

# CHARISMA<sup>®</sup>



MAY 2024

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SPIRIT-LED LIVING

**WE DARE NOT  
SQUANDER  
THIS MOMENT**  
**MICHAEL L.  
BROWN**

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**THE HEART AND  
EMOTIONS  
OF GOD**  
**RABBI KIRT A.  
SCHNEIDER**

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**PENTECOST  
2024  
& BEYOND**  
**MEEH  
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## **UNSAFE IN GOD'S HOUSE**

**IT'S TIME FOR AN HONEST APOLOGY TO WOMEN**

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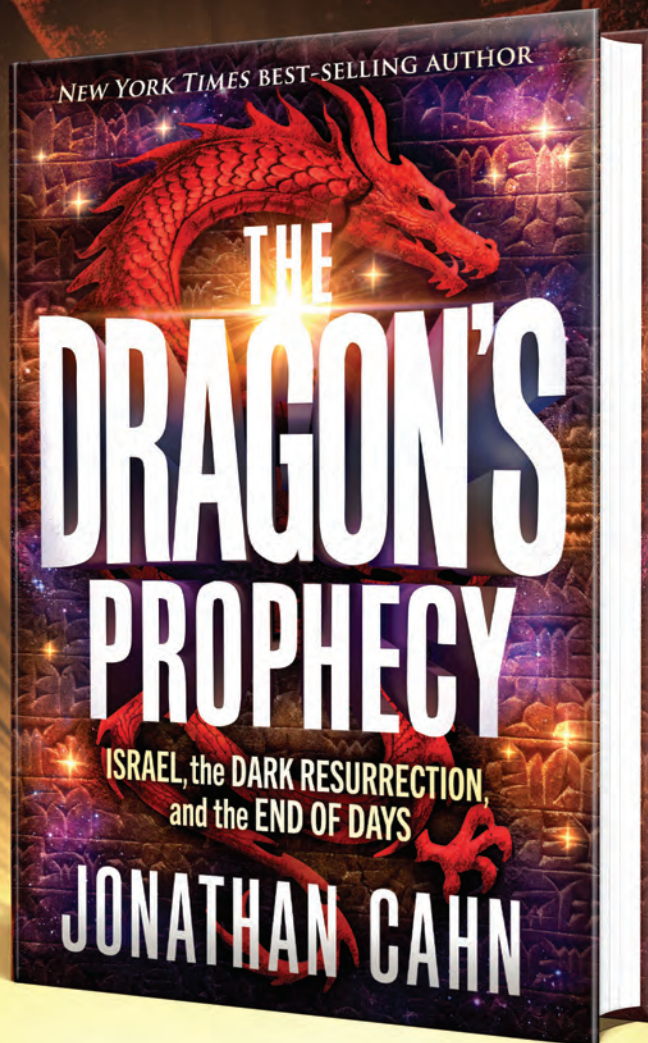
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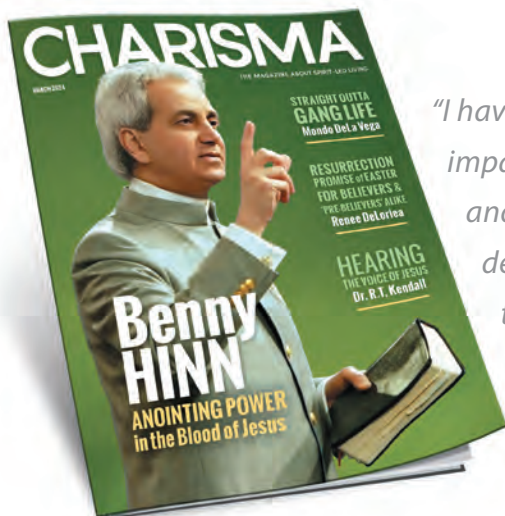


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## DEAR CHARISMA



*"I have been inspired by the impactful content in Charisma, and I greatly appreciate the dedication of your team to empower believers for life in the Spirit."*

*—Merry Usman,  
via email*

### "DEEPLY INSPIRED...IMPACTFUL CONTENT"

I am a passionate reader and admirer of *Charisma* magazine. I have been deeply inspired by the impactful content published in *Charisma*, and I greatly appreciate the dedication of your team to empower believers for life in the Spirit.

*Merry Usman, via email*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Your Charisma Media team love to hear from you, our valued subscribers, and treasured partners in the cause of Spirit-Led living. You are always welcomed to contact us by email, social media comment, or good ol' U.S. Mail. Thank you for joining us on this journey.*

### STRAIGHT OUTTA DANGER TO HOPE

Absolutely loved the Mondo DeLa Vega article on his backstory and testimony ("Lifted Straight Outta Gang Life," *Charisma Magazine Online*, March 2024). His story is hugely inspiring and encouraging. I cannot wait to find out the rest of his story in his new book. Please do more like this one.

*Gerald Hamschaft, Milwaukee, WI*

### NORTH KOREA

I recall when *Charisma* magazine used to do stories like the one on North Korea ("Hope for North Korea: Christ's Freedom Over Communist Rule," *Charisma Magazine Online*, March 2024). It seems like yesterday that the Korean War was finishing and there was hope for both North and South. But South Korea is a first-world country with a bustling economy while the North has remained trapped by its communist regime government. 'Hope' indeed, for the innocent victims of the North.

*Kathleen Haute, Lafayette, CO*

### SUPERNATURAL DETAILS CLARIFIED

I heard about things like red heifers in the book of Revelation in Sunday School as a child, but those kinds of things weren't included in church much after that ("Why Do I Need to Understand Red Heifers," *Charisma Magazine Online*, March 2024). The article about them [red heifers, Ed.] was a big help in realizing that things in Revelation are important today.

*Joseph Brandt, Arlington, TN*

## » HOW TO CONNECT WITH US:

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**STEPHEN STRANG** | Founding Editor and Publisher  
[steve.strang@charismamedia.com](mailto:steve.strang@charismamedia.com)

**JOY F. STRANG** | Chief Financial Officer

**CHAD DUNLAP** | Chief Operating Officer

**J. LEE GRADY** | Senior Contributing Editor

**ROBERT CAGGIANO** | Content Manager  
[robert.caggiano@charismamedia.com](mailto:robert.caggiano@charismamedia.com)

**MARTI PIEPER** | Copy Editor/Assistant Online Editor  
[marti.pieper@charismamedia.com](mailto:marti.pieper@charismamedia.com)

**JAMES LASHER** | Copy Editor  
[james.lasher@charismamedia.com](mailto:james.lasher@charismamedia.com)

**MARCISHA SCIOVILLE** | Director of Production

**JUSTIN EVANS** | Executive Design Director

**LISA MCCLURE** | Design Team Leader

**LINDA GILLOTTI** | Graphic Designer

**DANNY AYALA** | Graphic Designer

**JOSH NOLETTE** | Sales Director  
[josh.nolette@charismamedia.com](mailto:josh.nolette@charismamedia.com)

**ANN MARIE KELLY** | Senior Advertising Consultant  
[amkelly@charismamedia.com](mailto:amkelly@charismamedia.com)

**ERICA HEITZ** | Media Ad Traffic Supervisor  
[erica.heitz@charismamedia.com](mailto:erica.heitz@charismamedia.com)

**MARIO ALCANTARA** | Full Stack Web Developer  
[mario.alcantara@charismamedia.com](mailto:mario.alcantara@charismamedia.com)

### EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES:

PO Box 954027

Lake Mary, FL 32795

Phone: 407-333-0600 • Fax: 407-333-7100

Email: [charisma@charismamedia.com](mailto:charisma@charismamedia.com)

Website: [mycharisma.com](http://mycharisma.com)

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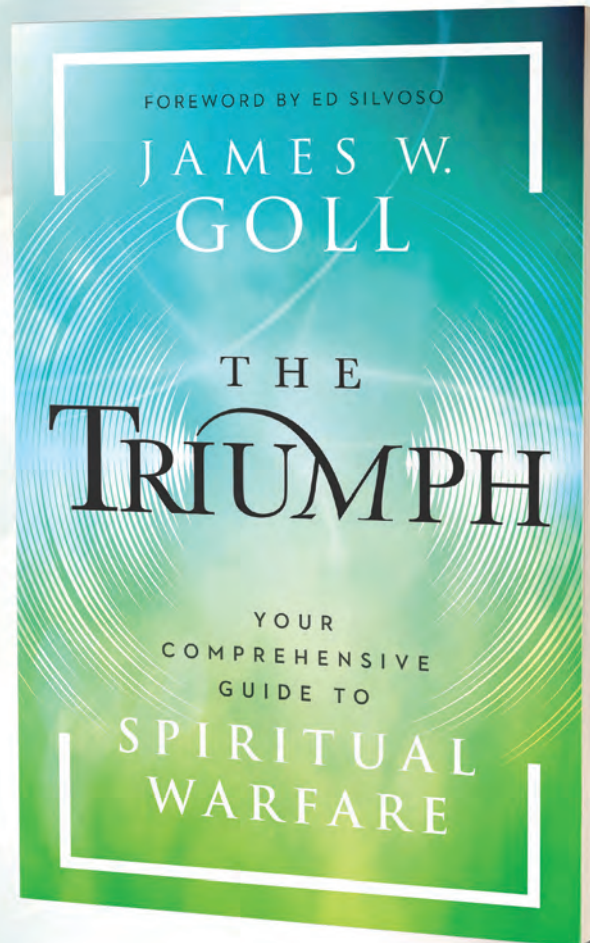


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# WAGE WAR AGAINST THE POWERS *of* THIS PRESENT DARKNESS— AND WIN!



JAMES W. GOLL



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## Claim the Gift of Pentecost

**P**entecost Sunday falls on May 19 this year. It is a time for action, and also reflection on how Pentecost is uniquely central to Spirit-led living.

In the late 1800s a holiness movement began emphasizing purity, zeal and devotion to Christ. People began praying for a new baptism in the Holy Spirit. At Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, a handful of students of a Holiness preacher named Charles Parham prayed on New Year's Eve 1900 to receive this baptism in the Holy Spirit. First, a young woman named Agnes Ozman began to speak in an unknown tongue. Soon other students did. When Parham heard this, he believed it confirmed his theory of tongues being the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Parham began going around the country preaching about Spirit baptism, and in the summer of 1905 he took his teaching to Houston where a young Black preacher named William Seymour heard the message and believed. Seymour began leading prayer meetings at 216 Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles that attracted so many people the house's foundation collapsed. The group was forced to move to a vacant former livery stable at 312 Azusa Street, from which one of the great revivals of the 20th century got its name.

Someone prophesied that what happened at the Bonnie Brae meetings would go around the world, and it has. These events marked the birth of the Pentecostal movement, which has become one of the fastest-growing religious movements in history.

Sadly, because many Christians in that era believed the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit died with the apostles in the first century, they weren't open to this new outpouring. (This is called cessationism.) So, when the baptism of the Holy Spirit was poured out at Azusa Street, Christians struggled to know what to call it. Most settled on the term *Pentecostal*, referring to the Day of Pentecost and the Greek word for 50 days after Easter.

Years ago, a friend told me he believed people flocked to Benny Hinn's healing crusades because they knew they'd see miracles and feel an anointing they rarely, if ever, experienced in their own churches. This is what people long for. We want to feel and experience God's presence. It's something beyond words, and it's

why some people shake or fall or exhibit other behaviors as they are overcome with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. It's also why in the book of Acts the believers were thought to be drunk on the Day of Pentecost.

But how does the average believer grasp that Pentecost power for themselves, and put it to work in their life for the glory of God and the building of His kingdom?

Billy Wilson, the current President of Oral Roberts University, once told me the three things he believes need to happen for the church to move into a moment of acceleration, to be energized by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and see revival take root and spread around the world:

[1] Listen to the voice of God.

[2] Be willing to say yes to the difficult task.

[3] Be led by the Holy Spirit to be a witness in your community.

This is the importance of Pentecost Sunday. It is also why Pentecost Sunday should be considered along with Christmas and Easter as the foundational days in Christian faith.

Pentecost Sunday commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and followers of Jesus. For me, the power

of Pentecost Sunday serves as a reminder of divine empowerment, spiritual renewal and a call to mission. I believe that through the Holy Spirit, I receive the power, guidance and God's wisdom to live out my faith.

The universal mission of the church is held in Pentecost. Just as the disciples were commissioned to be witnesses of Christ "to the ends of the earth," I am called to share the message of salvation with others as we have done in *Charisma* since 1975. The power of Pentecost equips me with boldness and love to engage the people and places around me, to extend the kingdom of God on earth.

I hope that on this Pentecost Sunday 2024, you will join me and the *Charisma* magazine family pressing in to Holy Spirit's presence for your life. Share the good news of Jesus with friends and family, maybe praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and even asking your restaurant server at lunch after church if there's anything they'd like you to pray about for them. Let's take our gift of Pentecost and honor God by stewarding it every way possible.

*“Join me and the Charisma magazine family pressing in to Holy Spirit’s presence for your life.”*

**Stephen Strang** has seen major changes in the church, the culture and technology since he founded *Charisma* magazine in 1975. In addition to being CEO of Charisma Media, he hosts a Strang Report podcast live on YouTube and Rumble at 4 p.m. EST every Tuesday and Thursday. His important new book *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-World* is available wherever fine Christian books are sold including online at [mycharismashop.com](http://mycharismashop.com).





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## Lord, Send a Fresh Pentecost

**O**n Feb. 17, 1967, more than 57 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.

The wave of supernatural renewal 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 (MEV): “And

look, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But wait in the city of Jerusalem 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.”

And the waiting paid off. Several days later, the promised power arrived. Suddenly, the heavens opened. 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.

*“It jumped the theological firewall to touch Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans and believers from all denominations.”*

I invite you to join me in personal Pentecost during the month of May. Soak in the book of Acts and pray for a rekindling of the Holy Spirit’s flame in our lives 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 and scandals.

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.”

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 my heart burn with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and let me carry that fire everywhere You send me. Amen.”

J. Lee Grady was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as senior contributing editor. He directs [The Mordecai Project](#) an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest books are *Follow Me* and *Let’s Go Deeper* (Charisma House).

# Simply Christ

## Gospel Insight

with Keith Surface

### He is the Cure

In the first recorded prophecy of Isaiah, God described the sinful condition of Israel in terms of a person stricken with disease throughout their entire body. Consider these astounding words:

*“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: **the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.**”* Isaiah 1:4-6.

Sin truly is a spiritual cancer which devours a person from the within. It may seem insignificant at first, but it never stops spreading and eating away at the person it inhabits. For all human history a cure has been sought, but none was found. The Jews thought the Law of Moses was the cure, but it only treated the symptoms of the disease. It could go so far as to kill the patient, yet, it could never take iniquity out of their heart.

Every human attempt to cure this disease has ended in failure. Humanity has been like the woman “...which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” Mark 5:25-26. These “religious physicians” have vastly different treatments to contain, control, or subdue this evil thing that works in the human heart. The only thing they seem to agree on is that there is no cure. Thankfully, God does not concur!

