Yet the truth is that many American churches are just spinning their expensive religious wheels. We are very busy, but we are ineffective.

British missionary C.T. Studd, who lived from 1860-1931, saw this tendency years ago. He wrote: “How little chance the Holy Ghost has nowadays. The churches and missionary societies have so bound Him in red tape that they practically ask Him to sit in a corner while they do the work themselves.”

I intend to pursue a personal Pentecost during the month of May, and I invite you to join me. I will soak in the book of Acts during those days, and I will squeeze every drop of revelation possible out of those 28 chapters. I’ll read the first chapter on May 1, the second chapter on May 2, and so on.

(If you’d like, you can also follow



Breakthrough Joint Pain Discovery

Doctor’s Formula Eases Joint Issues

If you’re over 40 or 50, odds are you suffer pain or stiffness in at least one of your body’s 230 joints.

In fact, over 21 million Americans suffer from “wear and tear” concerns such as:

- Joint pain or stiffness
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- Enlargement of joints

These issues can make it difficult to climb stairs, clean house, do yardwork, enjoy hobbies, or keep up with the grandkids.

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— Carol T. from Texas

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— Caridad W. from Maryland

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LIMBEX contains ApresFlex, a new next-generation boswellia extract that quickly helps balance the body’s

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LIMBEX now makes it easy to help support and soothe your joints.

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DR. BROWNSTEIN

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along in my 28-day study of the book of Acts on the YouVersion Bible app. Just download the app and search for “Rekindle the Flame.”)

I will also pray for a rekindling of the Holy Spirit’s flame in my life and in the global church. We are in desperate need of fresh fire today. The church is sick with hidden sin and weak with moral compromise. We have left our first love. Could it be that God is giving us this special “time out” to prepare us for the coming harvest?

Do you have the fire of Pentecost? The apostle Paul tells us that all Christians should have a spiritual temperature that reaches the boiling point. In Romans 12:11 he commands us to be “fervent in spirit.” The Greek word for “fervent” is *zeo*, which means “to boil like hot liquid or to glow like hot metal.” I challenge you to use this extra time to examine your heart in these areas:

» Am I fully surrendered to God

in all areas? Is Jesus truly my Lord?

» Have I allowed the things of the world to steal my passion for Jesus?

» Do I need to repent of any hidden sins or unhealthy habits?

» Is spending time with the Lord a priority, or have other things become more important?

» Am I using my spiritual gifts to serve others?

» Am I bold enough to share Jesus with others? Or am I ashamed of my faith?

» Have I fully surrendered so the Holy Spirit’s oil can flow through me in fullest measure? Or have I blocked the flow of that oil with my own selfishness?

If you are willing to take this risky journey, please join me as we pursue a fresh Pentecost. You can say this prayer as you begin:

“Lord, please set my heart ablaze. Send a fresh wave of the Holy Spirit to my church, my city and my nation. We need another earth-shaking revival

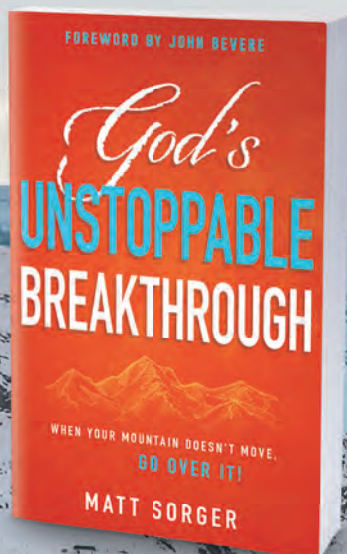
like the great awakenings of past generations. Do it again, Lord. Let the book of Acts be repeated in my lifetime. Unleash the full force of Pentecost, and let me be a part of it. I don’t want to be a spectator in this movement. I want to be in the very middle of it! Let me heart burn with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and let me carry that fire everywhere You send me.” ◀

READ MORE: Fire up with the power of Pentecost at pentecost.charismamag.com.

J. LEE GRADY was the editor of *Charisma* for 11 years before he launched into full-time ministry. Today he directs *The Mordecai Project*, an international missions organization devoted to protecting and empowering women who suffer from abuse and marginalization. He is the author of several books, including *Set My Heart on Fire* (Charisma House). You can learn more about his ministry at themordecaiproject.org.

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**—SID ROTH
HOST, IT’S SUPERNATURAL!**

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21 Heroes of Pentecost

Let these giants of the Spirit inspire you to experience His power and glory.

BY DEAN MERRILL

From home prayer meetings to drafty tents to ornate seminary chapels, from sunny California to the backwoods of Kentucky to the gleaming cityscapes of New York, Toronto and beyond, the wind of the Holy Spirit has blown for more than a century in the Pentecostal-charismatic movement. Here are some of those who felt its warmth.

The Female Forerunner

The timid Ohio farm girl didn't know in 1857, at age 13, what to do with God's call to "go into the highways and hedges, and gather the lost sheep." Her church didn't even accept women in the pulpit. **Maria Woodworth-Etter** didn't dare to speak publicly until she was 35. But soon people began responding to her salvation call. Her travels took her across America, from Chicago to Atlanta to San Francisco to Kansas City. Accounts of healing cures began to pile up. In Framingham, Massachusetts, she was arrested for practicing medicine without a license but was released when too many citizens came forward to affirm their healings. Her main defense: "The power of God which was given to the apostles in their day has never been taken from the church. Let the Holy Ghost work in any way that agrees with the Word of God."

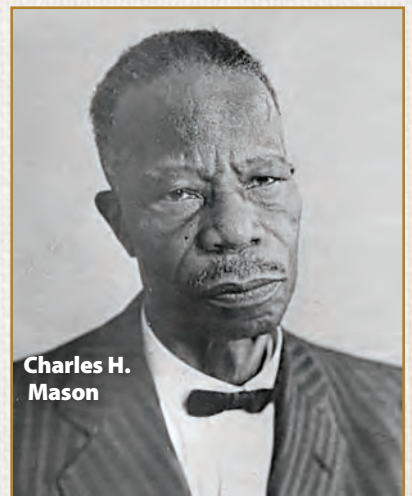


Maria Woodworth-Etter

The Man Who Said 'Yes, Lord'

The only denominational head to actually show up at the Azusa Street Mission (instead of just commenting from a distance) was **Charles H. Mason**, who had ridden the train nearly 2,000 miles from Memphis in March 1907 to see what this Spirit outpouring was all about. There he found Blacks such as himself shoulder to shoulder with whites, Mexicans, Chinese and others, all seeking God's fullness—despite the Jim Crow laws of that era. He was impressed with the preaching, but got nervous when white brothers wanted to lay hands on him. "That night," he later wrote, "the Lord spoke to me that Jesus saw all of this world's wrongs but did not attempt to set [them] right until God overshadowed him with the Holy Ghost. And he said I was no better than my Lord ... so I said yes to God." Today, his Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is one of the five largest U.S. denominations.

continued »



Charles H. Mason

**“The only reason we don’t
have revival is because we
are willing to live without it.”**

- Leonard Ravenhill





William J. Seymour

Ignition on Azusa Street

Scorned by *The Los Angeles Times* as “an old colored exhorter” (though he was only 35), **William J. Seymour** was the lead elder of the Azusa Street Mission, where services ran daily for more than three years (1906-1909), starting midmorning and continuing late into the night. Wrote one eyewitness, “There was no pride there. Seeking souls could be found under the power almost any hour. ... In that old building, with its low rafters and bare floor, God took strong men and women to pieces, and put them together again for His glory.” As for racial issues, “The color line was washed away in the blood.” The Azusa flame quickly spread across America, up into Canada, then Europe and around the globe. Seymour’s steady hand showed in his maxim, “We are measuring everything by the Word; every experience must measure up with the Bible. Some say that is going too far [being too restrictive], but if we have lived too close to the Word, we will settle that with the Lord when we meet Him in the air.”

Everybody’s ‘Sister’

Newspaper reporters in the 1920s and ’30s couldn’t seem to take their eyes off the high-energy, Canadian-born evangelist **Aimee Semple McPherson**. Stories ran continuously about her mass meetings, her pioneering radio

station, her creative dramas, her floats in Los Angeles’ Rose Parade and the long lines of people waiting to get into Angelus Temple, the triple-deck church she built—the nation’s largest at the time (5,300 seats). Hollywood celebrities filled seats alongside common folk to hear what “Sister Aimee” called the Foursquare Gospel (Jesus Christ our Savior, healer, baptizer and soon-



Aimee Semple McPherson

coming King). Future Academy Award-winning actor Anthony Quinn played trumpet in her orchestra; even Charlie Chaplin sneaked in one time to watch. Was this just a case of her megawatt personality? Perhaps it was her gutsy boldness to attempt what other women in that era would never have dared? No, she said. It all flowed from “a real baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire.”

The Boat-Rocker

Tradition had already settled into Pentecostal practice by the 1940s, as preachers said the one route to the Spirit’s infilling was to “tarry” at an altar, that is, to spend long hours begging (even crying) for the Spirit to come with a rush of tongues. **J.E. (Jack) Stiles**, a California pastor, began noticing that in at least three cases (Acts 8, 9, 19), believers received quickly through the laying on of hands. So he invited seekers to simply

come sit on the front row of a church, stop any use of English, open their mouths and “breathe in” the Spirit of God. He would then go down the line touching each head, and within minutes, long-frustrated seekers would begin speaking in new vocabularies. As Stiles and his wife traveled for the next decade, she tried to keep track of the Spirit-baptisms, but finally gave up once she passed 10,000. The Stiles approach, though controversial at first, became mainstream as the charismatic renewal got underway.

Wholeness for Body and Mind

Growing up in China as the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries, **Agnes Sanford** loved God. But once she returned to the States, married an Episcopal rector and bore three children, she felt her life constrained and her energies drained by the demands of home and parish. When her youngest child (18 months old) developed an ear infection and fever that wouldn’t go away for six weeks, she grew even more despondent. Then a nearby Episcopal priest stopped by and prayed for him; the whimpering boy immediately fell into a sound sleep—and woke up well. From this point forward, Sanford began ministering freedom and joy to women under a cloud, and men as well. She never sought to speak to large audiences, but her book *The Healing Light* (1947) became a perennial bestseller. She became what some today call “the mother of the inner-healing movement.”

The Charismatic Cardinal

On Oct. 22, 1963, during the history-making Vatican II council, a senior Italian cardinal expressed his view that any charismatic gifts should be limited to the clergy. **Leo Josef Suenens** of Belgium openly disagreed. “These special gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church do exist today,” he said. “Without the shepherds, the church would be undisciplined; but without the charisms, it would be sterile. Therefore the pastors must heed the warnings of St. Paul and take care not to stifle the Spirit.”

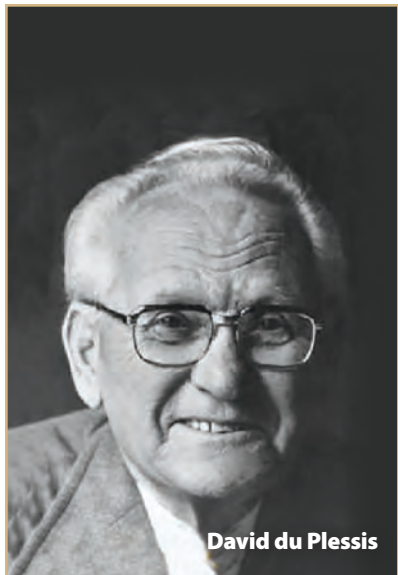


Leo Josef Suenens

Thereafter Suenens became the pope's unofficial liaison to Catholic charismatic worldwide. He was astute enough to admit that Pentecostals sometimes veered into excesses, but he said with a smile, "When you light a lamp in the darkness, you will draw some mosquitoes." His wise writings continue to give guidance to this day, even drawing endorsement from the current leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis.