Isaiah, the same prophet who described this horrid disease of sin and iniquity, also spoke of the cure. Most of us know his words well. He wrote, “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was*

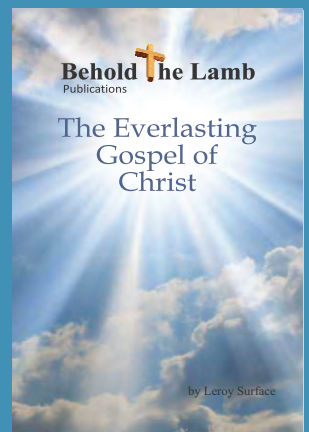
*bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”* Isaiah 53:5. The word “healed” in this passage actually means “to cure.” Jesus Christ gave himself to suffer and die upon the cross in order to “cure” the incurable disease called sin. He came to do what “*the blood of bulls and of goats*” could never do. Hebrews 10:4-5. He came to “*take away our sin.*” John 1:29. I John 3:5.

The Apostle Peter presented this “cure” as the true purpose of Christ's sufferings. He wrote, “*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that (in order that) we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*” I Peter 2:24. It is important to see and believe the reason Peter gives as to why Jesus “*bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*” He does not say, “To take our punishment,” “to pay a penalty,” or even “pay a price.” He says it was so that “*we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness:*” Christ died in order that sin in us would be destroyed through our death with Christ. This is God's cure for sin in the human heart. Peter confirms this by quoting Isaiah, “*by whose stripes ye were healed (cured).*”

The Apostle Paul also confirms this as the purpose of Jesus' death, saying, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*” Romans 6:6-7. Can sin in you really be destroyed and you truly be made free from its presence and power? Absolutely! Jesus Christ is the cure for this incurable disease. He told us he came to make us free!

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## The Fruitful vs. the Frustrated Life

**I**n John 15:16 Jesus says, “I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last,” (NIV). In fact, the Bible has a lot to say about how Christians bear fruit—and there are two ways that we can do it. One is by displaying the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). And the second way is by getting out in the world where God has planted us and being good to people.

I’m talking about helping people who are hard to love or don’t seem to deserve it. Or giving to the poor and getting involved with people so you can make a difference and help make their lives better, rather than spending all of your time trying to make yourself happy.

I’ve discovered that being selfish and self-centered never makes anyone happy.

Living for God is really just the opposite of that. God does want to bless us and give us the things we need, but when we give our lives to Him, our purpose is to serve Him.

In Matthew 12:33 (NIV) Jesus says, “...The tree is recognized by its fruit.” And this is how people know who we are.

Just as you recognize an orange tree by the oranges it produces, you know a Christian by the fruit of their lifestyle.

I’ve said often that you won’t be recognized as a Christian just because you have a Christian bumper sticker on your car or you wear Christian jewelry or go to church every week. Most of the time people won’t care what you have to say if your behavior doesn’t back it up.

The fruit of our lives is seen in our behavior—what we do to help others and our attitudes—as well as what we say. It’s the visible expression of the invisible work that God is doing in us.

Jesus says in John 15:8 (AMP), “My Father is glorified and honored by this, when you bear much fruit, and prove yourselves to be My [true] disciples.” In other words, we’re not proving anything to anyone simply by what we say. It’s the fruit of our lives that proves who we really are.

So it’s good for us to frequently ask ourselves: Who am I helping in my life? How am I making a difference or making

someone else’s life better?

The key to bearing good fruit is found in John 15:5 (AMP), which says, “I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union from Me] you can do nothing.”

Jesus is telling us that as we spend time with Him in prayer and by studying the Bible, His Spirit is working in us, changing us little by little (2 Cor. 3:18), causing us to reflect His image or characteristics more and more. It’s a progressive transformation that takes time and requires a consistent commitment throughout our lifetime.

If you aren’t spending regular time with Jesus and growing in your relationship with Him through prayer and Bible study,

I want to challenge you to reevaluate your priorities and put first things first. The truth is we put our time into what we really want to do. And if something is truly important to you, you will find time to do it.

God created you because He loves you, He wants to have a personal relationship with you, and He wants to do amazing things *in you* and *through you*. Every day

is a gift from God and it’s so precious!

Ephesians 3:20 (AMP) says that God “is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us.” He has a plan for you and He will give you everything you need to fulfill your destiny as you seek Him and grow stronger in your faith in Him.

As Pentecost shows, the power of the blood of Jesus purchased for us on the cross offers us God’s wonder working power for all time, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” (2 Cor. 12:9, MEV).

I want to encourage you to focus on Jesus and live by the wisdom He reveals to you in His Word. If you choose today to help someone else, not only will you be happier, but you’ll find that good fruit brings true satisfaction and fulfillment.

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## Expect the Unexpected When God Brings Revival in New Ways

**A**n important part of every believer’s life should be expectancy and openness for God to do a new thing. The body of Christ desperately needs revival and reformation. By and large, we have drifted astray from God’s original design: the Acts church.

It’s rare to see vessels walking in the power of God as the first apostles did. It’s rare to see apostles and prophets accepted and operating in their important role to equip, impart and lead. These aspects of the Acts church are integral to the church today as Jesus says “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,” (1 Cor. 4:20, MEV).

The ministry He demonstrated and commanded us to do was preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, to heal the sick, cast out demons and raising the dead. If you’re serious about following God’s Word, rather than the status quo of Christian culture of today, you’ll realize just how desperately we need revival and major change in the church.

God said that His bride will be ready, without blemish, spot or wrinkle before He returns. So that means change must come! God has already begun to bring revival and it’s just the beginning of the greatest revival and reformation that we’ve ever seen.

Knowing that revival and transformation in the church is God’s plan, we must live in expectancy of an extraordinary move of God! We also must expect that God will bring His revival in a way we could never imagine. Every revival of the past and every move of God in the Bible came in a new “outside the box” way, where God used unlikely vessels to usher in the revival.

David was completely discounted to be an anointed leader because he was thought to be too young and he didn’t look the part. Moses was seen as an outsider, having grown up in royalty and part of the family who oppressed the Israelites. Most would disqualify him to be a prophet since he murdered a man and he was not eloquent in speaking.

Jesus was from a town that was known to have “nothing

good coming from it.” He was neither a military king nor a son of a religious leader. In the eyes of the religious leaders of that time He was neither qualified to be the Messiah nor a prophet bringing new revelation from God. He was completely rejected by the religious leaders, who were the ones who should have been the very first to receive Him.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. God’s way of coming in a new, outside-the-box way remains, using unexpected vessels. When God wants to bring revival, He doesn’t consult with church leaders of today and ask, “Who do you think should be leaders in this revival I’m bringing?”

God chooses and He always chooses vessels that many don’t like, because many tend to prefer the “inside the box” logical way. It doesn’t matter to God if the vessel He chooses is popular or not. All He’s concerned about is His will. Jesus was not liked by most of the religious leaders, but that did not concern God and did not prohibit Jesus from accomplishing the Father’s will.

God’s history will continue to repeat itself. It’s important that we remember this truth so that we won’t miss a move of God. We must be expectant for God to move outside of the box and use vessels that we would never expect. When one keeps God inside a box and thinks He will only move a certain way and through certain people, then one simply sees anything outside of that box as not from God.

The Pharisees saw Jesus as outside of their box of where and how God moves. Therefore, they considered Jesus “not of God” in their perspective. They called Him a false prophet and accused Him of using demonic powers to cast out demons.

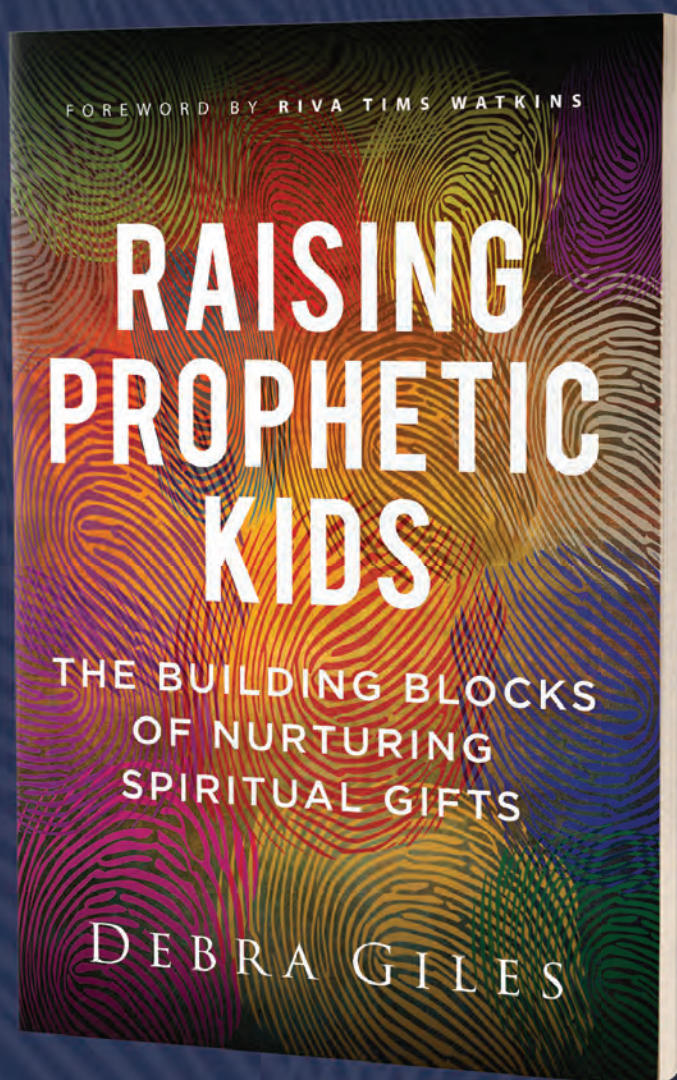
We must have expectancy and the fear of God when it comes to this principle of God doing a new thing—moving outside of the box. Otherwise we run the risk of not only missing a move of God, but even calling what is of God, not of God.

It’s time to humble ourselves and expect God to confound us as He moves in beautiful new ways to bring revival and reformation to the church.

*“We we must live in expectancy of an extraordinary move of God!”*

Apostle **Kathryn Krick** is a rising online influencer, and founding lead pastor of Five-Fold Church in Los Angeles, where many miracles happen and people are healed, delivered and equipped to be powerful vessels of God.

# Usher Your Children into Their **Highest** Calling



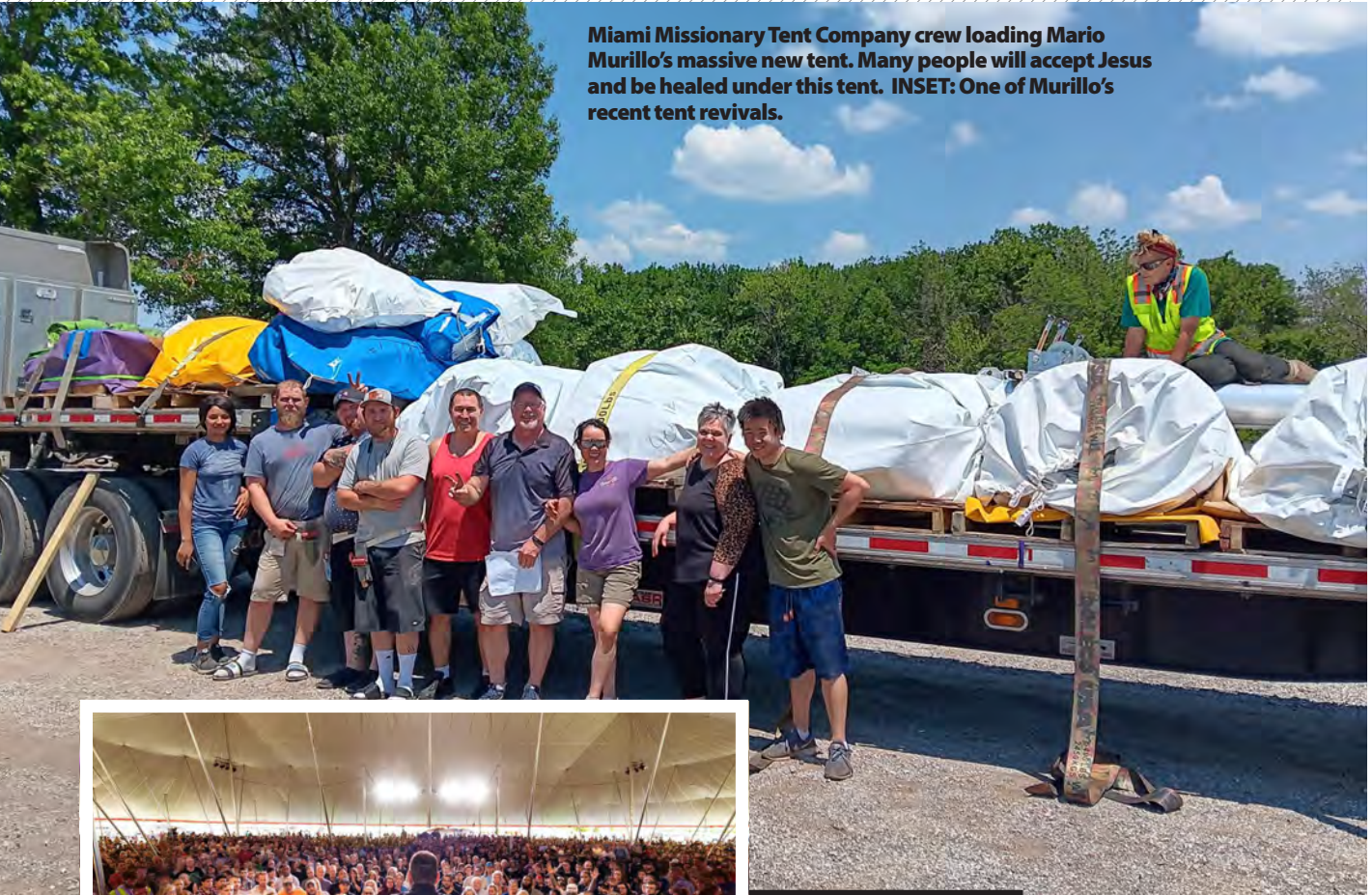
God is calling forth a new generation of Samuels and Deborahs—here's everything you need to train them in the way they should go.



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**Miami Missionary Tent Company crew loading Mario Murillo's massive new tent. Many people will accept Jesus and be healed under this tent. INSET: One of Murillo's recent tent revivals.**



## New Film Captures God's Healing Power at Mario Murillo Tent Crusades

*Living Proof* offers hope, not hype

God is releasing miracles and healings in unprecedented ways at Mario Murillo's tent crusades, and out of these supernatural events comes a new film, *Living Proof* that will bring hope to the nation by capturing three of these healings for moviegoers.

"We're expecting to overflow the theaters and for it to take on a life of its own," Murillo says of the film, which will hit theaters this fall.

Not only does *Living Proof* record miracles, but the doctors of people who were healed will also go

on record to describe the physical changes involved in the healings, he explains. His focus, however, is not on the hype but on God's supernatural power and what it can mean for our world.

"America needs hope right now," Murillo says. "And [people] need proof that there is a God who cares about them and that the gospel is real. ... I think that what we're going to do is be a voice in America to reestablish the inerrancy of the Bible: Jesus is the Son of God, and if you reach out to Him, He will heal you."



## Chick-fil-A CEO Surprises Regent University Student With \$25K Scholarship



When Peyton Edwards stepped into the lobby of the Virginia Beach Chick-fil-A restaurant where she works, she didn't expect to see her family, friends and even her pastor. But when the Regent University student spotted Chick-fil-A CEO Andrew Cathy, she was dumbfounded—and even more so when the executive presented her with words of encouragement, a new laptop and an oversized check for \$25,000, declaring her a True Inspiration scholar.

"Is this real or am I dreaming?" the business management major asked as she realized that the cameras, marching band and large group of fellow Chick-fil-A employees and community members were all part of the celebration. "I can't believe this is happening."

"Servant leadership is a core value that unifies every area of study at Regent University," said Dr. Josh McMullen, dean of the school's College of Arts and Sciences. "As Peyton has demonstrated so well with her strong GPA and humility, a skilled person with a people-first approach can't help but stand out."

Edwards, who has worked for Chick-fil-A for the past eight years, not only has a commitment to academic excellence but also a record of impactful community involvement and dedication to cheerful service that impressed the food chain's leadership. The company plans to award its True Inspiration scholarship, which can be applied to any area of study at any accredited institution, to just 14 team members nationwide.

## Music Minister's Prophetic Declaration in Song Goes Viral

"Find Me Here (Blessings Find Me)" surpasses 1 billion TikTok views

As the new year began, Caribbean musician and music minister Sherwin Gardner decided to encourage others with a brief musical prophetic declaration. The small snippet he shared on social media became a viral sensation and led to the song "Find Me Here (Blessings Find Me)," which has also gone viral, reaching more than 1 billion views on TikTok only weeks after its posting.

A worship leader at Bahamas Harvest Church, whose founding pastor was mentored by charismatic evangelist Rod Parsley, Gardner has made a habit of

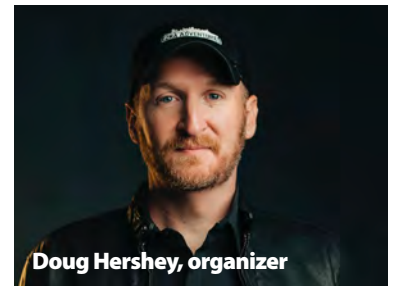
telling his church, "Remember, something good is about to happen to you." Thanks to a collaboration with a Kenyan arranger, his song, with its mixture of Afrobeats, reggae and dancehall genres, now presents a similar declaration to the world: "Something good gonna happen in this year!"

"This is now becoming the anthem for many people and their prayer throughout the world," says Bill Carpenter, Gardner's publicist, who adds that the music minister may be the first Gospel artist to reach the landmark number on TikTok.

## The Sons of Aliens Shall Be Your Plowmen'

How a group of farmers came to bless Israel

A typical overview of the war in Israel includes bombs, soldiers and terrorist attacks. But a closer examination reveals the many ways the conflict has disrupted lives, including an ongoing agricultural crisis. This came about when the Israeli government banned Palestinians and other internationals from farm labor



after sources revealed some had served as spies for Hamas. A group from a rural church in Pennsylvania came to support their fellow farmers, fulfilling prophecy at the same time.

"We're Christian folks, so the land and the people here are important to us from a biblical perspective, so we really came to bless Israel," Nelson Shertzer, who brought nine fellow volunteers, tells All Israel News. Their work brought to life the words of Isaiah 61:5: "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers."

The team's work, organized through author Doug Hershey's Ezra Adventures, included helping an elderly couple harvest their strawberries and assisting a farmer who had to serve in the military himself.



## Ancient Gold Ring With Carved Image of Christ's Face Discovered

Archaeologists from the Archaeologists division of Sweden's National Historical Museums agency have made the recent discovery of more than 30,000 objects, including a gold ring with a carved image of Jesus that they believe dates back several centuries. *The Archaeologist* reports that two projects in Kalmar, a city in southwest Sweden, have focused on the medieval city in this area and uncovered approximately 50 burial plots, 10 streets and parts of an ancient city wall. Findings span from A.D. 250-1650, and the most recent items date back around 400 years.

Officials say the well-preserved gold ring featuring a carved image of Jesus Christ likely dates back to the 13th or 14th century and is one of the more notable discoveries in the area. Additional intriguing artifacts such as an alsengem—a small glass stone believed to be a pilgrim amulet—a preserved brick cat paw print and a rune stone were also found.

Marcus Stibéus, a project manager at the Archaeologists division, says these findings shed light on various societal groups, from craftsmen and traders to church officials and others. Ongoing excavations continue to reveal further insights.



Gold ring lost centuries ago, recently uncovered in Sweden



Carved ring with the face of Christ



## McDonald's Owners Go Viral for Christ-Focused Easter Message

Surprisingly, Tony and Gina Wolfe have gained community support

In a day when Christianity continues to be canceled and Christians encounter mayhem, mockery and more for the most innocent declarations of their faith, Middle Tennessee McDonald's franchise owners Tony and Gina Wolfe have gone viral for the Easter-themed displays in the windows of their restaurants. "He is Risen! Happy Easter!" the windows proclaim alongside illustrations of the empty tomb, crosses and other Christian symbols.

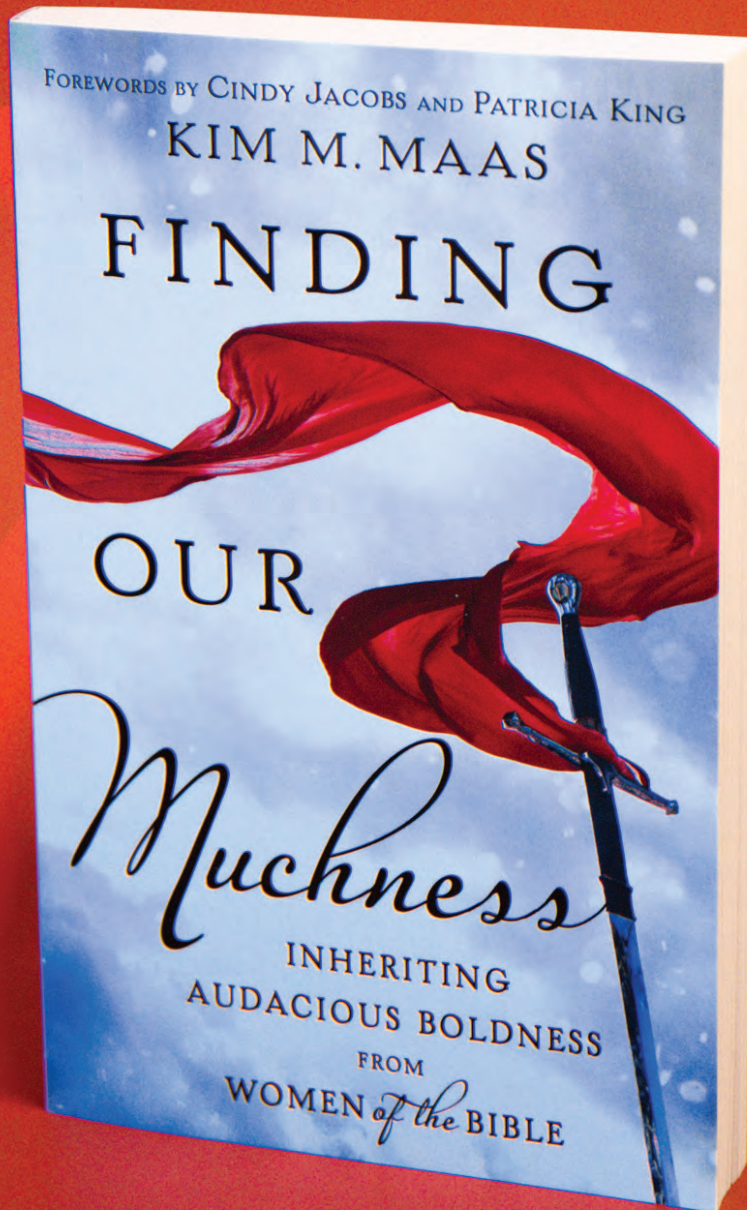
Burton S. Staggs, news director and general manager of Tennessee River Valley News, first shared a photo of one of the decorated restaurants on his Facebook page, noting that "While many companies are opting to stay away from holiday-specific decorations, a Tennessee McDonald's franchisee is embracing them."

As of late March, his post had been shared more than 35,000 times and received nearly 9,000 comments, the majority of them positive. He adds that at Christmas, the Wolfes often share a message at their restaurants that reads, "His name is Jesus."

"Feel free to share this, and definitely, when in middle Tennessee, stop by and support them," Staggs' post concludes.

MYTRUEANCESTRY FACEBOOK | ROBERT WOLFE FACEBOOK

# FULFILL YOUR CALLING *as a* WOMAN *of* GOD



- 
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  - ✿ refuse to be defined by your circumstances
  - ✿ dream, risk, and fight again
  - ✿ discover your Kingdom identity and purpose




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A stylized, abstract illustration of a church with hands covering the face. The image is dominated by vibrant blue and red colors, with a central white church building featuring a golden steeple. Two large hands are positioned over the church's facade, as if covering a face. The background is filled with splatters and drips of paint in various shades of blue, red, and white, creating a sense of movement and intensity.

# IT'S TIME FOR AN HONEST APOLOGY TO WOMEN

# In light of recent scandals, our sisters need to know the church is a safe place. We need public repentance.

BY J. LEE GRADY

**W**hen I first heard about the sexual scandal involving Mike Bickle and the International House of Prayer in Kansas City back in December, my initial reaction was defensive. I'll admit I didn't want to believe the charges made by "Jane Doe," one of the alleged victims. My thoughts went in this direction: *Maybe this was a false accusation? The church doesn't need another embarrassing scandal. The devil is a liar!*

But I cringed on Dec. 12, 2023, when Bickle released his own confession. His victim had suffered for years, but she finally mustered the courage to speak out. Then we learned there were more victims, revealing a sick game of manipulation and control. My heart sank when details surfaced about another woman who had been involved with Bickle in his earlier years as a youth pastor.

It became obvious that there had been a disturbing pattern of sexual abuse at IHOP, and with it, a pattern of hiding that abuse.

Details are still being sorted out at IHOP, and it remains to be seen whether that ministry will survive this crisis. (*Editor's Note: On Tuesday, Apr. 16, reports began circulating that IHOPKC will close. Please follow MyCharisma.com for latest updates.*) Meanwhile, those of us who are leaders in the global charismatic/Pentecostal movement have some serious issues to settle with God. The IHOP scandal is a harsh reminder that we have a much bigger problem. The worst thing we can do is go back to business as usual when the IHOP investigation ends. We need to stop, mourn for the victims, grieve for our own hardness of heart and publicly repent for the sin of sexual abuse.

In the past few years, Baptist women who endured various forms of sexual abuse from pastors, youth leaders or children's workers in the Southern Baptist Convention risked ridicule by coming forward with their embarrassing stories of abuse and harassment. It became obvious that leaders in that denomination at times refused to believe female victims of abuse, even those who were suffering from the trauma, depression, humiliation and suicidal thoughts that sometimes accompany sexual exploitation.

But before we throw stones at our Southern Baptist brothers for their mistakes and cover-ups, we need to examine our own hearts and remove the log in our own eye. We charismatics are certainly not without sin in this matter. Our reputation has been stained for decades because of blatant sexual scandal.

I began my job as a news editor at *Charisma* magazine in 1992. That was the year a female member of the 10,000-member Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Atlanta sued the church, claiming that she had been pressured into a sexual relationship with staff pastor Don Paulk. Eventually other women came forward to say they had been coerced into sex with Don's brother, senior pastor Earl Paulk, who founded the ministry in 1960.

Over the next few years, it became sickeningly obvious that this respected megachurch had become a nest of immorality. Rumors were confirmed that Paulk routinely preyed on female staff members, while at the same time wearing his trademark clerical collar and preaching his signature messages about the kingdom of God on earth. And just when we thought the reports couldn't get any worse, it was revealed that Earl Paulk's nephew, Donnie Earl, was actually Earl Paulk's son—the child of Paulk and his brother's wife, Clariece.

Another serious scandal erupted at The Tabernacle, a prominent charismatic church in Melbourne, Florida, where author and former *Charisma* columnist Jamie Buckingham had pastored

for years before his death in 1992. His successor, Michael Thompson, led a protracted revival at the church from 1995 to 1997 that drew 65,000 people. But in 2000, it was revealed that Thompson had engaged in affairs with multiple women in the church during the revivals.

Thompson was removed from the ministry, and the elders of the church were so disgusted by the scandal that they destroyed the Plexiglas pulpit Thompson used to deliver his popular sermons. But the damage was done. Victims had to seek long-term counseling, and the church lost

most of its members.

Similar failures continued into the next decade. I can remember times when there were four or five moral failures happening simultaneously, all involving high-profile ministers in our movement. Those scandals involved Word of Faith preacher Robert Tilton; popular author and pastor Larry Lea; pastor Clarence McClendon of Los Angeles; Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja; prophets Paul Cain and Bob Jones (both were given a platform by Mike Bickle and IHOP); Colorado pastor Ted Haggard; Bishop Eddie Long of Atlanta (who was

accused of abusing young men); preacher and Pentecostal historian Roberts Liardon; and revivalist Todd Bentley.

More recently, *Charisma* had to report on scandals involving charismatics as well as non-charismatic evangelicals. These included Christian comedian John Crist (who admitted to sexually harassing multiple women); apologist Ravi Zacharias; Chicago pastor Bill Hybels, founder of the Willow Creek church movement; and Hillsong pastors Carl Lentz and Brian Houston.

## Maybe We Should Ask Women How They Feel?

In 2017, Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein was accused of sexually exploiting numerous women including actresses Rose McGowan, Ashley Judd, Gwyneth Paltrow and Mira Sorvino. *The New York Times* published a report claiming that Weinstein forced actresses to perform sexual favors for him in exchange for movie roles or auditions. Other women came forward to accuse Weinstein of rape.

It took years for Hollywood executives to take the accusations seriously because a culture of sexual abuse had been tolerated in Hollywood for years. Even after female actors had gained more clout and higher salaries, they were still objectified by the studios, and by the men who viewed them as props.

The Weinstein scandal opened a can of worms—revealing that a similar acceptance of sexual abuse existed in corporate America. Since 2017, companies large and small began reexamining their policies about sexual harassment. Finally, women felt they could speak up. And many women began to feel safer.

But do Christian women feel safer today in the church? When we look at the current situation at IHOP, it appears that sexual abuse was excused or covered up for decades. I've read or listened to the testimonies of women who were manipulated into inappropriate relationships with Bickle, and it is horribly sad that they didn't feel the freedom to challenge the predatory behavior. In most cases, the men around them were not their advocates or protectors.

A while ago I did an informal poll on social media to find out how Christian women actually feel about sexual attitudes

## Be a Safe Place for Victims

### Here are five things you should say to a victim of sexual abuse

There are probably people in your church who have experienced the same type of traumatic sexual abuse, and they need love and support. When you minister to a victim of abuse, they need to hear encouragement and affirmation, not suspicion or judgment. Here are five things you should say in this situation:

**1. I'm really sorry that happened.** Galatians 6:2 says we are to “bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” When someone goes through something traumatic, he or she needs to know we are there to support them. Victims of abuse are tempted to think no one will believe their story. You can say, “That must have been horrible.” You can also tell them you believe them.

**2. You are not alone.** Remind the person you are part of a faith family that offers love and healing to people in their situation. Abuse victims are tempted to hide their experience because it is so embarrassing—yet true healing only comes when we bring our darkness into Christ's light. If you are counseling them, stay in touch and set up another time to meet—or get the victim connected to a support group.

**3. That was not your fault.** The most common lie an abuse victim believes is, “I must have done something to deserve this.” The devil is an abuser, and he uses abuse to destroy a person's identity and self-worth. Use your words to counteract those lies. Every victim needs to know he or she did not invite the abuse and are innocent.