The Bridge Builder

When a roomful of Methodist clergy met with the South African **David du Plessis** to ask questions about the Holy Spirit's work, they talked congenially for hours. At the



David du Plessis

end, the group raised a question: "Why is that you are the only Pentecostal we have yet found that will come to us in love and show such an interest in our spiritual welfare?" Du Plessis' influence across wide swaths of the world, including North America and Europe, opened doors for him from the World Council of Churches to prestigious seminaries (Yale, Union, Princeton), earning him the nickname "Mr. Pentecost." Even the pope gave him a medal in 1983 for "service to all Christianity." As du Plessis often said, "To be Pentecostal you have to be ecumenical. ... You cannot create unity. You cannot organize unity. But you must expect unity to come about by a creation of the Holy Spirit."

Daughter of Destiny

To millions from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, **Kathryn Kuhlman** was a fresh channel of healing and blessing, "a veritable one-woman



Kathryn Kuhlman

shrine of Lourdes" (*Time* magazine). To others, her style was over the top, melodramatic, "unbelievable corn," wrote one nationally syndicated columnist. Whatever the opinions, crowds flocked to her meetings at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Hall, complete with a massive choir; the same proved true when she added a monthly visit to Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium,

which seated 7,000. Scores of people fell backward "under the power" at the soft touch of her hand—or even before she touched them. Her two TV programs, *Your Faith and Mine* and *I Believe in Miracles*, expanded her reach even further. Perhaps Grant Wacker (Duke Divinity School historian) summarized her best as "one of the key figures to transform the 'down-home' Pentecostal revival of the

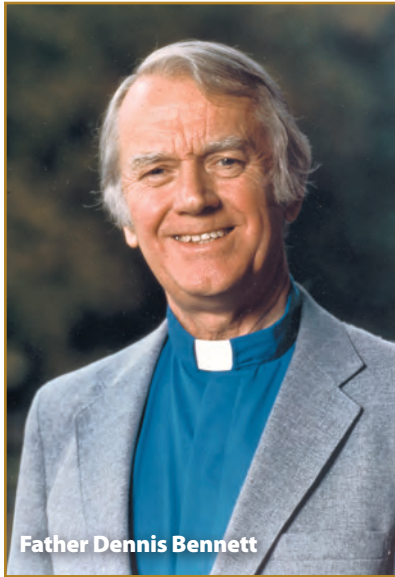


Leonard and Martha Ravenhill

early 20th century into the 'uptown' charismatic movement of the late 20th century."

Sounding the Alarm

The British-American revivalist **Leonard Ravenhill** would never have been tagged as a people-pleaser. Yet his 1959 book, *Why Revival Tarries*, grabbed the attention of sincere Christians everywhere with such statements as "The only reason we don't have revival is because we are willing to live without it." Another zinger: "The ugly fact is that altar fires are either out or burning very low. ... By our attitude to prayer we tell God that what was begun in the Spirit we can finish in the flesh." One young person who took his words at face value was firebrand singer-songwriter Keith Green, who called him "Papa." Together, they challenged young and old alike to seek God with full heart



Father Dennis Bennett

and soul; the two men were so close they are buried nearly side by side in Garden Valley, Texas.

The Reluctant Rector

When **Father Dennis Bennett** dared in 1960 to tell his upscale Episcopal flock in Van Nuys, California, about his recent baptism in the Holy Spirit, it triggered immediate reaction, even protest. “We’re not a bunch of wild-eyed hillbillies!” one parishioner shouted after mounting a chair like a soapbox. “Throw out the [expletive] tongues-speakers!” yelled another. Newspapers picked up the story, and the bishop of Los Angeles sent out a pastoral letter banning tongues across the diocese, and Bennett wondered if he had torpedoed his future. But a warmer welcome was waiting at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Seattle, which steadily blossomed to become a center of renewal. The full story is told in the bestseller *Nine O’Clock in the Morning*. By the 1980s, a kinder bishop honored Bennett as a “canon of honor” for his work across the charismatic landscape.

Speak It, Believe It, Receive It

Wherever two or three charismatics are gathered together, there will be four or more opinions about Kenneth E. Hagin, father of the “Word of Faith” (or “Positive Confession”) movement. To some, his teachings opened the gates to a fuller

life of spiritual, physical and material abundance. To others, his doctrine was seriously flawed. Regardless, his radio program Faith Seminar of the Air, his many self-published books and his Rhema Bible Training College in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, set in motion a major influence among Pentecostals and charismatics. His tone was always congenial. And he was forthright enough at age 83 to call out some of the abuses he saw, writing a final book titled *The Midas Touch: A Balanced Approach to Biblical Prosperity*.

‘Expect a Miracle’

Say what? Don’t miracles just happen out of the blue, beyond the reach of human influence? Not according to **Oral Roberts**, the most famous figure of the



Oral Roberts

post-World War II healing revival. He had experienced an instant healing from tuberculosis at age 17, and he confidently preached that “God is a good God!” (another of his signature phrases) through more than 300 major crusades, personally laying hands on as many as 2 million sufferers. Scoffers criticized, of course, but his nationally syndicated TV program rose to the top of the charts for almost 30 years. Today, the fully accredited university in Tulsa that bears his name trains

graduates according to God’s original commission to Roberts: “to go where My light is dim, where My voice is heard small, and My healing power is not known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth.”

Global Ambassadors

The rookie missionary couple **T. L.** and **Daisy Osborn** lasted less than a year in India before returning home



T. L. Osborn

defeated. The Muslims they had tried to reach with the gospel wanted proof that Jesus was alive today—and the Osborns had none. Two years later, they attended a healing meeting led by evangelist William Branham and discovered their missing link. By 1948, they were off to Jamaica, where hundreds were converted and many ailments cured. For the next 40 years they roamed the globe (Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America) with stunning results. “What good is a church established by miracles if it ceases to perform miracles today?” T. L. asked. “The blind are not interested in His power to heal the blind only in Bible days. They need His healing *today*. Let us never depart from the example of the book of Acts.”

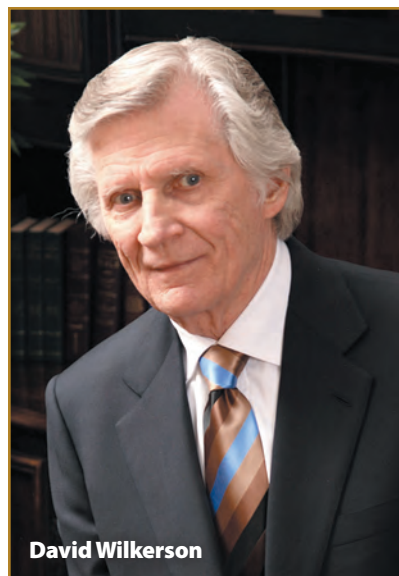
The Reconcilers

One man grew up in small-town Appalachia, the son of a Pentecostal Holiness pastor. The other was a pastor’s son, too—but grew up

on the mean streets of Brooklyn. Both inhaled the cultural assumptions that Black was Black, and white was white, and never the twain would meet. But after both had become ministers themselves, Bishop **Bernard Underwood** (then chairman of an all-white Pentecostal collective) became convinced that things had to change. He reached out to Bishop **Ithiel Clemmons** (Church of God in Christ) in a spirit of repentance. Their friendship eventually resulted in the 1994 “Memphis Miracle” of reconciliation, spawning the all-new multiracial Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA), with Clemmons as chairman and Underwood as vice-chairman—an organization that today numbers three times as many members as the previous one.

The Straight Shooter

New York City gangbangers were hardly the type to mince words, and neither was the young preacher who sought to bring them to Christ. When tough Nicky Cruz originally threatened to kill **David Wilkerson**, he replied, “You could do that, Nicky. You could cut me in a thousand pieces and lay them out on the street—and every piece would love you.” With



David Wilkerson

grit and faith, he brought gang leaders (and their equally tough girlfriends) to salvation, eventually building the impressive ministry we know today

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as Teen Challenge. The power of the Spirit, he said, was the key to freedom that would last. “While he consistently preached hard against sin,” wrote one observer after his death in 2011, “that is arguably because he saw firsthand the toll sin could take on a life. Countless faces of helpless lives and the cries of hardened addicts perhaps kindled an anger of sorts ... toward the enemy of our souls.”



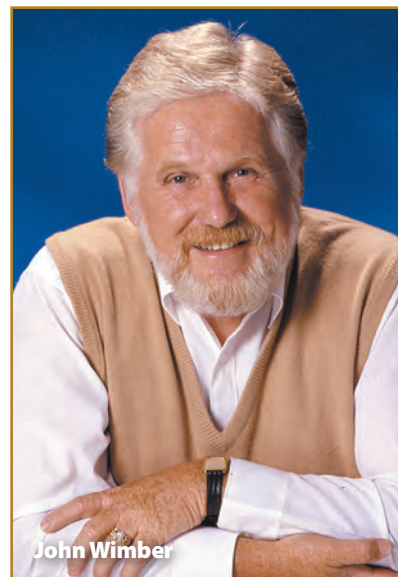
Jack Hayford

On the Way to Majesty

He looked nothing like a Hollywood star—yet celebrities young and old from nearby movie lots joined thousands of ordinary folks at The Church on the Way to hear **Jack Hayford** open the Word of God. He wasn’t an eager promoter or networker; he gave more attention to drawing people into genuine worship. He wrote songs such as “Majesty” (eventually published in more than two dozen hymnals). Every Saturday night, he would go through his quiet sanctuary laying hands on every seat, asking God to touch whoever would sit there the next morning. This kind of earnest heart for God could not go unnoticed; he ended up speaking widely at events from the Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization to Promise Keepers stadium rallies. In 2005 *Christianity Today* magazine put him on its cover as “The Pentecostal Gold Standard.”

In the ‘Radical Middle’

The longer the young **John Wimber** kept preaching through the Gospel of Luke, the more he kept running into healing stories (some two dozen). That frustrated him, since he’d never seen anybody healed through his efforts. But Jesus hadn’t done all the healing himself; sometimes it was the 12, or even the 72. Then came a breakthrough in early 1978, and from then on, healing and renewal were at the center of what became the Vineyard USA association of churches. He (and a friend, Dr. C. Peter Wagner) even taught a night class at the prestigious Fuller Theological Seminary called “Signs, Wonders & Church Growth,”



John Wimber

which drew national media attention—and controversy. Wimber didn’t want to be pegged as either “Pentecostal” or “charismatic?” he said instead with a smile that he was somewhere in the “radical middle” of Christianity. He admitted that he would never understand everything about divine healing, “but I am satisfied to act on what I know now, confident that I will know more fully in the future.”

Up from the Barrio

Little **Jesse Miranda** was just 6 years old when he first climbed up into the Albuquerque church bus to ride to Sunday school. There they spoke about a Jesus who loved Mexican-Americans like him, would save them, even heal



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Jesse Miranda

them. That was the start of his upward trail that gradually led to college, ordination, two master’s degrees and even a doctorate. He founded an alliance for Hispanic ministers, and eventually was invited by three U.S. presidents in a row (George H.W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush) to consult on Hispanic affairs. “Under the skin, we are all kin,” he wrote. “We are all members of the human race and *familia*. ... The church must not see diversity as a problem to be solved but rather as a way to complete its prophetic identity. To this end, racial and ethnic groups are the social and spiritual capital of the body of Christ.”



Reinhard Bonnke

Plundering Hell to Populate Heaven

Called to evangelize in Africa, **Reinhard Bonnke** faced several drawbacks. His skin was white, not black; his native language was German, not English or one of the other major African tongues. Not to be deterred, he campaigned for more than 40 years in nearly every one of the continent’s 54 nations and met face to face with 14 different heads of state, “plundering hell to populate heaven,” as he said. He preached in large tents at first, until his massive 34,000-seat tent blew apart in a Cape Town windstorm. After that, he took his meetings outdoors in parks and other open spaces, with floodlights, powerful sound systems and eventually large video screens around the perimeter. Crowds swelled into the hundreds of thousands.

Scholars for the World

When Korean-born **Wonsuk Ma** and his wife, **Julie**, began ministering among tribal people in the Philippines, they knew their academic degrees would carry little weight. “If we didn’t bring the powerful work of the Holy Spirit into this setting—confronting sickness or demon possession, for example—people would be unimpressed,” Wonsuk says. (He joked with his wife that her Ph.D. dissertation should have been entitled “When the Assemblies of God Meets the Assembly of ‘Gods.’”) With the help of supernatural power, they raised up more than 150 Filipino churches before moving across the globe in 2006 to England, where the prestigious Oxford Centre for Mission Studies sought their revitalizing leadership. In 2016 they moved again, this time to America to launch a Ph.D. program at Oral Roberts University. ◀

READ MORE: For additional information on modern-day Pentecostalism, visit Pentecostal.charismamag.com.

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6 Things We Learned From John Wimber

This pioneer of charismatic renewal spread the fire of the Spirit wherever he went. We can't forget his legacy.

By Connie Dawson

John Wimber was christened by the late C. Peter Wagner as the fountainhead of the Third Wave movement, representing the largest segment of Spirit-empowered Christians in the world. Wimber had a way of inspiring believers across the Christian

spectrum. He appealed to Pentecostals and charismatics because he was open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He also attracted Catholic charismatics because he embraced the mystical and was unguarded and willing to dialogue.

Many evangelicals accepted his ministry because it was scripturally based, and he presented the Holy Spirit in a way that allowed conservatives to embrace the Pentecostal experience while avoiding

the sometimes-controversial aspects of traditional Pentecostalism. Here are six of the most important things we learned from Wimber's life and ministry:

1) Jesus is our perfect model for ministry. Wimber saw the Bible as a textbook—a manual for ministry—and challenged both Pentecostals and contemporary evangelicals to reinvestigate Jesus and the purpose of His supernatural ministry. He taught us that in the Gospels, Jesus consistently used a twofold approach to ministry. Jesus would first *proclaim* the gospel and then *demonstrate* the Holy Spirit's power through signs and wonders such as healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead and taking authority over nature. Wimber felt Jesus was the ministry model for the body of Christ today, and believers were to continue "doing the stuff" He did. Just as Jesus empowered and commissioned the 12 and then the 70 to preach the Good News and demonstrate the presence of the kingdom with signs and wonders in His name, He calls and empowers believers to do the same today. Wimber understood this takes faith, and that faith is spelled R-I-S-K.

2) Power ministry is better "caught than taught." Wimber discovered that if people could start praying for the sick, they could rapidly begin moving in signs and wonders. This was the impetus behind his Equipping the Saints healing seminars. Historically, ministers who were powerfully used in divine healing gifts and miracles built ministries around themselves, but Wimber wanted to build an army, not an audience. During the practical portion of his healing seminars, he would coach and help others learn how to effectively pray for the sick. He believed teaching on

healing without getting people to pray for the sick was analogous to reading about water skiing without getting into the water. His motto was "Everybody gets to play."

3) There is one baptism and many fillings. Wimber believed in one baptism at conversion with many subsequent "fillings." This perspective brought into focus both Luke and Paul's thoughts and bridged Pentecostal and evangelical theology. It became the distinctive perspective of the emerging Third Wave movement. When he prayed for evangelicals, he would ask them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. If they answered affirmatively, he would tell them they simply needed to actualize what the Spirit had already given them. Then he would lay his hands on them and say, "Speak in tongues or prophesy." Wimber submitted that once a person received the Holy Spirit at conversion, they had access to all the gifts; therefore, they only needed to be activated.

4) Worship is for God. Wimber modeled a new style of worship that transformed Christian music. He believed worship is not just singing words about God or warming up the congregation for the sermon; instead, worship is giving our love and adoration back to God. It involves offering our entire being and expressing love that flows from an intimate personal relationship with Jesus. He reminded us that Jesus gives us everything, but worship belongs to Him. This revelation was transformative for church culture as the renewed emphasis on worshiping Jesus often led to life changing experiences in the Holy Spirit.

5) The "meat is in the streets." In other words, believers were to follow the ministry of Jesus by getting out of the church and into the streets to minister to the lost and hurting. It became Wimber's ministry goal to train and equip the body of Christ to operate naturally in the supernatural gifts of the Spirit among people in need. He challenged the church to get out of its prayer huddles and use the Spirit's gifts in the marketplace because it was there that the "meat" of ministry happened.

6) We are called to be fools for Christ. Wimber was an evangelical, exegetical teacher and preacher with a Pentecostal experience who took the words of Jesus in the Gospels literally. For Wimber, evangelicals only had two choices: They could embrace the cessation theory and relegate the works and power of Jesus to the ancient past, or they could take Him literally and obey His commission to heal the sick and cast out demons. He believed there was no choice; one had to decide whether to offend God or man. He chose to be "a fool for Christ" and asked, "Whose fool are you?"

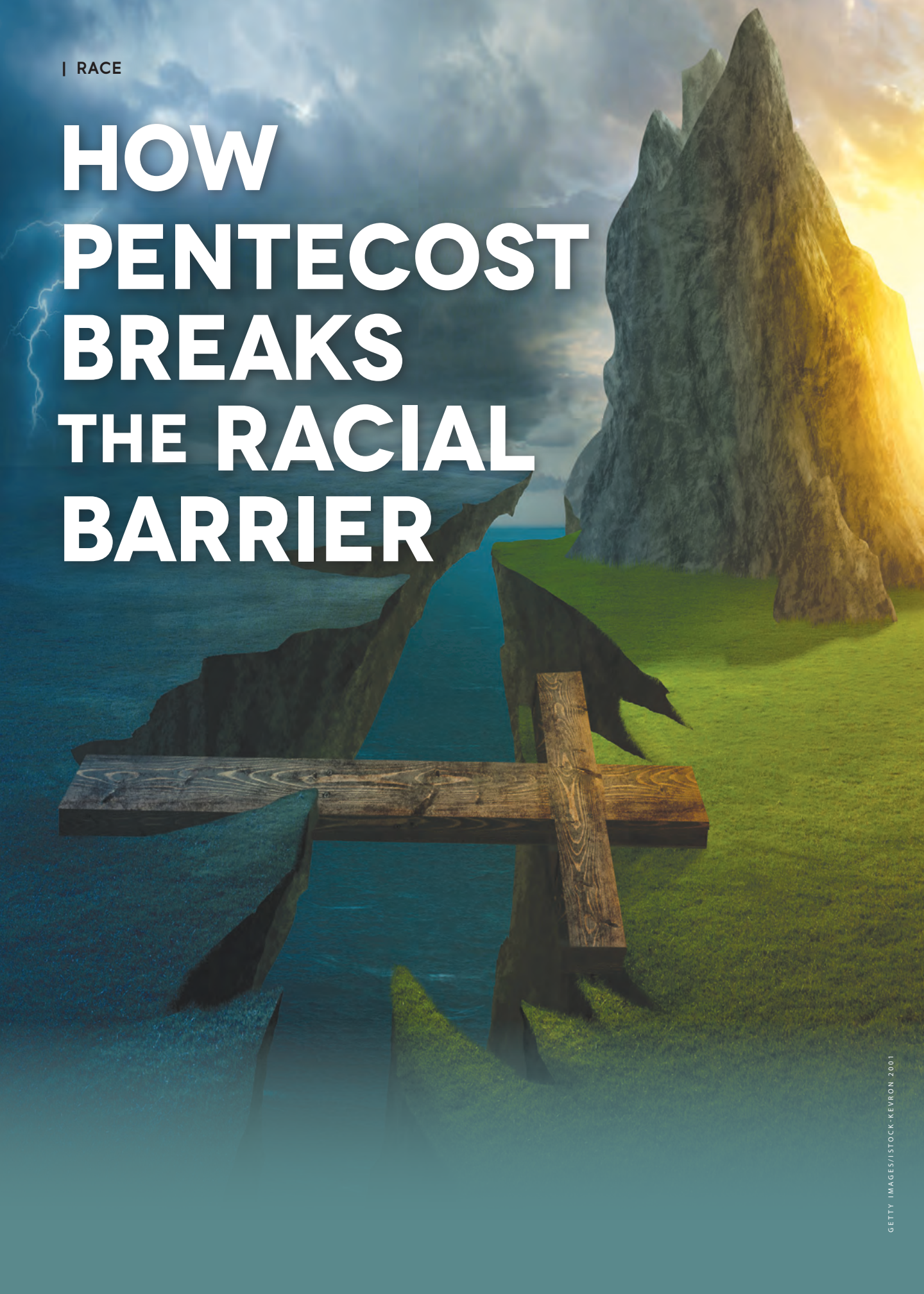
DR. CONNIE DAWSON is the author of the book *John Wimber: His Life and Ministry*. She is the lead pastor of *Radiant Church, Lincoln, Nebraska*, and also teaches church and revival history for *Global Awakening Theological Seminary*.



John Wimber

| RACE

HOW PENTECOST BREAKS THE RACIAL BARRIER



Because of the uncomfortable events of 2020, it seems we've gone backward in our efforts to build bridges. How can the church encourage harmony today?

BY DEMETRIUS MILES

Pentecost and racism—what an oxymoron! But the realities of widespread blatant racism in our nation and the overall poor response of the church have created more hatred than healing. Our current climate, in which we have Christian leaders and laypeople alike aligning with or spewing out racist rhetoric—at times in the name of God—has created a great chasm within and outside of the church.

When the late William J. Seymour birthed the Azusa Street Revival, Black, white, Asian and Native American people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. They worshipped together, defying cultural barriers. The impact of the Azusa Revival caused Frank Bartleman to write that the “color line was washed away in the Blood.”

This took place more than 115 years ago. But look where we are today!

2020 was an uncomfortable year to say the least. Looking forward to 2021, every indication leads us to believe more challenges lie ahead. Dr. Dwight McKissic, one of

the prominent Black pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention, cut ties with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and potentially with the Southern Baptist Convention over racial disparities.

I have committed my entire adult life to planting, leading and cultivating multiethnic churches. I have witnessed God bring people of all ethnicities together. I have also had the privilege of co-laboring with non-Black leaders from across the nation for the past 25 years. I not only call them my friends; they are my family.

However, I must acknowledge some personal realities. I see ethnicities come together weekly in a worship service, only to go back to their separate lives and communities. I believe in recent years, the church has done well at gathering ethnicities together for worship, but we have not been as successful in witnessing authentic racial reconciliation.

I have been in worship services where people

walked out when I stood up to speak. They didn't know I was the pastor or guest speaker. I was intentional to ensure my platform reflected my congregation, and at times I had to do so at a price. It is significant and sometimes challenging for a non-Black person to serve on the team with a lead Black pastor.

I believe subconsciously, as a Black leader who has a passion to see racial reconciliation, I was willing to do whatever it took to make that racial healing a reality. At times, that meant being overly sensitive to the needs of my non-Black team members and congregants. Attempting to balance the preferences of different ethnicities is not an easy task.

I have endured all the criticism: “It's too loud;” “It's not loud enough;” “It's too intense;” “It's not

intense enough;” “It's too Black” or “It's too white.”

I could tell other stories of racial tension I have encountered over the years, but I want to share what I recently faced during the pandemic.

Last year when the stay-at-home order was lifted in our community, my 17-year-old son began meeting with his friends

to play basketball in a subdivision near our home. One afternoon, my son and his friends were playing basketball, and a resident called the police. When the officers arrived, they approached the young men on the court and specifically called out my son (the only Black young man in the group) and proceeded to ask if he had any drugs or weapons on him. He said no.

My son has been raised among incredible law enforcement officers; we even have a neighbor who serves on the same police force. We have great respect for law enforcement and are very grateful for their service. Beyond the fact that this situation angered me, I was intrigued by the conversation that ensued when my son and his friends returned to our home from the incident.