**4. Can I pray with you now?** Jesus Christ has the power to heal an abused heart, and any follower of Christ has the anointing to pray for abuse victims. Isaiah 61:1 says: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted.” You can pray for the victim to experience healing after they have shared their painful story. Jesus can remove the emotional stain that abuse brings. (Some abuse victims may feel uncomfortable being touched when you pray, so be sure to ask their permission before you lay hands on their shoulder.)

**5. Can I help you find counseling?** Prayer ministry at an altar can be powerful, but most abuse victims need additional follow-up. Do not just pray and then announce, “Now you are healed!” Encourage the person you are praying for to seek more counseling, preferably from a professional who has Christian values. Most abuse victims have layers of hurt piled on top of their pain, and they will need time to process their healing. Sexual abuse is like a serious car accident—it may require extended time for healing. If your church has a counseling ministry, refer them to that resource immediately.

Jesus brings good news to the abused, not shame, condemnation or put-downs. When victims of sexual abuse come to your church, make sure it is a safe place for them to find total transformation.

in the church. I asked my female friends on Facebook and X to share what behaviors they had endured from men in church settings. Reading their answers (some were posted publicly, and many privately) was overwhelming. I divided their responses into eight categories:

**Blatant sexual abuse.** Many of the women I polled were victims of abuse that happened on church property. One woman was raped in a church parking lot by a man who professed to be a believer, and no one on the church staff intervened or offered pastoral care. Another woman from Alabama said she was groped and fondled by a church leader when she was a teenager—and she never went back to church until she gave her heart to Christ at age 30.

**Come-ons and inappropriate touching.** Numerous women I contacted experienced this. One said that two married men reached over and kissed her, but she refused their unwanted advances. Another woman said a pastor looked down her shirt while standing over her. A female missionary said she was terrified after an ordained minister groped and fondled her. Several women said they felt uncomfortable when men from the church ogled them, stalked them, made sexual comments or tried to hug them too closely.

**Bizarre gender bias.** One woman told me a man in her church told her during a counseling appointment that she shouldn't have an epidural during childbirth "because pain is part of a woman's punishment for sin." Another woman was told that she was in sinful violation of 1 Timothy 2:15 if she did not immediately start having babies regularly after getting married.

**Demands for "submission."** One woman from Texas said a pastor advised her that she must stay in her marriage regardless of her husband's physical and verbal violence. "I stayed in a very abusive marriage for 20 years," she said. By the time she did divorce, her children had grown up. "Unfortunately, the abuse had ruined their chances of a healthy home life by that time," she added.

**Insensitivity to single women.** Several single women told me they were shamed publicly by men in the church with comments like "Why aren't you married yet?" or "What's wrong with

you? Why are you still single?"

**Comments implying that women are always to blame for sexual sin.** One woman from Georgia needed a ride to the airport during a Christian conference, and she asked a male minister for help. He refused, saying he was not allowed to be in a car alone with another woman. "This wasn't harassment, but it was sexist in that I am a sister in Christ, a fellow minister," she told me. Other women recalled being told in church that the reason men struggle with pornography is because women don't dress modestly. "I grew up feeling that I was to blame for men's porn addiction," one woman said.

**Blatant condescension.** A 30-year-old ordained woman from Georgia said she encounters subtle sexism when male ministers call her a "girl" after she preaches. "Men who are my age are not spoken to that way. They are treated as peers," she said. "Some people may not think twice about, and I know it's never meant in a bad way, but I feel it reveals how some people view a 30-something woman in ministry versus how they view a 30-something man in ministry." Other women said they felt invisible because church leaders regularly referred to them as "John's wife" or "Bill's wife" rather than by their first names.

**Refusal to affirm a woman's spiritual gifts or callings.** The majority of responses to my question related to this topic. Women have been told they should never preach or lead in the church, and some who stepped out in their leadership gifts were labeled "Jezebel" or worse. Others were told that the only time God uses women in leadership "is when a man refuses to step into his rightful place." (Almost all women called to full-time ministry shared stories of an uphill battle.)

The women who shared their comments with me aren't resentful. They don't share the



same values as angry feminists looking for revenge. They aren't grinding an axe or looking for ways to punish men. I know many of these women personally, and they are godly sisters with strong character and gentle, loving attitudes. Some of them hesitated to share their pain because they don't want to be perceived as whiners or complainers.

They have tended to be quiet about these injustices, and they only talked about them because I asked. They simply are asking for dignity and a seat at the table. Yet in so many cases, we men have treated them with arrogance, disdain and disrespect. Our pride and insensitivity are dishonorable to God, and I don't think He's happy about it.

I believe it's time for godly men to offer a sincere apology. The devil wants to divide men and women, and he has manipulated the secular feminist movement to trigger a nasty gender war. But I believe we can diffuse this tension with true repentance.

There are many instances of public repentance in Scripture. God often called Israel to gather for days of public repentance (see Lev. 23:33-36); Ezra called the people to gather while he "wept bitterly" in public to repent for the wayward nation (Ezra 10:1); the prophet Joel issued a command to "gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land...and cry out to the Lord," (Joel 1:14); the Ephesians publicly renounced their witchcraft and burned their occult books (Acts 19:18-19).

What has been happening in our churches today demands a radical show of repentance. We must change our macho attitudes. We have offended God. We must publicly apologize to women for any instances of sexual abuse.

Words are so important. That's why James 5:16 says: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." It's not enough to repent privately; we need to rend our hearts from the church altar and make a public declaration of repentance so that women can hear us.

When I listen to women, especially those who have been abused, they say they never heard the words they longed to hear from a Christian leader after they were violated. If we are silent in the aftermath of abuse, victims feel judged, devalued and ignored. Women need to hear an apology—from leaders of IHOP, from the Southern Baptist leadership, and from any charismatic ministry

women are dangerously vulnerable.

When I start working in a country where men consider women inferior, I always begin with the pastors. I teach them how Jesus elevated women—how He healed bleeding women, defended women who were falsely accused, brought ignored women into the spotlight, and empowered women to be vocal witnesses of His Resurrection. Then, I always challenge the men to repent for their hard hearts.

It's a beautiful thing to watch when men from countries such as Congo, Tanzania, Bolivia, El Salvador or India kneel in front of women and repent for cruelty, domestic abuse, polygamy, marital rape, pornography and other forms of male superiority.

In one case in 2019, the men from a village in Uganda wept as they renounced a saying their forefathers had passed down to their sons for hundreds of years. That saying was: "Our cows are more valuable than our wives." The men repented of promoting that idea, and they broke free from centuries of male domination.

And the women listening to the public confession wept for joy. They never expected to hear those words in their lifetime.

I believe it's time for American men—led by our pastors—to make a similar public confession. I'm recommending that churches issue a bold statement that denounces sexual abuse. I've written this "Declaration of Repentance" (see facing page) for Christian leaders to pledge their support. Read this publicly, and post it on your church's website to send the clear message that we as God's people are taking this sin seriously. ◀

**J. LEE GRADY** was the editor of *Charisma* for 11 years before launching into fulltime ministry in 2010. Author of eight books including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, he directs *The Mordecai Project*, a Christian humanitarian organization that helps women who face abuse and marginalization. Lee's work has taken him to 39 countries. Learn more about his ministry at [themordecainproject.org](http://themordecainproject.org).



that has covered up or trivialized abuse in the past.

Our sisters need to know that the church is a safe place for them. Right now, many women have walked away from church because they know we haven't done what is necessary to protect them.

### **An Open Apology for Sexual Abuse in the Church**

For more than two decades I have been confronting the abuse of women and girls in developing countries where gender-based violence is common. I work in communities where rape is common, sexual violence is normal, polygamy is legal and forced marriage of underage girls is considered a man's right. I've built domestic violence shelters, counseling centers, girls' homes and women's vocational training centers in 11 countries in order to lift women out of poverty and help them survive in cultures where



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# DECLARATION OF REPENTANCE

## A SINCERE APOLOGY TO OUR SISTERS IN CHRIST

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As pastors and leaders representing various Christian denominations and church networks, especially from the charismatic and Pentecostal community, we acknowledge that too often women have been exploited sexually by men in Christian congregations, and this predatory behavior has been at times ignored, minimized or even covered up.

*We repent on behalf of all abusers, and we ask for forgiveness from our sisters.*

In some cases, men in the church—including pastors and other ministers—raped women, lured women into sexual relationships, touched women inappropriately, made sexual comments to women or requested sexual favors. We recognize that this immoral conduct is totally against the Word of God, which commands us to “flee immorality,” (2 Tim. 2:22). God calls men in the church to treat Christian women as our sisters and mothers “in all purity,” according to 1 Timothy 5:2.

*We repent for viewing women as sexual objects instead of valuing them for their character traits, personality, intellect and spiritual gifts. We ask for forgiveness.*

We recognize that in some cases, women who came to church seeking help after being sexually abused or violated did not receive the compassion and care they deserved. In some cases, we minimized their pain, trivialized their trauma and blamed them rather than praying for their complete healing.

*We repent for not listening to women’s pain or feeling compassion for their loss. We ask for forgiveness.*

We also recognize that in some cases, church leaders created an atmosphere of secrecy to enable abusers to continue in their sin. Some pastors or leaders even knowingly allowed abuse to continue, because they did not have the courage to confront the abusers. Jesus was a defender of women, even when they were falsely accused—but we have not always been bold enough to defend the women who came to us for help.

*We repent for our unwillingness to speak out on women’s behalf when they felt voiceless. We ask for forgiveness.*

We also acknowledge that in some charismatic and Pentecostal ministries, abusers mis-used prophetic words or other spiritual gifts to manipulate women into sexual relationships. We view this as a clear violation of the second commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain,” (Exod. 20:7). This is spiritual exploitation of the highest order. We believe any servant of Jesus Christ who uses Scripture or a prophetic message to lure a person into sexual sin should not be in ordained ministry.

*We repent for any instance of spiritual exploitation or deception to manipulate and control. We ask for forgiveness.*

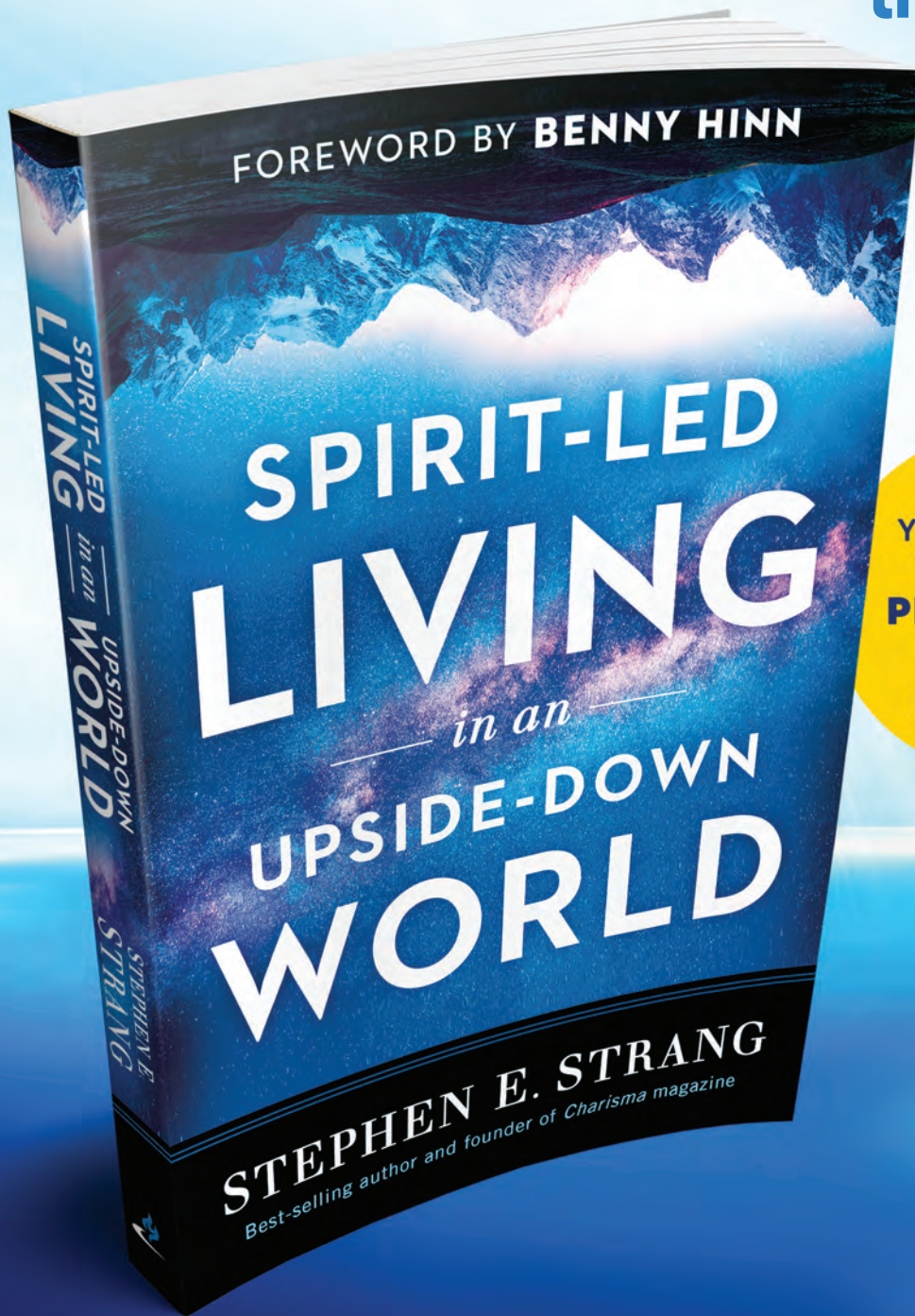
We acknowledge that God created male and female in His image (Gen. 1:27), and that men and women are equal in His sight. Yet because of male pride, many men view women as inferior—and as a result they believe they can coerce, dominate, demean and abuse women physically, emotionally and spiritually. We affirm that husbands are commanded to show wives honor, and treat them as “fellow heir(s) of the grace of life,” according to 1 Peter 3:7.

*We repent for all cruelty and abuse associated with male domination, and we repent for any pain we have caused.*

Acts 3:19 says: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” It is time for a new day. We look forward to a season of greater harmony and cooperation between men and women in all of our churches. We set aside the pain, mistreatment, suspicion and competition of the past, and we pledge to build churches where all of God’s people feel safe from sexual abuse.

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# WE DARE NOT SQUANDER THIS MOMENT

## SOBER WARNINGS IN THIS GRAVE HOUR

BY MICHAEL BROWN, PhD

**W**e are living today in one of the most critical moments in American history.

How we respond today will go a long way in determining the future of our nation—or whether our nation even continues to exist as the United States of America. That’s why the title of my October 2021 book was *Revival or We Die: A Great Awakening Is Our Only Hope*. There was no hyperbole in the title and no exaggeration in the subtitle. I believed then and believe now that, without a sweeping revival in the church that leads to a national awakening, America as we know it is doomed. We will either continue to fall into moral and spiritual confusion, ultimately crashing and burning, or we will break up entirely as a nation, pulling apart at the seams. Either way, without revival, we are in very critical condition.

But here’s the catch. Revival alone will not get the job done. Revival alone will not turn the tide. It must be a revival in

the church that leads to a reformation in the society—an outpouring that leads to awakening. Otherwise, to repeat, we are doomed. A powerful revival movement, without a national awakening, would just delay the inevitable or, worse still, simply make us more accountable. It really is revival and awakening or we die. Or do we really think that the right political candidate or the latest social program will solve our problems and cure our ills? Not a chance.