My son's friends expressed their anger and shared how they were confronting the officers on my son's behalf. I explained that there was no way my son could question or confront the officers because his

**“I long for the day we witness
the body of Christ celebrate
racial diversity, equality and
unity to the world.”**

reality was different from theirs. It was quite an enlightening moment for them all. While it takes real work to have discussions like these, I have, and I will continue to give my life to serve all people. Our church community has had a great impact in our community for good, and I know so much more is possible.

My son was in our neighborhood and has never had one negative incident with the law or authority in his life but was severely impacted by the racial climate of our nation.

As we celebrate Pentecost, I remain hopeful in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to reconcile all people to the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual awaking to the church and our nation. I long for the day we witness the body of Christ celebrate racial diversity, equality and unity to the world. Here are three things we must do to build bridges of healing:

We Must Confront

We cannot heal or reconcile what we do not confront. We must acknowledge that it is alive in the heart of some Christians of all ethnicities and that there is no justification for racism to reign in the heart of a Christ-follower.

We must admit that racism is a sin issue according to Scripture. Galatians 3:26-29 says, “You are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Meanwhile, James 2:9 says: “But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as sinners.”

As Christians, we should all be committed to loving our “neighbor” regardless of their race. More specifically, I want to address those of us who embrace Pentecostalism. The day of Pentecost is depicted in Scripture as the most prominent and powerful display of God’s heart to unify His

“I would suggest that it’s an indictment against the Pentecostal church to speak in tongues and not be able to speak in love.”



body by the indwelling and empowering person of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

Acts 2:1-4 says: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues as of fire, being distributed and resting on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”

It’s amazing how much emphasis has been placed on speaking in tongues. I would suggest that it’s an indictment against the Pentecostal church to speak in tongues and not be able to speak in love. As we study Scripture, we discover the goal is not only to be baptized in the Holy Spirit but to continue maturing as we learn to walk in step with Him.

Part of the original intent of

Pentecost was to unify the body of Christ. That idea was reintroduced in our nation in 1906 through the Azusa Street Revival, yet the ills of the day prevailed and sabotaged what was being birthed by the Holy Spirit. I am convinced that we must confront racism head-on. If we do, I believe we will begin to witness the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

We Must Be Convicted

Every Christ-follower should stop, examine their own heart and embrace the conviction of the Holy Spirit if racism is detected. Conviction will lead to repentance. Racism is not a surface issue; it is embedded in a person’s heart or root system and cannot be excised by superficial means.

Biblical repentance requires us to change the way we think and go in a different direction. I am not suggesting that we need more solemn assemblies or public displays of repentance among Christian leaders of all

races, only to walk off the public stage with the same heart and root system. We need transformational change.

I know we are an optics generation. We love platforms, pulpits and stages. But authentic and sustainable change occurs at the grassroots level. I receive inquiries, primarily from white pastors, who desire to know how they should respond when we are in the heat of a racial injustice incident.

I encourage leaders to express empathy over eloquence and compassion over complicity. Sometimes just showing up and saying, “I am with you, and I am here for you” is what’s needed. We can never go wrong when we demonstrate love and compassion toward one another. Personal conviction by the Holy Spirit will lead to change.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his book, *Strength to Love*, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

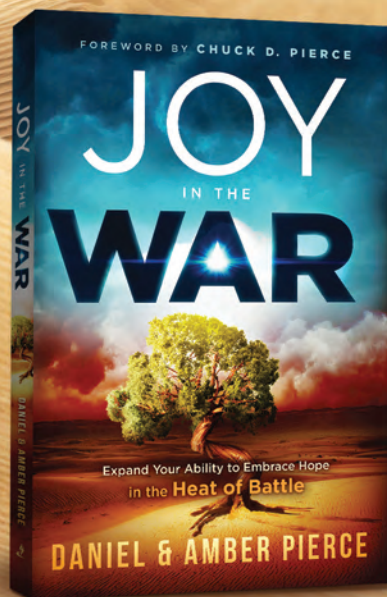
We must examine our own hearts and respond accordingly, based on what the Lord shows us. First Corinthians 1:10 says: “Now I ask you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak in agreement and that there be no divisions among you. But be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

We Need Conversations

One of the ways we can begin to build bridges and harmony around racism is through meaningful dialogue. I honor the efforts and investments of great leaders and movements within the church to address racism in conferences, conventions and solemn assemblies. However, I hope we can begin to make sustainable traction through engaging conversations.

Biblical discipleship is the primary ingredient needed to move the needle in a redemptive direction when it comes to racial healing. If the church would engage the principles of biblical discipleship as Jesus modeled, we will witness the Holy Spirit usher in a spiritual awaking in the church and


WITHOUT JOY, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERCOME HARDSHIPS



No matter what circumstances we face, God promises to be in an everlasting covenant with His children. Aligning with His purposes can lead to breakthrough and triumph even in the midst of conflict and warfare. The bonds of fear can be shattered in war and doom through unshakable joy.

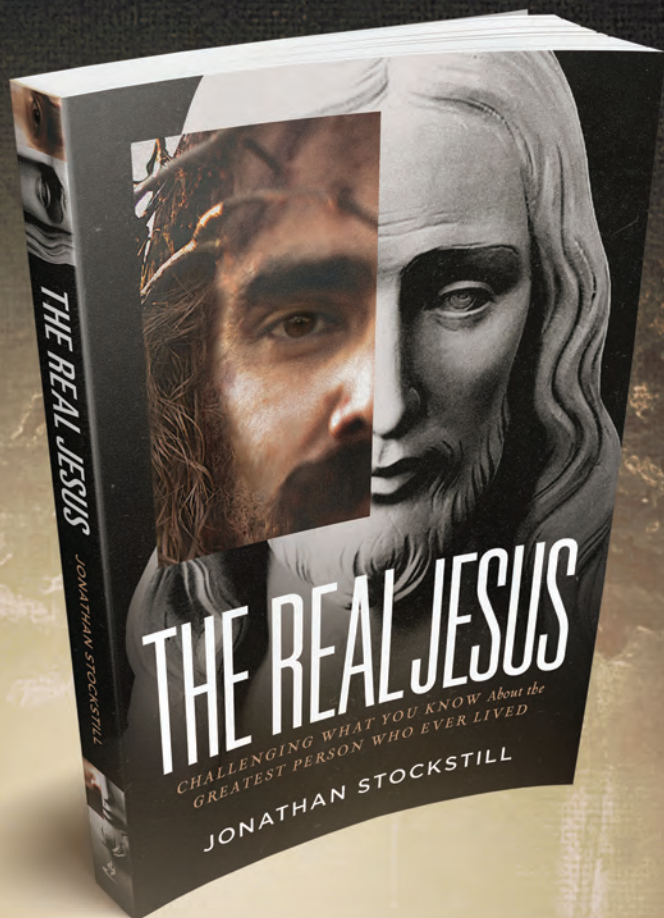
Daniel and Amber Pierce share their lessons about joy learned from their time living in Israel in *Joy in the War* and how the church and America can learn from the surrounding threats of Israel.

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our nation that will be filled with power and sustainability.

Biblical discipleship can create safe spaces conducive for believers of all ethnicities to begin authentic, raw, safe, meaningful and transformational conversations about racism. We can't preach or pray racism away; we must employ the practice of engaging in conversations with those who are different from us.

We must be willing to initiate conversations that begin to chisel away at the walls that divide us—such as fear, pride, arrogance, elitism and prejudice. In my city, a group of Black, white and Hispanic pastors have engaged in authentic, meaningful and transformational conversations about racism for the past nine years.

It has not been a journey without challenges, tears, skepticism, awkwardness, repentance and forgiveness. It has stretched us! But the results for our community have been priceless. I believe engaging healthy conversations facilitated through discipleship and empowered by the Holy Spirit can be a game changer for the church. Transformational conversations over time will breed understanding, understanding will lead to trust and trust will create community.

As we celebrate Pentecost, I pray that we pause to earnestly seek God, prepare ourselves by doing the necessary work for change and proceed with humility. I also pray for pastors across the globe to be encouraged and strengthened in their assignments. Together, we must confront racism, embrace the conviction of the Holy Spirit and engage in transformational conversations. I am confident that the King is up to good concerning His church, and the best is still yet to come! ◀

READ MORE: For additional articles on racism and its impact, visit racism.charismamag.com.

PASTOR DEMETRIUS MILES is a fully devoted Christ-follower, communicator, coach and lead pastor of Tucson Church International. He holds a master's degree from Southwestern Christian University and is honored to serve leaders nationally.

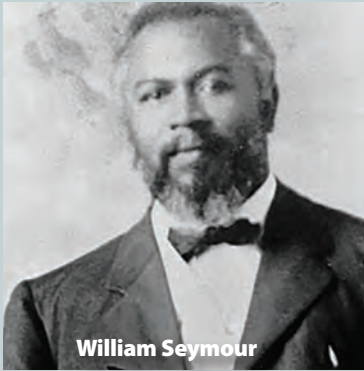
Pentecost Crossed the Color Line

We must not forget the legacy of William ‘Daddy’ Seymour

By Dale M. Coulter

Pentecostals love to talk about a global leaderless movement generated by the Holy Spirit. While there is some truth to this claim, it obscures the central role of William Seymour and the primacy of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. During the same year a race riot erupted in Atlanta leaving 25 Black men and women and two whites dead, Seymour led a multicultural revival where all ethnic groups and nationalities worshipped in racial harmony.

The revival broke out in April 1906 at the home of the Asberrys on Bonnie Brae Street. Seymour had been conducting prayer meetings for the small band of mostly Blacks when the



William Seymour

power fell and people began to speak in tongues. Within a few days, the meeting grew into multiracial event as whites and Mexicans joined. By April 13, Seymour had leased the former Stevens AME church on Azusa Street to accommodate the growing numbers.

Before they held the first service, a Swedish man from Chicago, Arthur Osterberg, witnessed a Mexican-American surrender to the power of the Spirit after a Black woman laid hands on him. Within a month, men and women from various ethnicities and nationalities were laying hands on one another and receiving the baptism in the Spirit. One such family was the Shakarians, Armenians who had recently immigrated from Russia. Demos Shakarian went on to found the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International.

When North Carolina evangelist G.B. Cashwell arrived for his own Pentecost, he struggled with the racial mixing. Friends would later report that the Southerner initially could not surrender to Black hands in prayer. For five days, he wrestled against his prejudice until he finally went forward and asked Seymour and other Blacks to lay their hands upon him to receive the baptism. Cashwell instantly began to speak in tongues. He would later report that he had to be crucified to things before he could receive. Cashwell brought the new message to the early Church of God and Pentecostal Holiness Church.

This crucifixion to racism is what Frank Bartleman meant when he declared that the “color line was washed away in the blood.” It was the sanctifying work of the Spirit to cleanse by the blood of the Lamb before immersing the person in tongues of fire. Bartleman would go on to describe what was happening

as living “in a sea of pure divine love” in which all kindness and compassion prevailed. Determined to put into practice what God was doing, Seymour asked whites to serve as board members and fellow ministers.

More than an organizer or facilitator of the message of Pentecostal power, Seymour was its primary theological voice. For Seymour, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a consecrating work in which grace ushered a person into the holy of holies to become a temple of the living God so that the very love of God might flow freely to all around. By plunging them into the depths of divine love, the Spirit transformed the people of God into a living habitation of divine glory, which radiated on Black, brown and white faces. God created the church through a crucible of love that melted individuals down and poured them out for others.

Tongues merely symbolized crossing the threshold into the ocean of divine love. It was not love. As Seymour noted, the most enduring sign that a person has become a temple is love itself. Racism could only be burned out by the blessed passion of love.

Unfortunately, the racial harmony to which Bartleman testified was short-lived. When Charles Parham arrived in October 1906, he concluded the Azusa Street awakening was not a genuine revival because of its interracial nature. A segregationist who embraced Jim Crow, Parham described what he saw as “animalism,” which echoed Thomas Dixon’s anxiety in his novel *The Clansman* over falling into “the black abyss of animalism.” To invoke a common racial slur was racism under the guise of rescuing the revival from what he viewed as Seymour’s slave religion. The color line had returned.

Seymour and Parham divided over the meaning of Pentecost. Was it a vision that included a clear separation and hierarchy of the races or a radical egalitarianism that reformed the people of God into an interracial tribe, a new temple? This remains a question that those in the Pentecostal-charismatic movement must ask themselves. What does the sign of tongues tell them? Is it a sign of a deeper immersion in love in which the person becomes a habitation of the living God to walk out in unity and mission? The global movement God brought into existence should give the answer.

The fire of Azusa offered a glimpse of the kingdom where all tribes and tongues speak the language of the Spirit. The church was to be the new melting pot, a place where the crucible of the Spirit would reforge believers into a color-conscious nation in which even the lowest can become the voice of God to all. This is the temple of the Spirit.

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UnWrap the Gifts of the Spirit



Cessationists believe many gifts of the Spirit ended with the canonization of the New Testament. Here's the biblical evidence against this doctrine.

BY RANDY CLARK

From the sawdust-covered tent floors of healing evangelists to the simple but radically profound services held at Azusa Street, the Pentecostal-charismatic movement continues to grow in size, impact, influence and significance. Wherever its message has traveled, believers have seen and experienced miracles, signs, wonders and healings as God has confirmed the word with supernatural activity and answered prayer.

Yet in a significant portion of the body of Christ, we find those who remain adamant that God has ceased the operation of multiple spiritual gifts recorded in the New Testament. This theology is known as cessationism.

The cessationist doctrine teaches that certain gifts of the Spirit—miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy—ceased with the death of the apostles, their immediate successors or the canonization of the New Testament. Cessationists also teach that some of the ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11-12—apostles, prophets and evangelists—also ceased. This was John Calvin’s position. Much of the Protestant church, however, later added the evangelist to the pastor and teacher as a continuing gift for the church.

‘The Perfect’

The primary Scriptures cessationists use to make their case are 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, Hebrews 2:3-4 and 2 Corinthians 12:12. After considering these passages and proving from context that they do not support cessationism, we will address other passages that refute this doctrine.

“Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for knowledge it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:8-12, ESV).

Verse 8 states prophecies will pass away, tongues will cease and knowledge will also pass away. Verse 10 gives the timing of the aforementioned gifts to end—when the perfect comes. The cessationist argument claims “the perfect” refers to the New Testament. However, most commentators—even most evangelical commentators—understand the phrase to mean the return of Jesus, not the canonization of the New Testament.

One of the primary principles of biblical interpretation is to examine the meaning the text would have had for its original audience. Since the New Testament was not canonized until A.D. 393 and 397, the more natural interpretation of “the perfect” would be the Second Coming of Jesus. The context of this passage predates the canonization of the

New Testament by approximately 363 years.

Near the decline of one the earliest heresies, Montanism, which originated sometime between A.D. 136-177, the Montanists moved from emphasizing the gift of prophecy to teaching that this gift would end. The early church responded to the teaching of the cessation of prophecy upon the death of the Montanists’ key leaders by using 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, interpreting “the perfect” as referring to the Second Coming of Jesus. The gifts would end, but not until the Second Coming.

Finally, the cessationist interpretation of this passage would require knowledge to pass away in the same way and time as prophecy. I am not aware of any cessationist teaching that believes knowledge has passed away with the canonization of the New Testament.

‘Those Who Heard Him’

A second passage used by cessationists is Hebrews 2:3b-4 (NIV): “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

Cessationists interpret this passage to mean the apostles were “those who heard him.” However, God is not said to testify or confirm the messengers, but the message of the gospel instead: “God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” He did this whether apostles, deacons or mere disciples were used to confirm the message. Mark 16:20 reveals a parallel to God confirming His word: the preaching of the gospel by signs and wonders.

‘Signs and Wonders and Mighty Works’

Cessationists use a third passage to prove their doctrine: 2 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV). “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.”

This first reference to signs includes the list of sufferings Paul had endured in preaching the gospel of the kingdom mentioned in 11:23-28. The second sign would be Paul’s character, and the third category would include signs, wonders and miracles. This passage does not say only apostles experience signs, wonders and miracles, but that they experience them along with others in the body of Christ. Acts 4:33 (ESV) also points to those other than only the apostles: “And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.” And in Acts 5:12a, we see again that these supernatural signs extend beyond the apostles alone: “Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.”

Thus the argument that signs, wonders and miracles or

“Both the hand of the Lord and evidence of the grace of God would imply power, signs, wonders and miracles.”

mighty deeds operated only through the apostles or persons the apostles had laid their hands upon is clearly in error, because the New Testament reveals no such limitation. Jesus declares this in John’s Gospel: “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12, NIV).

John 3:16,18, 36 make it clear that these three references to “whoever believes” pertain to salvation and are not limited to the apostles. John 6:35 and 7:38 both carry the implication that “whoever believes” refers to salvation. Though not stated as clearly as in John 3, the context indicates that the meaning pertains to the benefits of salvation and life in the kingdom.

John 12:44-50 also refers to salvation, as verse 50 clearly states: “I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” This should reveal that the “whoever believes” of John 14:12 who will “do the works [Jesus had] been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because [I am going] to the Father” is not limited to the apostles, but to anyone who believes. Those who believe receive salvation and will receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39), the one who will enable them to exercise the *charismata* (gifts of the Spirit) Jesus pours out upon them.

Acts 6 shows the apostles becoming bogged down in administrative work related to the ministry to the poor. They tell the church to choose seven men known to be “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (v. 3b, NKJV). The apostles turn this administrative service to the poor over to these seven, laying their hands upon them and setting them apart as servants—deacons. Of these seven, two became well known in the church for operating in wonders and miraculous signs. “Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people” (v. 8, NET).

Philip was also one of the seven; he went to Samaria after Steven was

martyred and the church scattered, leaving only the apostles in Jerusalem. “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed” (Acts 8:5-7, ESV).

In this same revival in Samaria, Simon, a former sorcerer, was saved. “Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed” (Acts 8:13, NASB 1995).

Both Steven and Philip had hands laid on them by the apostles. Yet neither is ever called an apostle, revealing that in the New Testament church, signs and wonders also happened through deacons. The book of Acts does not limit the miraculous power to the apostles or to those upon whom they laid their hands.

‘The Lord’s Hand Was With Them’

Acts 11:19 and following picks up the story from Acts 8:1-4; the church had been scattered and “preached the word wherever they went” (8:4b, NIV). Acts 11:21 uses a Hebrew idiom to indicate that the power of God rested upon the disciples as they were preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus: “*the Lord’s hand was with them.*” This phrase is used 36 times in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament.

The disciples who took the gospel to Antioch, none of whom were apostles, were all Jewish believers at this time. Acts 11:20-21 says, “Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” This verse makes the clear connection between

“the hand of the Lord was with them” and the great number of people who believed and turned to the Lord.

Just a few verses later, we see another Jewish idiom. The church in Jerusalem heard about the church plant occurring in Antioch and sent Barnabas to check it out. “When he arrived and saw *what the grace of God had done*, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts” (Acts 11:23, NIV). There is no evidence that these scattered Christians who were experiencing the “hand of the Lord [being] with them” and “what the grace of God had done” were only the other five deacons. Instead, they are men from Cyrene and Cyprus who went to Antioch. Both the hand of the Lord and evidence of the grace of God would imply power, signs, wonders and miracles. These expressions would all flow from the *charismata* of the Holy Spirit, the gifts. These *charismata* were not the exclusive domain of the apostles; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 makes this clear, as do other New Testament passages.

Other New Testament passages also display God using non-apostles to accomplish His supernatural work:

» “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—*so that you are not lacking in any gift*, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who



will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:4-8, ESV).

» As we have already seen, 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 also speaks of the gifts continuing until the return of Christ.

» “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says, ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to his people’” (Eph. 4:7-8).

» “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13, NIV).

» Additional New Testament passages that indicate the gifts operated in those beyond the apostles are: Romans 12:3-8; Galatians 3:5; Ephesians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8, 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Peter 4:7-12.

Other translations render the Greek for “works of service” as “work of ministry.” It is also important to note that the comma between “equip his people” and “for works of service” has been removed in most translations of the modern era, preventing readers from seeing the function of the fivefold offices: to “equip his people,” “for works of service,” “to build up the body of Christ.” With the removal of the comma, the purpose of the fivefold

offices is to “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until ...”

The “until” gives us the duration of the fivefold offices. Until Jesus returns, the function is to continue, and if the function is to continue, so are all the offices or ministries needed to bring about those functions. The operation of the gifts of the Spirit serves as the means of accomplishing the goals of verse 13. And the *doma*—“gifts” in the latter part of verse 8 and listed in verse 11 as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—are the ones through whom God imparts, activates, coaches, trains, teaches and equips the saints for the work of ministry.

The ministry of the fivefold is to prepare the members of the body of Christ to minister in the gifts and callings God has given them. Again, as in all of the references in this section, the ministry gifts are to continue operating until the Second Coming of Jesus.

Wonder-Working Power

In Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonian church he states, “With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:11-12, NIV). Notice he prays God would, by His power, “fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.” And why does he pray this? We find the answer in verse 12: “That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him.”

Let us remember that the primary way God glorifies his name is through His power. We see this clearly in the Upper Room discourse of John 14-16 and in John 2:11, where Jesus revealed His glory by turning the water into wine. Paul, like John, will use glory and power as synonyms for each other, sometimes saying, “raised by the power of God” and other times “raised by the glory of God.” The acts prompted by

faith are most probably acts that would require God’s supernatural power in and through His *charismata*.

The acts prompted by faith may not involve healings, miracles or deliverance, but they can still bring about occurrences outside the natural realm of things. In the 19th and early 20th century, George Mueller’s prayer-driven care for orphans, and in the late 20th and early 21st century, Rolland and Heidi Baker’s by-faith feeding of 5,000-10,000 children a day through Iris Global both demonstrate the gift of faith. The way Mike and Deena Van’t Hul and their three children followed God’s call to China also reveals the power of faith expressed through works of service. Their ministry, Loaves & Fishes International, depends upon God supernaturally supplying the money to build several buildings, purchase land and care for hundreds of children abandoned in state orphanages due to their severe birth defects.

Some denominations believe in healing through prayer while denying gifts of healings and working of miracles, often restricting this type of healing to the elders of the church (see James 5:14-15). Though practicing this scriptural command deserves commendation, we need not abandon the reality of the power of the Spirit as described in the New Testament. The church of Jesus Christ has been and always will be supernatural in nature. There is no biblical evidence to support modern believers subscribing to a theology that relegates the miraculous power of God to an earlier era. We must believe God for a fresh release of His wonder-working power. ◀

READ MORE: For further study on spiritual gifts and how they operate, visit giftsofthespirit.charismamag.com.

An international itinerant minister birthed from a four-day meeting in Canada, RANDY CLARK illustrates the aphorism, “don’t despise small beginnings.” With more than 30 years of pastoral experience and 44 years of ministry, he has traveled to over 50 countries and continues to travel to fulfill God’s mandate on his life.

I'M NOT GIVING UP ON MY GENERATION

A huge segment of today's young generation has walked away from church. But I am hopeful that many prodigals are on their way home.

BY BEN CRISP

Numbers tell a story. The numerical decline of Christianity in the Western world is no secret. Pandemic statistics are even more alarming. The numbers are disheartening. They make us feel like Elijah: “and I alone am left” (1 Kings 19:14b). Numbers tell a story, but they only tell part of the story. A remnant lives.