### Much to Fix— But How!

How do we fix things when most American adolescents watch large quantities of graphic online pornography, and when most children are exposed to coarse porn by the age of 13 but some as little as seven? How do we fix that?

How do we fix things when 40% of our children are born out of wedlock and half of first-time mothers bearing children out of wedlock? CBS News reported that as far back as 2013, 83% of first births to non-high school graduates were to unwed mothers, and, “By 30, two-thirds of women will have had a



# THERE MUST BE REVIVAL IN THE CHURCH THAT LEADS TO A REFORMATION IN THE SOCIETY—AN OUTPOURING THAT LEADS TO AWAKENING.

child out of wedlock.” By 2019, America had the “world’s highest rate of children living in single-parent households,” Pew Research reported. What is the political or social solution to problems like these?

How do we fix things when Americans with no religious affiliation rose from almost 0% in the 1950s to almost one in three by 2021? In 2011, 75% of Americans identified as Christian. By 2021, that number had dropped to 63%, the most rapid drop in recorded polling history. How do we right the ship?

How do we fix things when there have been nearly 400 school shootings in the 25 years since Columbine? How do we fix things when every day we become more deeply and dangerously divided over important issues such as abortion, “transgender rights,” and free speech? What is the earthly solution?

Take something as simple (and apparently minor) as shoplifting. Even that has reached epidemic levels. As reported by David Marcus in the *Daily Mail*: “There is anarchy in the USA. More and more, Americans are living every day in a dystopia that just a few years ago would have been utterly unimaginable. From major cities to the border, and even in some suburbs, the rule of law is now all but meaningless, with hard-working families left to pay the price in blood and treasure. The America we grew up in—of bright shopping malls that weren’t attacked by thieving mobs, of gas stations where carjacking wasn’t commonplace, and of public transport that didn’t double as a homeless shelter—is vanishing. Last week came the sobering figure that our country now has [a] \$100 billion-a-year shoplifting habit. One hundred billion dollars. The annual budget for the entire

state of Maryland is a mere \$65 billion. And this is money that, according to the National Retail Federation, stores are never getting back. As brazen crooks stuff backpacks full of goods unchallenged, the police—cripplingly over-stretched—will likely never even turn up.”

How do we fix all this or even begin to chip away at these problems, short of a sweeping spiritual revival that will produce a moral and cultural revolution? There is no other way to turn the tide.

## The Hour Is More Urgent Than We Realize

Speaking to a group of Catholic priests around the year 2010, Cardinal Francis George (1937-2015) said, “I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history.” What profound words!

Cardinal George subsequently explained that he was responding to a question when he gave this spontaneous answer, which was “entirely outside of the current political debate.” And he noted that he “was trying to express in overly dramatic fashion what the complete secularization of our society could bring.” He certainly hit the nail on the head.

In my view, speaking as circumspectly and soberly as I can, the picture that George painted is entirely plausible, barring one thing and only one thing: sweeping revival that produces a radical reformation to our society. A spiritual renewal that is so deep that it births a societal awakening. Otherwise, the crash is inevitable. (Of course, if Jesus

returns in the next few years, this point would be moot.)

Some would protest that we’ve been here many times before in our history, with doomsayers repeatedly claiming that the end of the world was near. “It’s all over,” they shouted in years past. “America is doomed!” And yet here we are today, decades (or centuries) later, still economically strong, still powerful, still one nation. Perhaps I’m overstating things?

In point of fact, I’ve written extensively on this very subject, giving examples from our history of how, in fact, it appeared that it was all over for America (or at least for the church of America). Yet the tide turned, God poured out His Spirit and America marched on. Obviously the doomsday prophets were wrong. Perhaps my concerns will prove empty too?

But here is the three-fold, jarring reality:

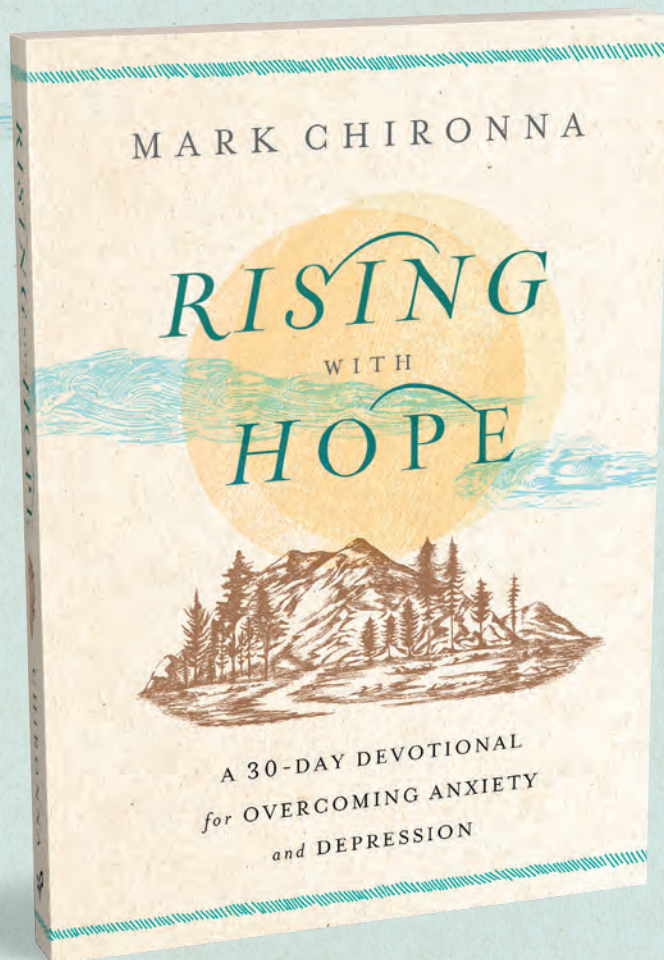
1) It was powerful revival movements in the past that turned the tide and saved the nation. Nothing less will do today;

2) In many ways, we have been on a steady moral and spiritual decline since the counterculture revolution of the 1960s. So, it really is revival or we die;

3) There is no guarantee that America will not go the way of the Roman Empire, fading into oblivion, or have a fate similar to the USSR, breaking into fragments. (The Soviet Union dissolved into 15 independent states.) Show me where it is written that this will not happen to our country. Show me the chapter and verse.

After all, if the covenant nation, Israel, could suffer dispersal, exile and near complete destruction, continuing to exist as a people only because of the

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sovereign mercy of God, why should we assume that America's blessed destiny is guaranteed? Again, I ask you: where is the chapter and verse that promise this?

Speaking at the commencement exercises at Harvard University in 1978, the famed Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn brought a sobering word to the graduating class. Describing the horrors of the Communist Revolution, he said, "If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible what was the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men had forgotten God; that is why all this has happened.'" Speaking of America, he said, "There are telltale symptoms by which history gives warning to a threatened or perishing society. Such are, for instance, a decline of the arts or a lack of great statesmen. The center of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy." And these words are from 46 years ago! I shudder to think what he would say if he were alive today.

We are, in so many ways, a nation that has forgotten God. To quote once more from this historic speech: "To destroy a people, you must first sever their roots." Could Solzhenitsyn have been any clearer?

Writing eight years earlier, in 1970, Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer spoke plainly of America as a post-Christian nation. As summarized by Joe Carter: "Yes, back in 1970, Schaeffer says the United States—not just continental Europe—was already post-Christian. He writes about the reality of historic Christianity becoming the minority in the West, stripped of cultural power and influence. And in this situation, Schaeffer identifies a great danger for evangelicals: taking sides with political elites in order to retain comfort, affluence and personal peace. In the face of societal chaos and upheaval, Schaeffer doesn't want Christians to compromise

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for the sake of short-lived comfort. In this remarkably prescient work, Schaeffer goes on to predict the inevitable loss of freedoms that will come once the Christian foundations of Western society have finally crumbled. And in response, Schaeffer calls for a kind of culture war—though not the sort of battles we might be imagining. Schaeffer wants a Christian revolution, the kind that looks like spiritual reformation."

Yet even a Christian thinker as brilliant as Schaeffer might struggle to find the right words to describe the current state of our nation, one in which...

» 13-year-old girls are encouraged by doctors to have their healthy breasts removed, simply because they are temporarily confused about their gender identity;

» men's bathrooms on college campuses have tampons, since "men can menstruate, too";

» you can be banned from social media for "deadnaming" or "misgendering" someone (for example, calling Caitlyn Jenner "Bruce" or referring to him as "he");

» music videos saturated with the most profane, graphic and degrading sexual imagery are watched or downloaded hundreds of millions of times;

» fentanyl overdoses have become the

leading cause of death for adults between 18 and 45;

» a Christian pastor who made reference to homosexual practice in a sermon 15 years earlier is disinvited from praying at a presidential inauguration while a gay bishop was invited to offer up special prayers by this same president four years earlier;

» a major sports team publicly honors an anti-Catholic, Jesus-mocking drag group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence;

» we have now more millennial witches than Presbyterians...

Need I say more?

Journalist and cultural commentator Christopher Rufo said, "The cultural revolution that began a half-century ago, now reflected in a deadening sequence of acronyms—CRT, DEI, ESG and more—has increasingly become our new official morality. Many conservatives have made an uneasy peace with this transformation of values, even as the culture around them has, in many places, collapsed. This attitude no longer suffices. It is time to break the loop of 1968. We need a counterrevolution."

He is absolutely right, but I would take this one step further. This counterrevolution must be gospel-based. That's why our only hope is a sweeping, national revival that turns into a powerful, cultural awakening. It is the purpose for my new book, *Turn the Tide*, to cast a vision for how this can be done—by the empowerment, grace and guidance of our Lord. ◀

**MICHAEL L. BROWN, PHD**, is the founder and president of AskDrBrown Ministries and the president of FIRE School of Ministry. The author of over 40 books, he is also the host of the nationally syndicated daily talk radio show *The Line of Fire*, where he serves as your voice for moral sanity and spiritual clarity. His syndicated columns appear on leading websites, and his scholarly publications range from biblical commentaries to articles in Semitic journals and theological dictionaries. He has served as an adjunct or visiting professor at seven leading seminaries and has debated gay activists, agnostic professors and Orthodox rabbis on university campuses. His newest book *Turn the Tide* releases this month and is available now on [MyCharismaShop.com](http://MyCharismaShop.com).



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# Step Into the Heart & Emotions — OF GOD —

## THE MYSTERIES IN THE SONG OF SONGS

BY RABBI KIRT A. SCHNEIDER

**F**or many years I couldn't get past what felt like significant barriers to my understanding and appreciation of the Song of Songs. I wondered: Does Jesus really want to know us the way a groom knows his bride? How can I see this theme as something healthy instead of something weird? Does the rest of the Bible affirm this kind of intimate relationship with Jesus, or is this message isolated to the Song of Songs? In other words, how seriously should I take this perspective? And how do I apply a seemingly allegorical love poem between a man and a woman to my everyday walk with Yeshua (Jesus)? What, if anything, does the Song have to do with my life today?

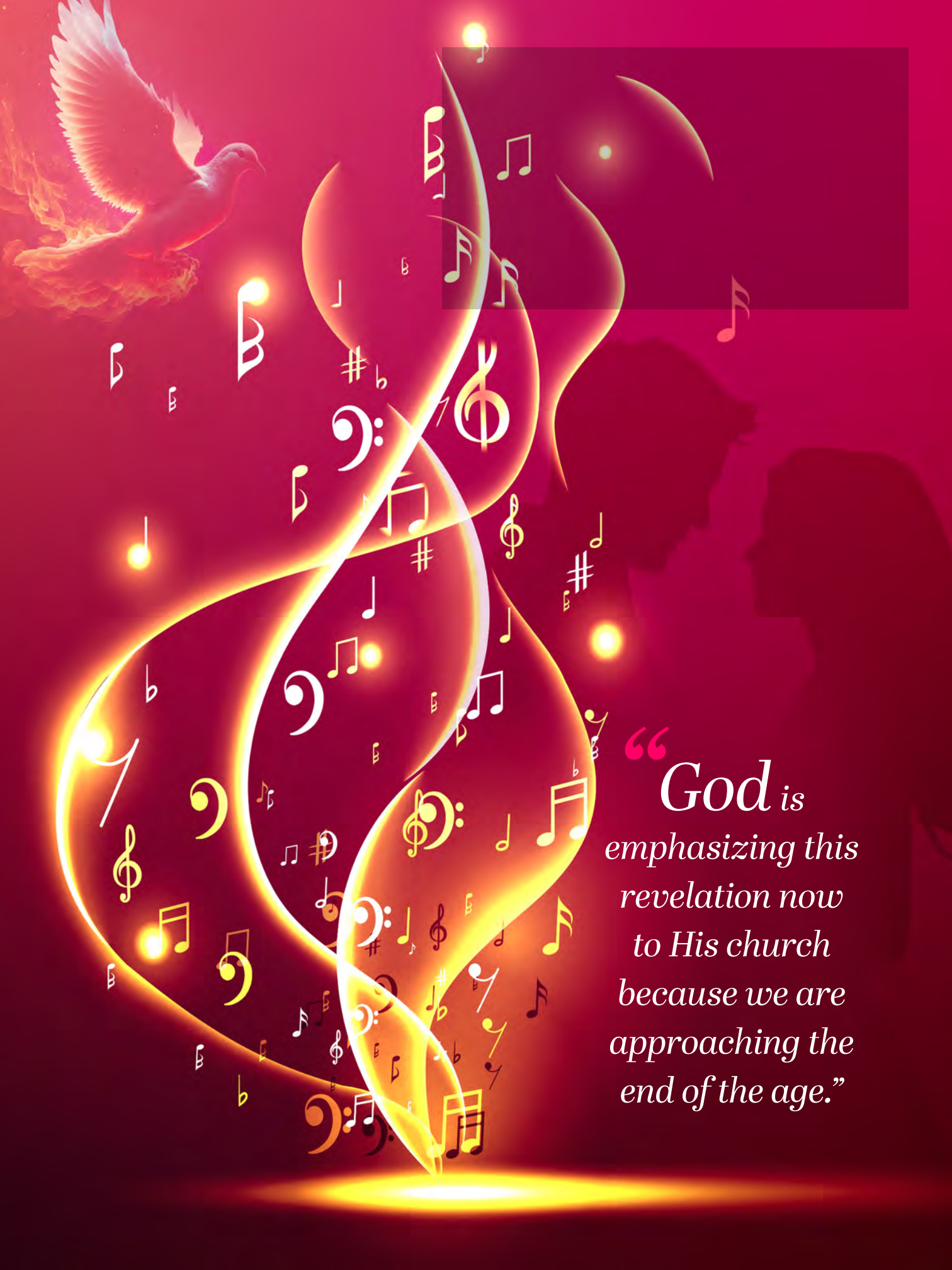
Before encountering the Song afresh, I certainly knew Yeshua as my Savior, Redeemer, Messiah and friend. But I didn't understand the deeper mystery of His relationship with me as expressed in this book. Serious questions and reservations stood between me and the Song, and I'm sure this is why it has been one of the most neglected books in the Bible throughout history and still today. Some Bible students and scholars even wonder why it is in the Bible! Aside from the fact that they don't find its flowery, poetic language appealing, they question whether King Solomon can teach us about pure marital love or even divine romance

for that matter since he had hundreds of wives and concubines. For these reasons and many others, some sincere believers simply leave the book alone—or just read it through quickly in their Bible-in-a-year plans.

My view of the Song changed rather suddenly, however, when the Lord knitted my heart to this book in a way I never expected. In December some years back, I asked the Lord what I should focus on in His written Word in the coming new year. I was looking to Him for the next level of revelation He wanted to bring into my life. At that time, I sensed the Lord beckoning me to give myself entirely to the study of the Song of Songs. I felt He was going to open up a new mystery to me. So, I studied the book every day for 52 whole weeks.

Through the Song I have come to understand Jesus' love for me in a way I didn't truly see before. The Song of Songs shined a great deal of light on the kind of relationship God created for me—and you—to have with Him.

Jesus is on a journey of love with each one of us. His deep, personal interest in His beloved ones is never casual or offhand. He has committed Himself to having the closest fellowship imaginable with us individually and corporately. While we may be inclined to keep Jesus at arm's length, He is content with nothing less than communing with us in the deepest ways possible.



“*God is emphasizing this revelation now to His church because we are approaching the end of the age.*”

The good news is that He is totally committed to helping us love Him as fully as He loves us. This is the purpose of the Christian life—and the Song of Songs.

## Our Prophetic Destiny

The rabbis have taught for centuries that among the wisdom books of the Hebrew Bible, Proverbs is like the outer court of the temple, Ecclesiastes is like the inner court, and the Song of Songs is like the holy of holies, meaning it reveals to us the deepest mysteries of divine love. The rabbis also teach that there are many different levels of understanding Scripture: the surface understanding, which is the purely natural reading, and other layers of revelation as you keep digging. This is certainly true when it comes to understanding the prophetic revelation of God's Word. Without forcing anything, we search for meanings beneath the surface.

On its face, the Song is simply a love letter or love poem Solomon wrote to the woman he was about to marry, called the Shulamite bride. But of course, we are not looking at it simply in the natural. We are interpreting it prophetically.

My belief, and the belief of many others, is that the Holy Spirit gave the Song of Songs to the church to help us understand Jesus' love for us. It uses the marriage relationship as a paradigm for the relationship we have entered into with Him both corporately and individually. As poetry, the Song cannot be interpreted literally, and I don't consider my view to be a "Thus saith the Lord" word. But I believe the Song is ultimately a picture of Christ and the church. How can I say this with confidence? Let's look at 2 Peter 1:20–21, where the apostle Peter writes this: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Peter affirmed that all Scripture is written by the Holy Spirit. The primary role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Messiah Jesus and disclose the deep things of Yeshua to us. So it is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit would have given us a book in the Bible that was only about King Solomon's natural relationship with

his wife. Rather, everything in Scripture speaks of Jesus.

Yeshua affirmed this in Luke 24, lending further confidence to our view of the Song as a prophetic book. At that moment in history, Jesus had been crucified and the disciples were downcast, not really understanding what had happened to Him. As best they could tell, Messiah Jesus was gone, and their plans had fallen to pieces. Then Jesus appeared to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus without them knowing who He was. This tells us plainly that not only is all Scripture written by the Holy Spirit, but all Scripture is about Jesus! The entire Word of God finds its ultimate purpose in Yeshua. He is the center focus of the whole Bible.

The Song of Songs must be about Messiah Jesus or it would not be in the Bible. Yes, it is different from other types of books in Scripture. Some biblical

he wrote the Song of Songs that he was bringing forth a revelation beyond the natural one he had in mind. We find many instances in Scripture where people were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak and write in an inspired way—and didn't even know it.

We see an example of this in John 11 when Caiaphas, the high priest, told the chief priests and Pharisees, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this on his own authority. But being the high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation," (vv. 50–51, MEV). Just as Caiaphas prophesied without knowing it, I am certain when Solomon wrote Song of Songs, he was not aware he was prophesying by the Holy Spirit.

What exactly was the Holy Spirit prophesying through Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived? On the surface the

*“Song of Songs reads dynamically...a dialogue between lovers and reflects the conversational intimacy of husband and wife. But the Song is more than a dialogue we read.”*

books are meant primarily to convey history, lay a foundation for doctrine, to impart wisdom, and to teach us proper relationships. But Song of Songs reveals the heart and emotions of God more fully than any other book in the Bible.

Jesus foretells this in John's Gospel, saying that after He departs, He will send the Holy Spirit—the Ruach HaKodesh, who will then take the deep things of Yeshua's heart and reveal them to us. (See John 16:13–15.) So the Song of Songs is given to us by the Holy Spirit, its main subject is Jesus, and we must interpret it with Him foremost in mind. What, then, is Song of Songs telling us about Yeshua—and ourselves?

## Heading for a Wedding

I do not believe Solomon knew when

Song depicts a romance taking place between a king and a young maiden on a journey toward maturity. But in the context of the rest of Scripture, we can say that the Song of Songs speaks to the unparalleled depth of relationship we as believers have with our King, Jesus. We are His bride, journeying toward the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

What basis do we have for interpreting the Song of Songs as depicting a marriage relationship between us and Jesus? For a lot of believers the marriage paradigm is a foreign one. We are accustomed to thinking in terms of salvation and going to heaven, yet we have no real concept of spiritual intimacy with Jesus. But the idea is central to Scripture. For example, in Ephesians 5:28–32, Paul writes (emphasis added): "So husbands ought

also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*"

It would be one thing if Paul confined himself to teaching husbands how to treat their wives, but he took it to a whole other level. He unveiled a great mystery, which is that Christ and His church are exemplified in the earthly marriage relationship—the two become one. Our marriages are little, lived-out pictures of the kind of relationship Jesus intends to have with us!

Our salvation aims at one purpose: that you and I will experience such a deep relationship with Yeshua that we can only compare that type of love to the love between a husband and wife. The Holy Spirit used Solomon to give the church an understanding of how God feels about us and the type of love relationship we are being called into. The Song was given by the Holy Spirit, taken directly from the heart of Yeshua, to ignite within our hearts a deep understanding of and fiery passion for Jesus.

### A Progressive Journey

The Shulamite bride is a picture of you and me and of the body of Christ corporately. Together and individually, we are on a journey into divine love, and this journey is progressive, meaning it is unveiled and accomplished over time in different stages and steps. This revelation shows us how we, the bride, grow in our intimacy with Jesus, the Bridegroom. As a result of this progression, we eventually come to realize how we bring great pleasure and delight to Jesus.

In the beginning of the Song, the Shulamite bride—a type or shadow of the church—looks at Jesus mostly in terms of what He can do for her. Many of us start out in our walk with God thinking mostly about how it affects us. We want God to answer our prayers. We want Him to tell us about His plan for our lives. We want His blessing, His

protection, His promotion, His presence—and all of that is good and necessary. But as the maiden grows in maturity, she sees it is not all about what God does for her but also about what the relationship means to Him.

As the bride grows in her spiritual maturity, she comes to understand that her affections touch His heart. Not only is she blessed when she feels His love, but He is blessed when He feels her love. It moves Him. He is sensitive to our love.

Like our relationship with Jesus, the Song of Songs reads dynamically. It is in fact a dialogue between lovers and reflects the conversational intimacy of husband and wife. But the Song is more than a dialogue we read—it is a discourse we enter into to gain from personally. You and I must see ourselves in this story, and we must dialogue with the Holy Spirit about what He wants us to learn and experience through it.

For all these reasons—and many more—I consider the Song to be one of the most important books in the entire Word of God. In fact, it is so important I wrote a book called *A Journey Into Divine Love* that explores the truths about God's incredible love for us found within the Song. I believe God is emphasizing this revelation now to His church because we are approaching the end of the age. To walk steadfast and remain in His love during the days ahead, we must have the revelation that the Father gives us in the Song of Songs deeply imparted into us: the revelation of how our Maker feels about us—that He is in love with us and has called and destined the church to be His bride. ♣

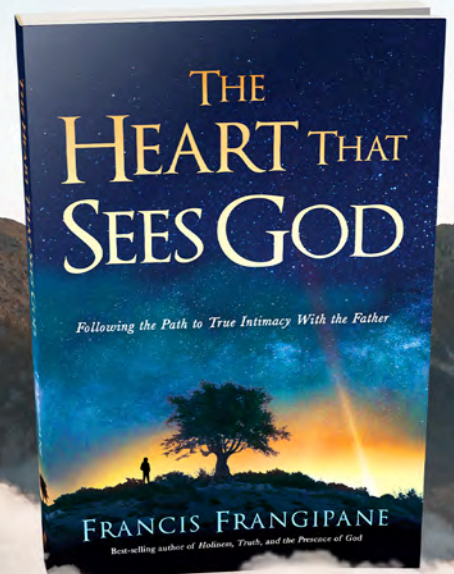
**RABBI KIRT A. SCHNEIDER** is the host of the popular TV and radio broadcast *Discovering the Jewish Jesus*. Rabbi Schneider's teaching is straightforward, authentic and revelational. The anointing on his ministry carries an eternal weight of glory that the Father uses to transform the souls of His elect. Rabbi Schneider is the author of several books, including *The Book of Revelation Decoded*, *Messianic Prophecy Revealed* and *Awakening to Messiah*. His newest book *A Journey Into Divine Love* releases this month and is available now at [MyCharismaShop.com](http://MyCharismaShop.com).

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# WAVES of PENTECOST UNITY

## SWEEPING FROM CALIFORNIA ACROSS THE NATION

BY MEESH FOMENKO

**D**uring a late-night devotional session in the winter of 2021, Pastor Mark Francey of Oceans Church in Orange County, California, stumbled upon a passage that would ignite a movement across California and beyond. It was a story about the largest water baptism in American history, a monumental event at Pirates Cove in Corona del Mar, California, in August of 1990. Around 3,000 people were baptized by 100 pastors, and many were part of the Jesus Movement that started in the 1970s. Inspired by the story, Francey felt a divine whisper stirring, urging him to replicate this historic baptismal gathering. Little did he know this whisper would catalyze a movement reverberating across denominational and geographical borders.

As Francey read about the throngs of people descending upon Pirates Cove, his spirit stirred with an inexplicable sense of divine urgency. It was as if the very voice of God resounded within him, echoing through his soul: “Mark, I’m going to do this again.” With closed eyes and a humble heart, Francey beheld a vivid and compelling vision of Pirates Cove teeming with boats and people, recognizable faces from his own congregation among them. And then, like a gentle whisper, came the question that would alter the course of his ministry forever. He heard the Holy Spirit say, “Mark, would you do this for me? Would you organize this event? Would you bring my body together? Would you gather the church of California and help host the largest water baptism in American history to inspire America? If I can do this in California, I can do it in any other state.”

### A Movement Is Born

Thus began the journey of Baptize SoCal in 2023, Baptize California for 2024 and Baptize America in 2025, a movement birthed in the depths of prayer and fueled by a relentless passion to see the church united in the power of Pentecost. It was a vision for a single event, then a revival sweeping across California and beyond, igniting hearts and souls with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

“When we announced it, everyone was really excited. We had no idea that a movie for ‘The Jesus Revolution’ would come out six months later, making everyone even more eager to join in. It set the stage for a big campaign, making people want to be baptized at Pirates Cove to be a part of California’s history with God,” Francey says.

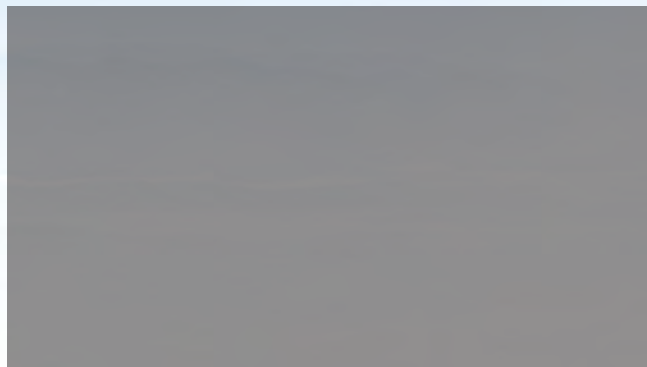
The inaugural Baptize SoCal event in May of 2023 exceeded all expectations. Over 200 churches participated, with 30 pastors in the ocean baptizing over 4,000 individuals who descended upon Pirates Cove; the unity and revival were profound. People from all walks of life converged to participate in this mass baptism unlike any other. From entrepreneurs to drug

dealers, children to the elderly, the waters of Pirates Cove bore witness to a profound outpouring of faith and unity. It was a moment of divine significance—a glimpse of Pentecostal power in the 21st century.

But the impact of Baptize SoCal extended far beyond the shores of Pirates Cove. A seismic event sent shockwaves of revival throughout Southern California and beyond as people flew in from across the country to be part of this historic occasion. And as they emerged from the waters of baptism, their faces radiant with joy and newfound faith, it was clear that something extraordinary was happening—a divine intervention orchestrated by the hand of God.

In a whirlwind of faith and determination, stories of transformation and dedication unfolded at Baptize SoCal, of the power of community, belief and the call to take the next step in one’s spiritual journey. Among the remarkable tales shared, Francey recounted an extraordinary encounter with a man who journeyed all the way from Arizona to partake in the baptismal waters.

“I baptized a guy who flew out from Arizona,” Francey recalls. “He saw the advertisement we had done on social media that week. He lived in Phoenix, and he literally had Sunday off



from work. So, he hopped on an airplane.”

The intensity of the man’s commitment was palpable as he made his way to Pirates Cove, driven by a desire to fulfill his spiritual calling. “He told me, ‘I’ve been wanting to get baptized. I’m ready to take the next step,’” Francey says, reflecting on the man’s resolute determination. “He gets on an airplane Sunday morning, lands at noon, gets to Pirates Cove at 1:30, gets baptized at 4:00 p.m., and then literally gets back on an airplane at 6:30 p.m. and goes home.”

Over the rushing tides and the jubilant cries of celebration, the profound significance of baptism manifested itself in the tears of joy streaming down the man’s face as he emerged from the waters. “It was truly a special baptism, and there were many other incredible stories just like his,” Francey shares.

Indeed, the event was a testament to the community’s

inclusivity and compassion, exemplified by the provision for individuals facing physical challenges. “We had people who were paralyzed getting baptized. We had a special baptismal tank area for them,” Francey explained, on the commitment to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, could partake in this sacred rite of passage.

## Pentecost 2024 and Beyond

Building upon the inaugural event’s success, Baptize California in 2024 will have over 300 churches from 58 counties across California hosting baptismal gatherings simultaneously. From the redwood forests of Eureka to the sun-drenched beaches of San Diego, those who want to be baptized will gather to participate in this collective expression on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2024.

“We aim to baptize 30,000 people this year. Next year, I believe we could baptize 300,000 people or more. What we do here in California can affect America so that we can baptize millions in one day,” Francey says. “So, if the body of Christ will work together, we’ll get close enough to start loving each other and not believing the worst about one another. That’s what I’m excited about,” he concludes.

Baptize California will be more than just a series of events; it’s a movement of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of Pentecost power in the modern era. In churches, large and small, believers experience the transformative power of baptism as old divisions are cast aside and hearts are united in worship and fellowship.

“Baptize California isn’t just for California. It’s for every church, pastor and believer who wants revival and unity,” said Pastor RayGene Wilson from West Coast Life Church in Murrieta, California.