We have watched educational, governmental, recreational and familial masses walk away from the faith. But God has revealed, just as he did to Elijah, thousands “whose knees have not bowed to Baal” (1 Kings 19:18b). A despondent Elijah was infused with faith as the generality of thousands became specific in Elisha, a young man willing to sacrifice everything to pursue God (1 Kings 19:19-21).

As the piercing eyes of Jesus lock with younger generations, He asks, “do you also want to go away?” (John 6:67). Time and again, I have watched as younger generations boldly respond, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). This younger generation is willing to go anywhere and do anything so that Jesus may receive the reward of His suffering (Rev. 5).

Over the last two decades, four specific paradigm shifts have given me great hope that prodigals in younger generations will return home.

Presence Over Production

At the turn of the 21st century, churches were infatuated with novel technology, innovative service openers and attractional elements to reach lost people. The intended positive effort quickly became a vicious cycle. Many church leaders focused on service openers more than opening heaven (Isa. 64:1). The genuine attempt to reach outsiders led to a neglect of God's mandate to be a “house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:7c). Instead, some churches became “a den of robbers” (Jer. 7:11b). They were not moneychangers because they merchandised the faith experience; Jesus' rebuke was not primarily to moneychangers. It was to religious leaders who robbed God's people of a genuine experience of His presence. These churches unintentionally robbed younger generations of an authentic encounter with God, leading to their prodigalization rather

than their proselytization.

One of my mentors once said, “What you catch people with, you must keep them with.” The desperate approach at sensationalism led to pastoral burnout and cynicism. Church leaders were unable to generate enough “wow factor” each week. Younger generations saw through the gimmicks. They longed for God's presence but received a production.

Younger generations are craving the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A spike in spiritism and other cultic religious groups is an indictment against the church. People are leaving church to discover a spiritual experience. What a tragedy! I can only imagine what the apostle Paul would say: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal 3:3).

There is good news, though—churches are rising! Churches no longer satisfied with ankle-deep spiritual waters. Churches that long for the deluge (Hag. 2:9). Churches that long for the river to flow (Ezek. 47). Churches that will not quench the Spirit's fire (1 Thess. 5:19). Churches that will not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Churches that minister to the Lord (Isa. 56:6).

The presence of God yields unimaginable outcomes. A quick look at the Gospels demonstrates an intrinsic connection between God's presence and the expulsion of demonic activity (Mark 1:39). Recently, our church saw a demonized individual freed, saved and changed. As the news spread, a family came to our church to witness this authoritative gospel power (Mark 1:27), and their teenage son radically encountered Jesus. When he experienced God's presence, he was gloriously saved, baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit's fire. Marketing, lights and production did not lead this young man to salvation. The organic spread of God's presence and power did.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not against service planning, leadership development or digital production. I love excellence. I love aesthetics. I love leadership development. I am getting a degree in it! But we must not exchange God's presence for human production. Younger generations appreciate the bells and whistles but want the real thing. May we never rob them of their spiritual birthright. Their return home depends on God's presence, not production.

Shepherding Over Spectating

Younger generations crave connection. They will do nearly anything to get it. Technology has promised to satisfy the craving, but it has only manufactured a mirage—the promise of connection without its fulfillment.

Disconnectedness is not a new issue. The church in Corinth experienced something similar. The people had numerous teachers with flashy presentations, but they lacked real connection (1 Cor. 4:15). The Corinthians did not realize they needed shepherding, but Paul did. Young leaders worldwide seek the eschatological fulfillment of the prophet Malachi by restoring the connection their generation needs (Mal. 4:6).

I will never forget the pain I saw in one young man's eyes. He never heard the affirmation of his parents. He only heard criticism. We prayed and sought the heavenly Father for healing. As we prayed, the Holy Spirit led me to embrace this young man with a hug. When I did, the tears flowed. The deep emotional pain was released as God's gracious love was received. That young man's tears still whisper in my ear, reminding me of younger generations' longing for love and connection. They desire shepherding above the church show.

I mentor several young men. Some come from great family backgrounds. Others come from brokenness. Both backgrounds long for someone who cares. They want to share their successes. They want to share their struggles. They want to voice their dreams. They have incredible spiritual insight. They have zeal. They have anointing. They just need shepherding. They need someone in their corner cheering for them. They need someone fanning the gift of God into flame (2 Tim. 1:6). They need someone saying, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

One young man I mentor, Robert, is so hungry for God. When we first started meeting, he shared several wounds from his childhood, but he did not let his past overtake his present calling. The love of a church family and the safety of spiritual shepherding enabled him to flourish. I am so proud of him. As he pursues his ministry degree, he is training with Christ for all Nations for outreach and crusade ministry. He is seeing signs, wonders and salvations in his ministry. He is 21. This is only the beginning!

Another young man I mentor, Judah, came from an incredible home. He is a natural connector. As Judah and I have journeyed through discerning his ministry calling, he has explored numerous ministry opportunities within our church. He makes our church so much better. He is growing and maturing in God every single day. His giftings and anointings are increasing. He is going to change the world!

As a 28-year-old pastor, I know the difference shepherding makes. My parents encouraged and supported my calling. They love me, pray for me and invest in the church I pastor. Many of my mentors have invested time and money toward my ministerial formation. One mentor gifted me with Logos Bible software. That is a \$2,000 investment! Younger generations do not need green-room celebrities. They need selfless shepherds who will lay down their lives on account of them. Shepherding is the birthing place of Holy Spirit outpouring. If you do not believe me, ask Jesus. He shepherded 12 individuals as He guided them to the place of Holy Spirit outpouring. Younger leaders are following the example of Jesus as they shepherd those God has entrusted to them.

Missional Over Missions

Younger generations are no longer satisfied with a two-week mission trip they hashtag. They are fulfilling Jesus' desire to preach the gospel to all people (Matt. 28:18-20). Gone are the days when mission trips are the end of spiritual intensity. Younger generations desire a life of mission—day-in and day-out listening to the Holy Spirit. For some, that means leaving everything

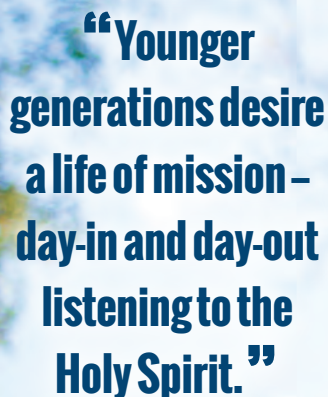


behind to go overseas. Over the last few months, three young ladies from our church have gone to other countries as they obey the Holy Spirit's leading. They are leaving everything behind for the sake of the harvest. Others are staying in their geographic location but leaving behind the stagnancy of religious rituals. They are finding ways to transform their cities through radical obedience to the Holy Spirit. They understand that missional living does not require a plane ticket.

Many in my generation also understand that missional living can occur from our homes. We are not content with old nets. We want to innovate to invite others to Jesus. New nets do not denigrate old methods. Jesus made this abundantly clear—"Neither do men put new wine into old wineskins. Or else the wineskins burst, the wine runs out, and the wineskins perish. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and *both are preserved*" (Matt. 9:17, author's emphasis). Podcasts, Netflix, social media and other multimedia approaches do not replace in-person gospel proclamation; they supplement it. Younger generations understand that digital media is not the solution. It is, however, a new net to cast so that all may know the beauty of Jesus.

The desire to reach out has caused us to reach up. Sending is preceded by knowing the sent one. That is why Jesus asked His disciples to be *with Him* before *He sent them out* to preach and cast out demons (Mark 3:13-15). Missional living is rooted in intimate relational connection with Jesus forged in Scripture, prayer and community. Missions was never about altruism or virtue signaling. Ananias did not go to Saul out of altruism but out of obedience crafted in the place of prayer (Acts 9:10-19).

We are grasping a significant reality—prayer is not transactional. It is navigational. Younger generations are learning to hear the voice of God as young Samuel did (1 Sam 3:3-21). We are trusting the Holy Spirit's leading for every step. One of my dearest friends begins his



“Younger generations desire a life of mission – day-in and day-out listening to the Holy Spirit.”

mornings by asking God what His desires are for the day. Another friend starts his day by praying fervently in the Spirit. These are just a couple of ways younger generations are pursuing a missional, Spirit-led life.

Ministering Over Ministry

I have watched numerous Christian leaders and influencers build massive ministry platforms. The attraction of numerical success cannot be denied. But my heart breaks as I watch these same pastors and leaders fall. Along with many others in my generation, I am tired of the name of Christ being disgraced. Younger ministers seek to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors. Younger generations are moving away from ministry as a career to ministry as a calling. The adage sounds worn, but let me share a nuanced difference. The ministry I speak of is not to people but to God.

The prophet Isaiah foresaw a people who would “bind themselves to the Lord to *minister to him*” (Isa. 56:6b, NIV, author's emphasis). Ezekiel foresaw the restoration of a priesthood that would “*come near to [the Lord] to minister to Me*” (Ezek. 44:15, MEV, author's emphasis). The Old Testament prophets foresaw a ministry that would flow from ministering to the Lord. This is precisely what the early church modeled. In Antioch, the church leaders ministered to the Lord before they sent the apostles off for ministry: “While they were ministering to the Lord ... they sent them

away” (Acts 13:2-3, NASB 1995).

The younger generations are making this vital connection. They are choosing to become New Testament Levites, consecrating their lives for the sake of ministering to the Lord. This generation is accepting its spiritual inheritance as a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). I am part of the generation willing to neglect the delicacies of earth to receive the delights of heaven. We are eager to consecrate ourselves and contend for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We will not offer something that costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). We will not cart the presence of God with spiritual lethargy; we will carry the ark of God's presence on our shoulders just as the Levitical priests carried the ark of God (1 Chron. 15:15). We do not want ministry platforms. We want to offer fragrant, pleasing ministry to the Lord!

From the outside, it may look as though younger generations are difficult to understand. We really are not. We just want something genuine. We want holy worship. We want houses of prayer. We want Holy Spirit gifts active in our lives and our churches. We want to see an outpouring of the Spirit like never before. We will not stop. We will not quit. We will minister to the Lord. We will function in our rightful priesthood. As our exaltation ascends to heaven, we believe a divine exchange will occur. God will respond with His weighty glory. This weighty glory will crush addiction, shatter sickness, eradicate spiritual apathy and restore relational brokenness.

I am not giving up on my generation. I hope you don't either. ◀

READ MORE: For added information on God's work among the generations, visit generations.charismamag.com.

Born in Lenoir, North Carolina, BEN CRISP received a call to ministry at the age of 10. Today, he is the lead pastor of Reflection Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and is pursuing his doctorate at Regent University.



A Spirit-Led Life

The benefits of pursuing an advanced degree at a Christian institution

BY MALLORY JOHNSON

Who knows the course of our lives better than God? Who better to guide us than the Holy Spirit? When we truly believe we can give our past, present and future to Christ, things change. When we walk in agreement with God's will, we rest assured that the Holy Spirit will be a faithful guide.

Maybe your passion is to become a missionary or a pastor; maybe your dream is to be a business professional or an educator; maybe you have a love for science. Your career may be linear, or you may have multiple directions that you feel led to pursue. You may volunteer and serve in areas you never could have anticipated. Your home may look vastly different than you planned. Regardless of where the Holy Spirit leads you, by pursuing your advanced degree from a Christian institution, you can be equipped to be a Spirit-empowered servant, prepared to impact the world.

Coming to and leaving college can be filled with uncertainty. The Holy Spirit's guidance isn't always crystal-clear and in line with our five-year plan. This should spark excitement, not anxiety. Loosening our efforts to grasp for control is freeing and beautiful. The Holy Spirit guides us to both our equipping and our calling. While you may not know where you're being led, knowing how to press into the promptings of the

Holy Spirit and trust that you have been thoroughly prepared to confidently step into your calling is essential. Having the practical skills to perform well is crucial, but equally crucial is a firm understanding of biblical truth and how to be a Christ-centered leader and light wherever you are. With biblical and foundational truth woven throughout the entire framework of a university's curriculum and community, your faith will be nurtured while you discover your calling. God has created you uniquely; the goal of a higher education institution should be to help you discover who you are in Christ.