Baptize California will establish its headquarters event in Huntington Beach, California. Pastor Francey unveiled another thrilling aspect of the event, a sprawling festival stage set to create a splash in the coastal city. “We’re excited about this huge festival stage set up at Huntington Beach,” Francey divulged.

But beyond the musical extravaganzas, Baptize California harbors a deeper purpose rooted in outreach and inclusivity.

Francey illuminated the significance of a dedicated time for the Latino community, featuring esteemed Latino artists and the influential voice of Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, who will deliver a message of hope and salvation.

“Pastor Samuel Rodriguez will be here; he’ll be preaching the gospel in Spanish,” Francey revealed, on the event’s commitment to reaching diverse audiences and fostering unity. But Francey’s vision goes beyond California, seeing Baptize Cali-



fornia as the start of something bigger, a movement that will spread to other states and countries. The main goal is to bring Christians together to share the message of Jesus and help people become followers of Christ through baptism.

## Christmas, Easter and Pentecost

Looking ahead, Francey imagines a future where people worldwide gather on Pentecost Sunday as one of the three primary holy days of the faith, along with Christmas and Easter. They’ll worship, tell others about Jesus and baptize many new believers. This vision of unity and a powerful spiritual awakening when the church brings hope and change to a needy world is a vision of unity and a powerful spiritual awakening.

The Baptize California team is already planning for the years to come, believing next year will be Baptize America on Sunday, June 8, 2025, with baptism movements in multiple states across the country. The team plans to expand internationally in the following years, resourcing and uniting churches in multiple countries and continents.

Pastor Francey believes this movement will go beyond borders and differences. It will unite Christians worldwide under the idea of Pentecostal unity. The ultimate goal? A global revival, a huge wave of

spiritual change touching every corner of the globe, touching every heart and soul.

“I really think it could be on the heels of a global water baptism movement that will prepare the earth for the second return of Jesus Christ, the prayer of John 17; Jesus prays for all of us believers. The prayer of Jesus was unity and was to make them one as we are one. When you look at the landscape of the body of Christ, even with Baptize California, we have Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Charismatics and everyone in between. It really is one of the central doctrines of all believers that we can agree on,” he said.

As Pentecost Sunday 2024 approaches, believers across California prepare to gather in churches, beaches, lakes, oceans, pools and stadiums to participate in this sacred tradition. It is a moment of anticipation, a holy expectation of what the Holy Spirit will do in their midst, for they know that in the waters of baptism, they will find forgiveness and renewal and the power to transform lives and change the course of history.

In churches everywhere, believers will sing and worship, celebrating God’s goodness and the triumph of the cross. They’ll step into baptismal waters with faith and hope, aware they’re part of a divine movement bringing revival and renewal across the land.

Pastor Francey wants to make Pentecost a day when everyone recognizes its significance, especially those who don’t know God yet. He states, “We envision Pentecost as the day people flock to churches for baptism, just as they do for Christmas and Easter. It’s about emphasizing the importance and goodness of baptism to those without a spiritual foundation. By prioritizing Pentecost as a day of unity, we honor the birth of the church, rooted in powerful gospel preaching and the symbolic act of water baptism.”

For information about Baptize California, visit <https://baptizecalifornia.com>. ◀

**MEEH FOMENKO** is a Slavic-American evangelist based in Southern California. He spends most of his time discipling the younger generation.



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# ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

Expecting God in the deep shadows  
of disease & recovery



It was a cold, Spring morning like any other.

My phone rang, and on the other end was the nurse who had recently examined me and removed a suspicious-looking mole on my right leg. Suddenly my whole world changed with one word...

Cancer.

I was never to be the same.

Questions raced through my mind like wildfire. How could this happen? I was just 43 years old, and my life could end. Would I be snuffed out like a low burning candle, never again to trumpet the Good News in the nations?

That week, the voice of the Lord spoke. It was that still, small voice, the one that originates inside our redeemed, human spirit. It flashed through my mind as a flood of thoughts and carried the Father's authority, and His love.

"The enemy is aggressively trying to kill you before your time. You must be as aggressive in fighting him, as he is in fighting you."

Two weeks later I endured my first major operation. Yes, they found the cancer had spread into my lymph nodes and become deadly. I was diagnosed with Melanoma, Stage 3b and absolutely needed drug treatments to survive (save from a healing miracle that God could send; I prayed and many people prayed for that miracle, which eventually came, though not in the timing nor the way I was expecting it).

I remember trembling in fear as I came out of the doctor's office. I stood alone, feeling the weight of now having to travel on a journey I had never imagined.

Major operations, very difficult treatments and a grim diagnosis all were placed before me. I felt weak. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling," (1 Cor. 2:3).

## The Road Forward

Some days we are in sunshine. Some

days we are in shadow. This particular day was a shadow. I trembled for a moment, standing there and then a ray of hope entered my spirit as the Spirit Himself reminded me of Joshua 1:9, "Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." That ray of hope began to grow like a small seed in my heart. I knew the voice of the Lord, and His voice was leading.

What I didn't know was how to have courage. What is courage? I asked one of my dear mentors, Pastor Dorothy Langstaff. She replied in a hand-written note, one that I am quoting from now and that I will cherish the rest of my days, "Hello Dear Braveheart, you asked, 'How do you have courage?' I've come to realize it's like manna. We need it every day. It doesn't seem to keep long when faced with adversity. The Lord is our source of courage and hope. We can encourage ourselves in the Lord, remembering what He has said and done in the past; His words for the future and the strength, comfort and encouragement we receive from others who care. Someone has said, 'Courage is when you feel the fear, and do it anyway.'" Mama Dorothy (as I always affectionately called her) went to be with the Lord in the Fall of 2023, but I will always remember our talks, prayers and notes of encouragement like this.

Whatever adversity you might be facing today, whatever trial of fire you are called to walk through, know this: "When you pass through waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you," (Isa. 43:2).

## Love Will Speak: Face To Face

Until a few years ago, I had traveled and preached in 25 nations spreading the gospel. The day of my diagnosis

began a long break from preaching or traveling. After the initial shock wore off, and still clinging to that Scripture from Joshua 1, I was now facing the reality of treatments. Since I knew the Lord was calling me to become a warrior (though a weak one, at that) and enter into the battle for my very life, I had to take the most aggressive treatment I could. I was offered four choices of immunotherapy, a standard treatment for melanoma. Skin cancer, often unnoticed, spreads malignant cells inside the lymph nodes, deploying like an enemy army to kill us. Immune therapy works to build up the body's natural immune system to fight that army of cancerous destruction.

With most of the treatments, the side effects include a fever, as the fever causes the body to naturally fight all possible enemy cells. To make matters worse, that cancerous enemy was inside my body now and acting like an invisible Klingon battleship (for you fellow Trekkies). Something was missing inside my body to fight it. It was invisible to my immune system and simply declared to my cells which were naturally designed by God to fight it, "Move along, nothing to see here."

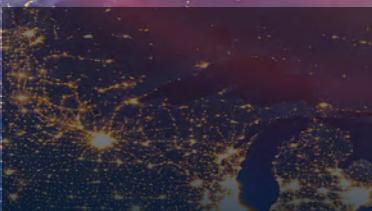
That summer morning as I was out on my favorite prayer swing, I asked the Lord: "So which treatment do I take?" Immediately, He brought me to Psalm 32, verse 8, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye on you." In the original languages, some translations say, "eye to eye" or even "face to face." So, like Moses was "face to face with God," (Exod. 33:11), I understood that God was saying symbolically, almost poetically, in this Scripture, that He "would make it very clear" which treatment to take. Yet this is the very heart and beauty of my life's calling—you too can become "eye to eye" or "face to face" with God Himself that we Christians call "Father, Son and

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embrace our calling and

**PREPARE FOR  
THE IMMINENT  
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Holy Spirit.”

So I fasted. And I prayed. And I praised all summer.

Really?

What did I have to “praise” for? I was facing possible death and a whole list of side effects. The answer: “Through Him, then, let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name,” (Heb. 13:15). This became my lifestyle, beginning that summer and lasting nearly five years. Most of the time I offered these “sacrifices of praise” during times of uncertainty, times of real suffering, times of waiting in faith for the next PET Scan results. Whatever battle you are currently called to fight, remember God is worthy of our praise, and we are daily struggling against the principalities and powers which seek to destroy our pure life in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-18). I have always considered sickness and disease as an enemy of God, not to be trifled with. We must pray and seek to destroy His enemies and sometimes (as in my case), these battles last years, not days.

## 8 “Contacts” from God

The end of the summer came and I was faced on a Friday with making my decision of which treatment to take that following Sunday night. During those three days, it was like I was in a really nice theatre with Dolby Surround Sound. God’s voice was quite literally everywhere, surrounding me! I encountered the voice of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in eight unique “contacts” that weekend:

1) The Established Word: I was standing upon a Bible verse of truth, “I am the Lord who heals you,” (Exod. 15:26).

2) The Living Word: this is when the Holy Spirit breathes upon a Scripture and gives you a “Word from the Word.” I had two of these from Joshua 1 and Psalm 32.

3) The Inner Witness of the Spirit: this was the sense of peace and joy (like a green light) every time I prayed about one of the four; that same “Witness” gave me a tightness in my spirit, like a red light, when I prayed about the other three.

4) The Inner Voice of the Spirit: He whispered within me the name of the treatment I was being called to take.

5) I Dreamed a Dream: my

oncologist appeared to tell me which treatment to take.

6) Providence: this is where the Father goes before you to prepare a person or circumstance in His love, just for you! I walked into a restaurant and there, right in front of me, was one of my Jewish friends. He asked how I was doing, and when I told him I had cancer and was not doing well, he suddenly smiled and said, “Survivor!” He had been at Stage 4 and was a survivor too, and he encouraged me, “God will show you which way to go.”

7) Media: Holy Spirit led me to watch an episode of a Ken Burns documentary and while watching, the name of my treatment was on a World War II airplane as the “Female name of the Plane” (the soldiers sometimes put a picture of a woman and named her on the nose of the planes), taking off into battle!

8) Symbolic Speech: this is the language of visions and dreams and God is speaking in metaphors all the time. For me, the name on the airplane was symbolic speech as it was the exact name, “Peg” of the common name given by the doctors to the official name of my treatment: Pegylated Interferon. This symbolic speech encouraged me to begin the “PEG” treatments and they would become like warplanes going forth to battle the enemy of cancer and defeat it!

So, off I went into the battle, which lasted a full five years...and I have come out the other side of the test with a testimony—I am healed! All praise to God!

## The Trinity Speaks

As Jonathan Edwards once noted after studying the topic of the Triune God extensively, “I think [the doctrine of the Trinity] to be the highest and deepest of all Divine mysteries.” As a diamond or special gemstone reflects the light shone upon it in many facets, so God’s glory upon you continually reflects many aspects of His voice to discern and His love to experience, and all three persons of the Trinity are actively involved. To put it very simply, as you study each way God speaks, think of His contact with you in these terms (while remembering that this is all a mystery):

1) The Father speaks primarily externally, through His providence,

circumstances, nature and creation, and other ways. These signs of His love are quite literally everywhere. And each sign then bears witness within your spirit, through the Holy Spirit's confirmation. "For God (the Father) so loved (agape) the world that He gave His one and only son," (John 3:16).

2) The Son, Jesus Christ speaks primarily through both His Word (the Bible) and through His body (other believers). We are all part of the one body of Christ no matter what our church background. His Word (the Bible) is the foundation of all revelation and the trusted source of confirmation for everything we hear from God.

3) Holy Spirit speaks primarily internally, from within your human spirit, as He now inhabits your heart with the divine kingdom of God. His voice flows out of your mind and can be discerned by your spirit. And He confirms all direction at least two or three times through both internal and external means.

Please also note, Holy Spirit is a Person who comes to abide inside every believer in Jesus Christ. His workings require the believer to actively participate in a sanctifying, holy lifestyle that involves a dying to self and all of our old, self-centered, flesh-driven priorities.

## A Media Missionary

I pushed forward into treatment, and into the days of shadows. I suffered through strong fevers which lasted three to five days. I endured 69 weeks of fevers in a row the first two years. I underwent four major operations to remove cancer. And I kept praising! I was face to face with God throughout these days of battle, and He kept speaking. His presence was glorious every single day that I had enough strength to pray.

I wrote down 21 possible ways that we can encounter God each day, week, month and year—if you are actively listening, that is! I published them in my book, *Love Speaks: 21 Ways to Recognize God's Multi-Faceted Voice*. I had an encounter with the Lord in prayer one day, and He whispered in His still, small voice, "Carl, I'm offering you a new calling as a media missionary." Media Missionary? What on earth is that? After I prayed further, this turned into a calling

to become a visual storyteller utilizing my documentary filmmaking skills.

I travel back through history discovering God's voice for a new generation. I link moments of God's faithfulness in history with stories and modern interviews, to give faith in the present and hope for the future.

He said to me, "Begin your media mission with 21 documentary film episodes, each one based on a chapter of your book and teaching people a new way to hear my multi-faceted voice."

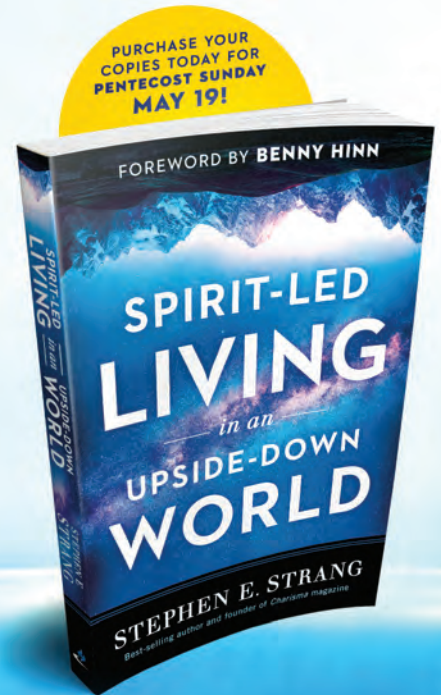
That calling came seven years ago, and by God's grace I have completed this seven-year assignment producing 21 full episodes of *Love Speaks*. Our team is grateful to be able to say we have won gold, silver and bronze "Telly" Awards for excellence (a secular award, not a "Christian" program, with other winners including Netflix, PBS and the BBC).

## The Adventure of a Lifetime

So, what can you do right now to begin your own lifestyle of learning and journeying with God "eye to eye" or "face to face?" One simple answer: *expect*. Expectation is a wonderful gift to our free will. By expecting the Father, Son and Spirit to speak, you are following the ways of faith. And faith is action. Faith is a verb. Faith is expecting that God, your Father, has already visited your tomorrow and can speak and lead you today. Remember the truth: you will have days of sunshine. And days of shadow. Yet God is to be praised in all your days. And truly some of those moments are a real "sacrifice" of praise. So put on your seatbelts, as my friend, J. Lee Grady, former editor of *Charisma*, declares in my book, "because listening to God and following His direction is truly the adventure of a lifetime." ◀

**REV. CARL WESLEY ANDERSON** is an international equipping evangelist and documentary filmmaker. His vision, through itinerant ministry and his unique calling as a Media Missionary, is to inspire and equip believers for passionate discipleship and hearing God's voice. Carl is a Stage 3b Melanoma cancer survivor and walks in faith through God's healing and calling in his life.