Advanced education has been instrumental in the lives of so many who have stepped into the workplace and mission field. The integration of faith and learning that comes from an education received at a faith-based institution is core to developing effective and Spirit-led leaders in any and every field. At the base of this type of institution's values should be the foundational belief that biblical truth is central and integrated into all experiences. Faith and reason are complementary to each other, and both are necessary in the search for truth. Pursuing an advanced degree at a Christian institution will equip you holistically as you receive an education that merges biblical Christianity with humanities, arts, sciences, behavioral sciences, social sciences, specialized subjects and more.

The camaraderie of a campus full of Christ-centered believers is unlike any other, even if you participate in that campus community virtually. This type of community is passionate about living life on purpose, for a purpose. Spiritual and academic life are essential, but the community that carries on long past your graduation date is just as life-giving. From shared experiences in the classroom to practical ministry opportunities, the community should inspire you to lead a Spirit-filled life and make a global impact for the kingdom.

The Holy Spirit takes us where we need to go so we can be fully equipped before He guides us to our calling. When an institution values both the individual callings of students and the integration of faith and practical education, the result is a community of servant leaders who are Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led. Your calling and passions are valuable and orchestrated by God. Pursue an education that will help you fulfill the calling God has uniquely placed on your life. ◀

READ MORE: Learn about God's work through education at education.charismamag.com.

MALLORY JOHNSON is a digital content creator at *Evangel University* and a proud alumni. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism and is passionate about storytelling in all forms.

SPREADING THE FIRE GLOBALLY



2020 was a difficult year. But many Christians across the world believe we are now—after some dark days—on the cusp of the greatest move of the Holy Spirit in history.

Even during the darkest weeks of the 2020 pandemic, a common theme circulated during Zoom calls and virtual church meetings. Pastors and prophets alike spoke of a coming spiritual awakening. At a time when churches were closed, conferences were canceled and missionary travel was restricted, God assured us that hopeful times lay ahead.

Charisma interviewed a wide cross-section of church leaders to see what God is revealing about the coming days. Even though many believers face the challenges of political divisions, economic turmoil and even persecution, the leaders we interviewed believe we stand on the cusp of a global revival of faith. These leaders, from Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America, all expect a widespread outpouring of the Holy Spirit amid this challenging season.

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost on May 23, we pray these words from leaders around the world will ignite fresh hope.

Tunde Bolanta, Restoration Bible Church & Ministries International KADUNA, NIGERIA

The global shaking of the past year and the present distress of nations are labor pangs for the revival ahead and a season of boot camp training for the church. Like the early church, this revival will come with persecution as a catalyst for growth and increase, just as the olive oil comes out of a great press and the Israelites multiplied in Egypt during their time of affliction. God showed me a healing revival where creative miracles like amputees receiving new body parts will be commonplace. In addition, a great harvest of souls such as we are witnessing in the monthly birth of new churches in northern Nigeria and other frontline mission nations will occur. There will come a new passion for authentic Christianity in the pulpit and the pew; false ministries will fall and be exposed; and a great revival and fresh fire will fall on the altars.

Rev. Yang Tuck Yoong, Cornerstone Community Church SINGAPORE

Two identifiable signs are taking place in Singapore to reveal that we are on the cusp of a mighty move of the Holy Spirit: the proliferation of prayer groups all over our city and a greater sense of unity and love for one another. It was only when the early church behaved in a totally unselfish way and started to live for one another that great power and great grace came upon them. The prefix “great” was only added in Acts 4:32 when believers started loving one another in practical ways, and we are seeing this happen in Singapore.

I believe everything God has done in my life up until now took place to prepare my people and me for this great end-time revival and harvest of souls. Revival is in my DNA, and 2 Chronicles 7:14 is the key. We must do all we can to be ready because God only uses the prepared.

Avi and Chaya Mizrachi, Dugit Outreach Ministries TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

We believe a new birth took place in 2017 during the Feast of Tabernacles, when local Israeli Messianic leaders hosted the Welcoming the King of Glory gathering in Jerusalem. This event forced us to take our place in a new way, welcoming the Good News back to Israel from the ends of the earth. Then in 2019 we hosted Welcoming the King of Glory 2 gathering in Nazareth, coming together in Hebrew, Arabic and English to repent for rejecting Yeshua as Messiah. This event caused a significant shift for the body in Israel.

Since the events of 2020, our message to the people of Israel is “Repent, for the kingdom of God has come” and as believers we are to “Arise and shine, for the light has come.” The veil is being lifted from the eyes of the Jewish people. More than ever, it is time to share the Good News. The harvest is ready!

Natalia Schedrivaya, Village Gospel Harvest, Calvary Fellowship of Churches MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Since 1993, God has been speaking about a great revival that will take place in Russia and all over the world, a revival of the church rising to the standards of the truth, purposes and life of the first apostolic church. God spoke to me before the pandemic, mainly for the Western church:

“The days of doing church in the usual old ways are over; the days of doing evangelism the old ways are over. I will not bless evangelism where one man is a star. Instead, I will bless evangelism Jesus’ way, the Samaritan woman’s way, Zacchaeus’ way—a more personal way. I want My people to learn to love the hurting world, to have compassion, just as Jesus had when He watched the weary and confused crowds following Him.”

People today are hungry for the truth as never before. I challenge the church to stop and ponder its message and even its language. When simple men listened to Jesus, they all understood, and their lives were radically changed.

continued »



Tunde Bolanta



Rev. Yang Tuck Yoong



Avi and Chaya Mizrachi



Natalia Schedrivaya



Pastor Elijah M. Wafula

**Pastor Elijah M. Wafula, Life Missions Ministry
MOISBRIDGE, KENYA**

Christianity was birthed in a society that was as anti-God as could be, and yet the church thrived, influenced cultures and stayed relevant enough to remain alive for more than 2,000 years. I believe strongly that this decade is ushering the church in unprecedented revival that will bring a young generation back to God.

The church should be a force to declare the Word and the will of God by preaching the gospel and living a legacy of excellence both as a body and as individuals. Everywhere we go as Christians—even in a worldly system—we leave a mark for God. We need believers everywhere to express the manifold wisdom of God by preaching the gospel of Jesus and the truth, which is the power of God unto salvation.

**Teresa Arce de Gomez, Esmirna Iglesia
TARAPOTO, PERU**

What God has shown us during the pandemic is a revolution of intercessory prayer for healing, salvation and a cry for the church and families in the nations. The pandemic has brought pressure to believers to act on the Word of God along with a yearning to see miracle manifestations in the face of a virus that has paralyzed the entire world. In Peru, we saw the raising of altars for family worship, a flame of the Holy Spirit lit in homes in spite of so many deaths.

This prayer revival has not stopped. Without a doubt, the movement of the Holy Spirit will come, and we will see the greatest revival not only in Peru but in other nations as well. God spoke to my spirit, saying, “Whatever happens, do not be afraid of what you see, and do not lose focus on My Word and My power.” He is the mighty one of Israel; we must believe in the work Christ has already completed on the cross and in the coming outpouring of the Holy Spirit.



Teresa Arce de Gomez



Bishop Charles Agyinasare

**Bishop Charles Agyinasare, Perez Chapel International
ACCRA, GHANA**

The global church must do what it was always called to do, patterned after the early church: Work together with God in the areas of prayer, obedience and the Spirit-powered preaching of the Word. This collaborative work comes first in rekindling the fire of prayer by making it an essential in churches, not an accessory, exhorting God’s people to pray everywhere and always, lifting up holy hands in faith. In other words, we must get rid of sin, pursue righteousness and holiness, and pray correctly. In addition, as the Lord instructs, the church must walk in constant obedience to His word and His leadings. Finally, the global church must return to preaching the unadulterated Word of God in every place, both publicly and from house to house.

**Simon Hemsley, His Church
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**

The church needs great reform to break out of our Sunday traditions and podcast culture. We need a huge paradigm shift, repositioning our mental schematic to help us see the Holy Spirit and the divine design for inward intimacy with Him as not only necessary, but critical.

Something is changing. The Lord is raising up a remnant from among His people who would dare hold up a new pattern for life and ministry, revealing our need for God in us. We need Him not as our quietly received theological promise but as our majestic companion who speaks and declares to us, deep calling unto deep. In this way, we will make known our need of Him and the world’s need of us, everyday people awakened and empowered by a love and a Spirit-birthered power that satisfies all.



Simon Hemsley



Oystein Gjerme

**Oystein Gjerme, Norwegian Pentecostal Movement, Salt Church
BERGEN, NORWAY**

The book of Acts lays out the pattern for how the Holy Spirit moves. When the gospel was preached widely, the number of disciples multiplied. Among those disciples, an increasing number of leaders was raised up. We see particular evidence of this through the ministry of Paul, but we must recognize it all as the Holy Spirit's work. The people caught His direction and leading as they prayed and fasted (Acts 13:2). If we long to see a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this is what we also must do.

**Abby Olufeyimi, Builder's House
CROYDON, ENGLAND**

I have observed an ecumenical revival as churches come together in unity to pray and to serve. We are listening to each other; listening to the community around us; responding practically; and above all, listening together for the heart of God and responding to the Spirit's call to pray. We are simply praying more, and I dare say as never before.

Against the backdrop of a global pandemic and a post-Brexit United Kingdom, the church's response is one of compassionate care and engagement across social strata. Indeed, there has been an increase in people wanting to know more about the Christian faith. The church may have left the building; however, its presence demonstrates the relevance of Christ amongst us. As the prophet Elijah once spoke, the cloud may be the "size of a man's fist," but the church is preparing for a deluge of rain.



Abby Olufeyimi



Igna de Suárez

**Igna de Suárez, The Father's House (church and foundation)
BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA**

I believe God is about to bring a great revival to the world and is preparing the church even now. There is no doubt that everything we've gone through in the COVID-19 pandemic has led many to seek God and has made us respond as a church to this difficult situation. So what must take place for us to see this great revival?

- 1) The church must turn its heart to God in brokenness, in humility and in lives of commitment and holiness.
- 2) The church must return to evangelism with the true message of the cross. Ministers must return to the preaching of the Word, a Christ-centered word that confronts, edifies and transforms.
- 3) The church must bow the knee in intercession so heaven touches earth, a united crying out to God throughout the world by pastors, leaders, men, women and children. Let's keep crying out to God until His revival comes, and we see every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

**Ana Paula Valadão
BRAZIL**

One evidence that the Lord is awakening Brazil is the rise of the interest in prayer. We have witnessed big crowds coming together to worship in the past, but now we see people signing up for prayer schedules and participating in prayer conferences, collective prayer initiatives and individual prayer commitments as never before. During the pandemic, online prayer gatherings are also happening. I've often seen prayer leaders have bigger audiences on their YouTube, Facebook and Instagram lives than Christian artists. In one of the many online prayer watch movements, groups of tens of thousands of Brazilians have been praying in the middle of the night. Prayer has been a key to every revival in history, so we remain expectant for the Holy Spirit to bring it once again in our day! ◀

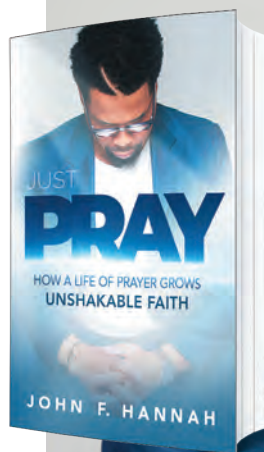
READ MORE: Experience the Holy Spirit's fire as you absorb the inspiring stories about revival at revival.charismamag.com.

Compiled by Nadia Joy Schult

Just Pray

John F. Hannah
Charisma House

With what he calls the “most under-utilized tool in the treasure chest of Christianity,” John F. Hannah equips believers to claim authority, believe in the supernatural and trust life’s biggest moments to the God of the universe. For those tempted to change in their own strength, *Just Pray* reminds readers that God wants to meet us in our mess. Further, He wants us to wield our spiritual armor as we yield our battles to Him.