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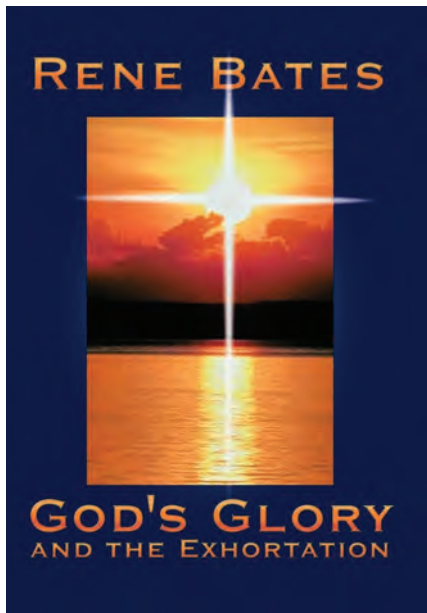
In an upside-down world facing intense spiritual warfare, Christians today are easily depressed and bombarded by sin on every side. There's only one power that can help in these situations—and that's the power of the Holy Spirit!

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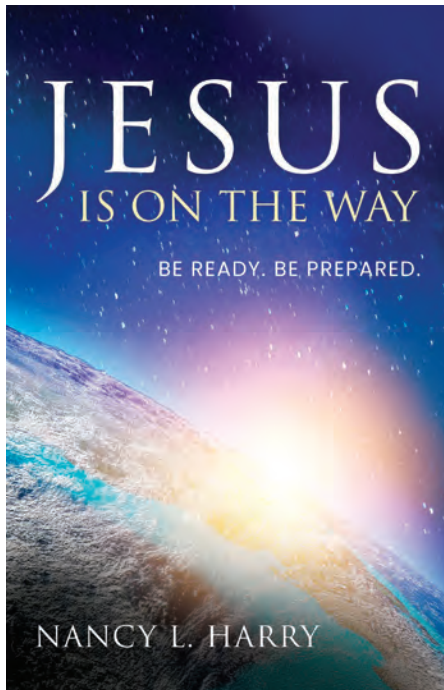
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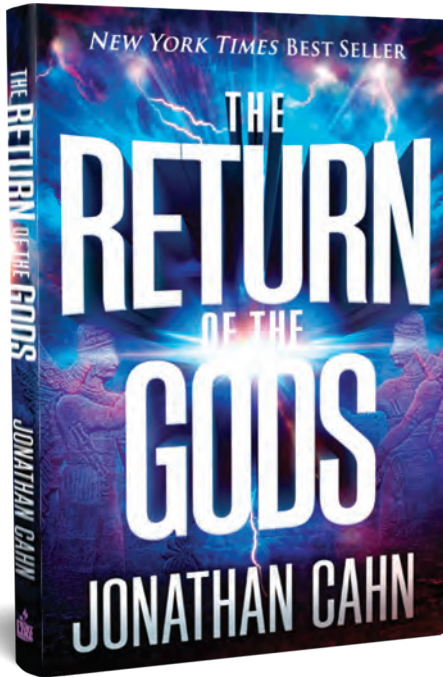
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# Refresh Your Spirit



## ***The Return of the Gods***

**by Jonathan Cahn**

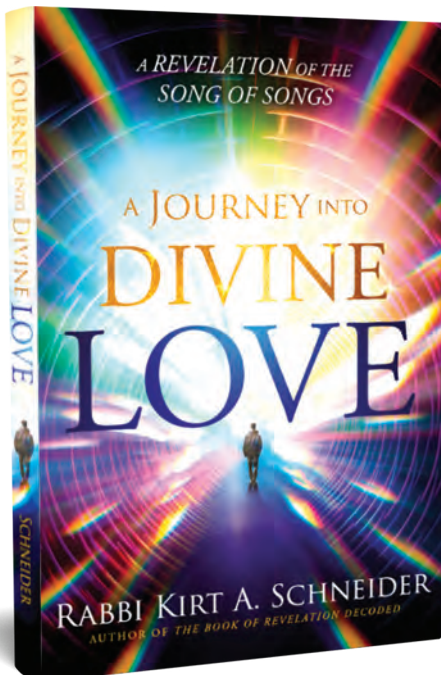
Is it possible that behind what is happening to America and the world lies a mystery hidden in the ancient inscriptions of the Middle East? In the *New York Times* best seller, *The Return of the Gods*, author Jonathan Cahn provides the answers behind mysteries like:

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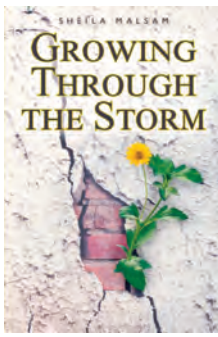
## ***A Journey Into Divine Love***

**by Rabbi Kirt A. Schneider**

What if the point of the cross wasn't just to be saved but to be loved? In Rabbi Schneider's *A Journey into Divine Love*, you'll uncover what it means to walk in true intimacy with God. As you dive into the Song of Songs, sometimes known as the Song of Solomon, you'll see glimpses through this poetic text of a greater, prophetic love story that God has written for us as His children.

Using practical guidance and insightful analysis, Rabbi Schneider illuminates the meaning and symbolism behind the Song of Songs. As you observe the profound truths from this book of the Bible, you'll find the tools needed for personal transformation and greater spiritual renewal. You don't have to stay in a spiritual drought. This is your call to know God in a whole new way.

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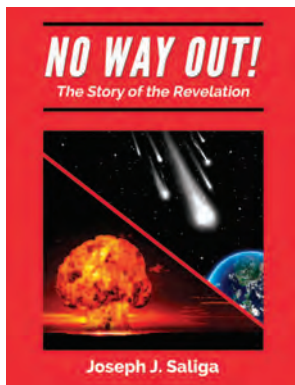
Sheila Malsam, co-founder of the Prayer Capsule, was first blessed by a written prayer from her father during a challenging time in her life. The heartfelt prayer is a cherished keepsake.

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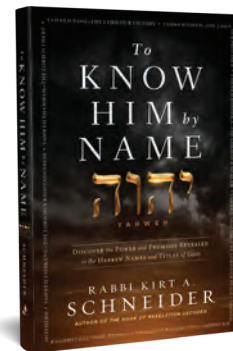
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## No Way Out! The Story of the Revelation by Joseph J. Saliga

If you want to understand the book of Revelation as it was intended to be understood, this book is for you. *No Way Out!* uses a new chronology to interpret the prophecies of the book of Revelation. Chief among Revelation's unfulfilled prophecies are those related to Armageddon. Is there a nuclear holocaust or a celestial object impact event? This is determined, but this book addresses all of the end of the age including the fate of the United States, the fate of Islam, climate change, and inadequate oil supply. It also identifies Revelation's fulfilled prophecies.

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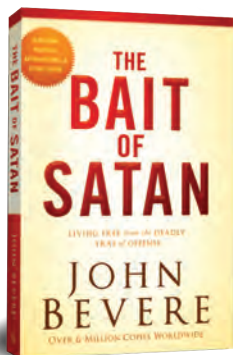
## To Know Him by Name by Rabbi Kirt A. Schneider

When you know what name to call on, you know more of *whose* you are. In Rabbi Schneider's book, *To Know Him by Name*, you'll discover the power and purpose behind the various Hebrew names of God.

When readers see God from this perspective, they'll see him for who he truly is: provider, counselor, savior, shepherd, victorious healer, and so much more. No longer do you have to live in fear and anxiety—once you spend time in His great presence, you will see how much greater life truly is with Him.

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# Refresh Your Spirit

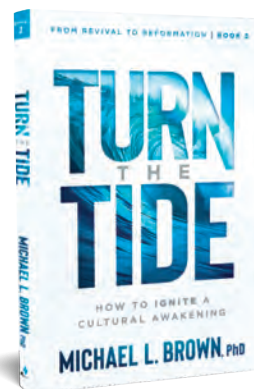


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by John Bevere

Most people who are ensnared by the bait of Satan don't even realize it. With John Bevere's classic, best-selling book, you will learn how to identify the traps lying in the path ahead of you to escape from a victim mentality. Examining declaration-style prayers and testimonials, you'll discover what it looks like to stay free from offense and its destructive power. You'll uncover the answers to questions like: Why am I compelled to tell "my side" of the story? and how can I regain trust after someone deeply offends me? Start your journey of freedom today!

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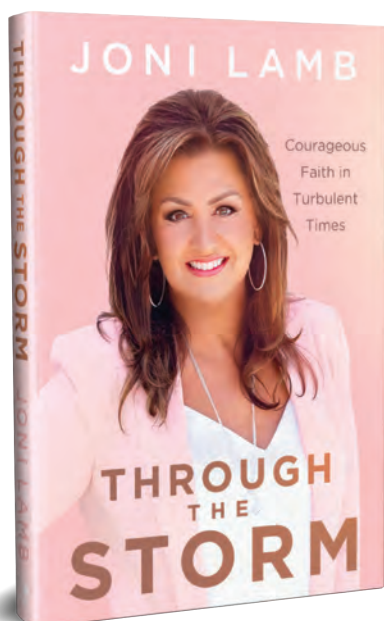


## ***Turn the Tide***

by Michael L. Brown

With the power of the Holy Spirit, we can change the world instead of the world changing us. With Dr. Michael Brown's newest book, *Turn the Tide*, you'll discover how you can practically take your revival experience and be apart of the movement to turn it into reformation that will permeate in our culture, nation, and the world. Drawing from historical revivals and scriptural insights, Dr. Brown will help you move beyond the church walls to share the good news of the gospel and see change take place in our politics, culture, and so much more.

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## ***Through the Storm***

by Joni Lamb

What if the most beautiful kind of faith is the type that has been tested and tried? As the visionary and cofounder of Daystar Television Network, Joni Lamb's journey has been incredibly remarkable. In her new book, *Through the Storm*, you'll learn what it means to overcome trials, and experience triumphs even after immense loss. Join Joni as she candidly opens up about the relentless challenges, she's overcome of establishing and growing the network, and the dire personal struggles she's also faced. *Through the Storm* doesn't just recount the moments of struggle—it shows you how to navigate and overcome these moments to experience true victory.

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## 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 [mycharisma.com/bible-reading-guide/](http://mycharisma.com/bible-reading-guide/).

*“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.”—Acts 2:2-4*

### MAY

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. 71; 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

What if the point of the cross wasn't just to be saved but to be loved?



One of the most beautiful and misunderstood portions of the Bible is the Song of Songs. But what if there's more to this love story than what meets the eye?

In his newest book, Rabbi Kirt Schneider draws deep from his understanding of Scripture to unlock the mysteries hidden in this text. Whether you are seeking to deepen your relationship with God or just want to understand this passage better, you will experience a renewal in your own relationship with God once you read *A Journey Into Divine Love*. You don't have to just wonder about the power of God's love—you can experience it.

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 CHARISMA HOUSE

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## Another Man's Servant (September 1985)

When missionaries visit the States and see our opulence, they can't help but contrast it to the poverty they've just left.

But poverty, and riches, are relative. I have two cars. I live in a two-story brick house. I can buy anything I want, within reason. I've never known hunger. What should I do if confronted by the poverty of the Third World?

I'll tell you what I have done. I loan my cars to missionaries when they are home on furlough—and I buy the gas and pay the repair bills. My house stays filled with people in need of ministry. I give a large percentage of my income to support those in ministry and to feed the poor. Ten years ago, my wife Jackie and I moved out of a small subdivision to our present house on 20 acres in a semi-rural setting. By today's standards we got it at a steal. But for five years both of us lived with a deep-seated guilt because we had such a nice place. That has passed. I simply see my purchase as a wise move. I no longer believe God condemns prosperity. Indeed, I think He desires it for us—as long as we use what we have for His glory.

On the other hand, I too am appalled by what is going on in some sectors of Western Christendom. Extravagance grieves me. Yet, extravagance is relative to culture. Recently I helped deliver an evaporative cooler to a Christian Indian living in a dirt-floored two-room hut in the Mexican desert, that provided him—and the 10 people in his tiny house—a degree of comfort. But in the eyes of his neighbors, it was sheer extravagance.

I admire the way Sen. John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV approached his job as a volunteer in the antipoverty program with the kind folks of Emmons, West Virginia (population 200), as a Peace Corps worker. "I come from a world that may be different, but you'll find me serious and caring and wanting to help," he told them. Those grateful people later elected him governor—then U.S. senator. That, it seems, put riches in the right perspective.

What has God told me to do? He's told me to withhold judgment from His servants—to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving—even if I do not understand.

For instance, God did not tell me to build a splendid university as He told Oral Roberts. But I'm glad Oral obeyed, and I've sent him four of my five children to educate.

I've looked but I cannot find a single biblical injunction to tear down what others are doing in the name of Jesus. My call? To use the things I control to God's glory—and allow my brothers to answer to God for the things they control.

Once I spent a week in a Catholic monastery with about 50 of the nation's charismatic leaders. We were miles apart in doctrine. Some were classic Pentecostals. Some were liberals. Several were Catholic priests. We spend all week listening to each other.

At night, when we finished with the day's activities, we went down to the kitchen for snacks. Some drank beer, some lemonade. One afternoon I listened to a devoted Catholic scholar tell how Mary encouraged him to love and worship Jesus. The week did not change my doctrine, but it softened my spirit.

I wish some of my friends who are so critical of Catholics would take a week each year, as I do, getting to know these folks and listening to their hearts. Perhaps they would come away as I do, realizing God is bigger than our interpretation of the Bible and that all men who are committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ are brothers.

As I examine my past critical attitude of the lifestyles and doctrines of others, I realize most of it has come from secondhand

knowledge. Recently I sat in a ministry's conference in Tulsa and heard Kenneth Copeland preach. I'd never cared for Copeland's approach, but, again, I'd never heard him in person. That night I left the room a mellowed man.

Who is right? One who drives a luxury automobile and whose ostentation seems second only to the Taj Mahal? Or my missionary friend who drives a battered car over rocky Argentine roads and wears threadbare clothes? Who is right?

I suspect, when earth's last picture is painted, that the bright lights here at home will blend right into the dusty colors painted by my missionary friends, and somehow the picture will come out looking just the way God intended.

*“God is bigger than our interpretation of the Bible...all men who are committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ are brothers.”*

Jamie Buckingham wrote 153 columns for *Charisma* over 13 years, first known as “Dry Bones” but later as its most recognized “Last Word.” His singular voice was animated by a heart for Jesus baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit in 1967 at a Full Gospel Businessmen's convention. Buckingham provided a steadying force during the scandals of the 1980s, penning the seminal article on the PTL scandal, “God Is Shaking His Church” in May 1986.

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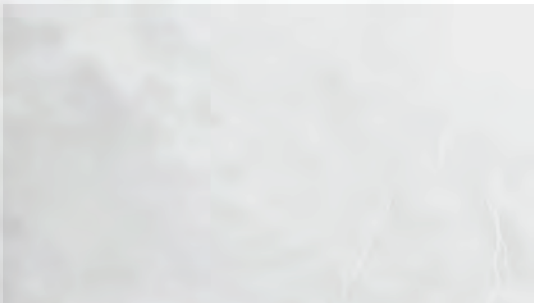
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What if the most beautiful kind of **faith** is the type that has been tested and tried?



**As the visionary** and cofounder of Daystar Television Network, Joni Lamb has had a remarkable journey. In her new book, *Through the Storm*, Joni candidly opens up about the relentless challenges she's overcome of establishing and growing the network to the personal struggles she's faced. But even in the midst of each obstacle, she unwaveringly sought the Lord to find rest in His goodness and mercy.

Discover how you can have this same resilience and redemption present in your own life and testimony!