John F. Hannah



My Savior

Carrie Underwood
Capitol CMG

In an album comprised of songs she grew up singing in her home church, seven-time Grammy winner Carrie Underwood has teamed up with the musical talents of CeCe Winans and NeedtoBreathe’s Bear Rinehart to cover traditional gospel hymns. *My Savior* is a perfect blend of folk, bluegrass and gospel music, featuring tracks such as “How Great Thou Art” and “I Surrender All.”



Alone With My Faith

Harry Connick Jr.
Verve/Capitol CMG

Harry Connick Jr. says the “uncharted odyssey” of the recent COVID-19 quarantine allowed him the time and effort to tap into the faith—affirming lyrics that helped him “heal as much as I wanted them to help heal others.” To hear Dr. Steve Greene’s podcast interview with Connick about “Alone With My Faith,” which the artist sees as a collection of faith-anchored songs, visit connick.charismamag.com.



Circles

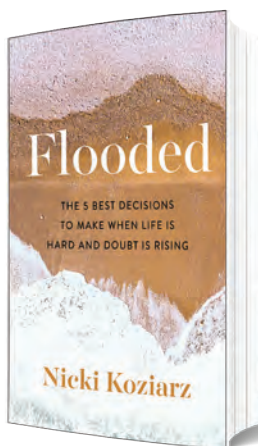
Dante Bowe
Bethel Music

From the streets to the studio, Dante Bowe’s *Circles* shares the self-revelation he received from drawing close to his grandmother in 2020 after his grandfather’s death, learning from her about his heritage and family history. Bowe weaves these familial themes through the mix of ‘90s-style R&B and gospel influences as he explores the impact racial tension had on his past and the lessons he longs to employ in his future.



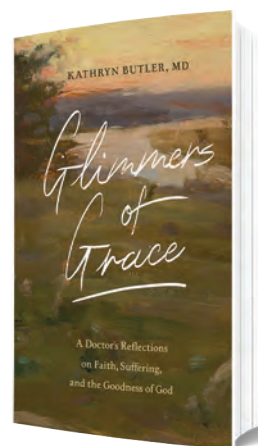
The Feeler
James W. Goll
Whitaker House

If you've ever been told your feelings are too big or you feel too much, James Goll has encouragement for you: Sensitivity allows you to discern and act on God's voice. Cultivating that spiritual sense allows believers to connect with the Father's will. *The Feeler* gets to the heart of your identity in Christ and gives you the tools you need to discover new and glorious ways of relating your emotional depth to the depth of God's love.



Flooded
Nicki Koziarz
Bethany House

Hard and holy work comes at a cost. Nicki Koziarz knows this firsthand after losing her mother to cancer and her brother to suicide. But out of the darkness, pain and rising doubt, God met Koziarz and brought healing through the pages of *Flooded*. God used the story of Noah's obedience in building the ark to inspire and encourage her. Doubt is not the end of life-changing, faith-building decisions—It's the beginning.

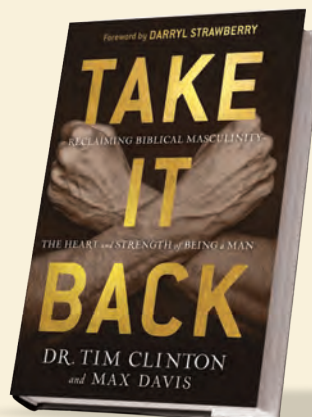


Glimmers of Grace
Kathryn Butler, MD
Crossway

Is God trustworthy in the midst of pain? Souls struggling through storms easily sway away from God's promises of goodness "all the days of my life" (Ps. 23:6). There is hope, Dr. Kathryn Butler says, even while walking through warfare. As a trauma surgeon, she has found the Father's steadfast faithfulness in seasons of joy and suffering, and *Glimmers of Grace* is the product of that revelation.

Take It Back
Tim Clinton and Max Davis
Charisma House

Amid the confines of cancel culture, misguided feminism and a world that continues to move further away from its biblical roots, masculinity and men's role in life are squandered and silenced. Despite media touting the opposite, Tim Clinton and Max Davis remind readers in *Take It Back* that masculinity is not and never has been toxic. Culture is in desperate need of men to arise and seize their God-given identity found in the biblical examples of godly men.





Pentecost Empowers Women in Ministry

The Holy Spirit's call has no gender bias, and we must support the women He anoints for service

As a journalist who has worked in Christian media for more than 45 years, I've interviewed many key leaders in the charismatic world. But a recent conversation I had with Dr. Beth Grant for my *Strang Report* podcast moved me deeply. Grant, the first female executive presbyter of the Assemblies of God (USA), highlights a powerful link between Pentecost and women who are empowered by the Spirit and called to ministry. Because of its importance in the month we celebrate Pentecost, I want to share it with you.

Women continue to face challenges—both inside and outside the church. Through the years, various denominations have denied them the right to seek ordination or other credentials for professional ministry.

But as you have read in this issue, the Pentecostal-charismatic movement has a powerful history of women in ministry. People still talk about female ministers such as Maria Woodworth-Etter or Aimee Semple McPherson, who founded The Foursquare Church, or even Kathryn Kuhlman, whom I interviewed shortly before she died in 1976. And of course the more contemporary charismatic female leaders such as Marilyn Hickey, Joyce Meyer and Paula White-Cain bless us today.

I've always been grateful that the Assemblies, my own denomination, has a long history of women in ministry. In fact, my grandmother Alice Kersey (later Farley) was ordained as an Assemblies minister in 1914, the very year the denomination was founded. She served as an evangelist for a number of years as a single woman and then ministered alongside my grandfather, also ordained in the Assemblies in 1919.

"It's great to look back at the beginning of the history of the Assemblies of God," says Grant, the co-founder with her husband, David, of Project Rescue, a ministry devoted to restoring victims of sexual slavery. She adds that from its earliest days, the denomination "was comprised of powerful pioneer women who were called to pastor, to evangelism, to missions. Many places in the world, there were women who were the first ones to go into countries—many of them single women—who were incredibly courageous. And so we had this great legacy."

"And so from the very beginning, the Assemblies of God has had very much as a part of who it is, the recognition that when the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—is moving, there are women and little girls, as well as men and boys, who stand up and say, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,'" Grant says. "He has anointed me; He's called me to preach. He's called me to teach."

Grant says Dr. George Wood, who later served as the denomination's general



**"The call of God is not a gender issue. It's an obedience issue." —
Dr. Beth Grant**

superintendent, contacted her some 20 years ago because the percentage of credentialed female ministers in the Assemblies had dropped to just 15%. "And he said, 'Considering our history and our theology, what is going on?'" she recalls.

"And so his heart was to initiate something which would encourage women ministers to step up and become credentialed, but not because that's where ministry comes from," Grant says. "That credential doesn't give us a call, and it doesn't empower us, but in a sense, it acknowledges and recognizes, 'We see God's hand on your life.'"

In response to Wood's request, Grant started a task force to call out and empower women in ministry. Their approach was: "How can we equip you? How can we encourage you? And how can we empower you to fulfill the call of God, whatever that may be?"

Grant says the task force worked with female ministers for about 10 years. Today, "We are to a point where 30% of the credentialed ministers in the Assemblies of God are female," she says.

But God's work through women extends far beyond the Assemblies, Grant says, adding that this Spirit-birthed call on women's lives represents a prophetic movement in the world. "What I feel passionately, the more I look at Scripture: The call of God is not a gender issue. It's an obedience issue."

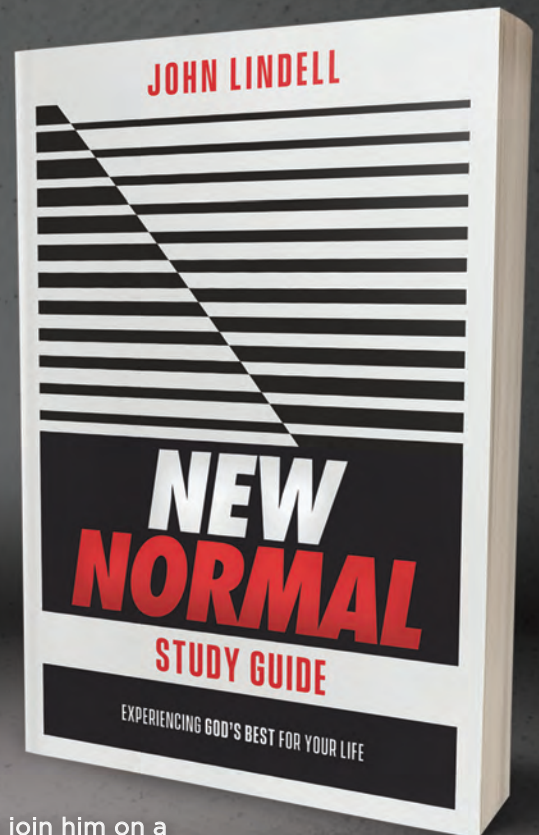
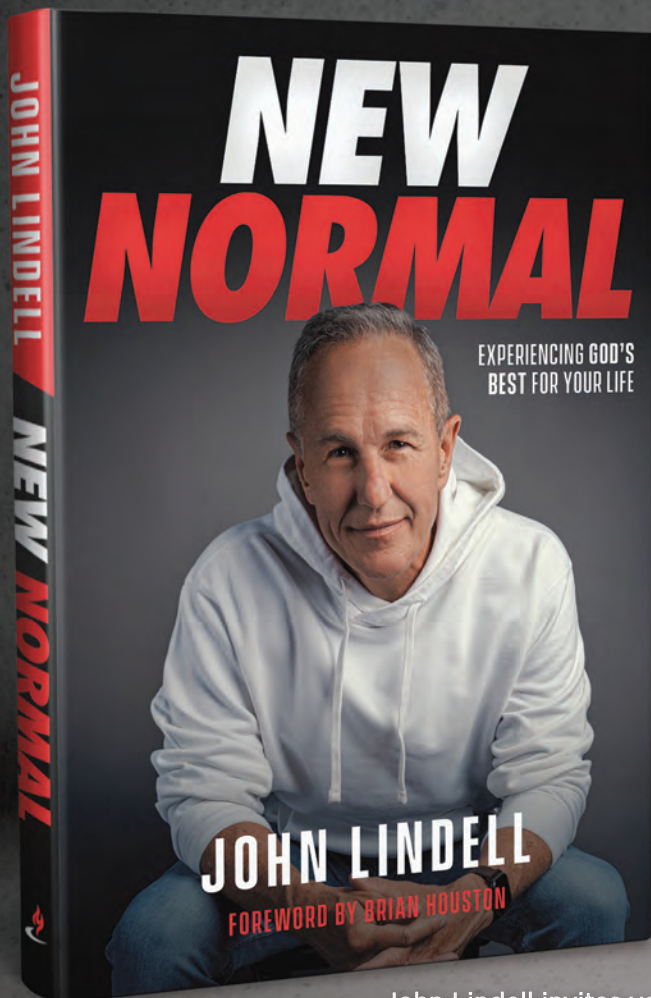
I agree with Grant, and I want to go on record as standing behind her statement that God's call extends past gender, nationality or denomination. Scripture makes it clear that God uses women. We must not attempt to construct man-made boundaries around the power of Pentecost.

EXPERIENCE GOD'S BEST FOR YOUR LIFE!

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

What if what you call “normal” falls tragically short of what you were created for?

What if the difference between you living in God's best and where you find yourself today is simply your willingness to rise up and fight to experience the new normal—He has for you?



John Lindell invites you to join him on a life-changing journey following Joshua and the nation of Israel as they find out what it takes to live in the “new normal,” the land of blessing God has prepared for them. You will discover an existence where you no longer view God's best as a passing reality but as the place where you LIVE!

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