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DECEMBER 2024

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SPIRIT-LED LIVING

STANDING FIRM in FAITH through the HOLIDAYS

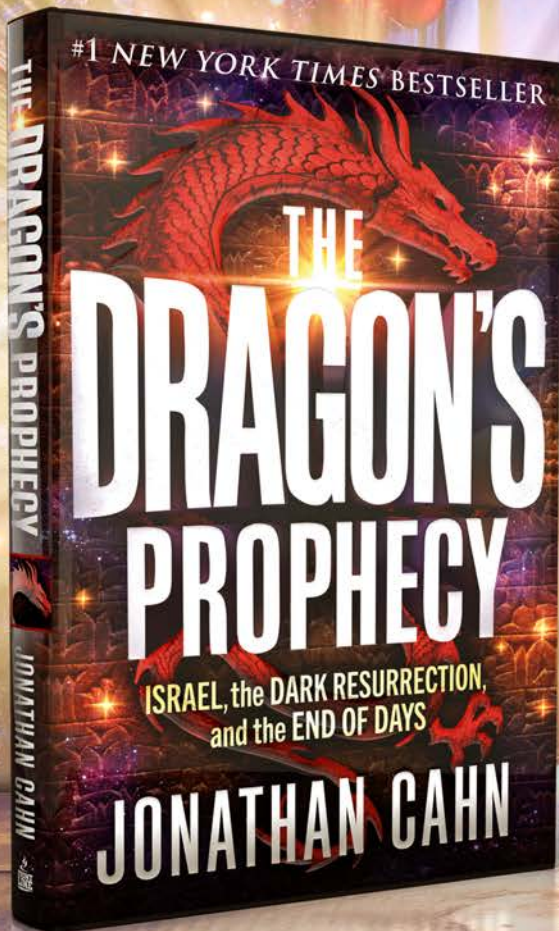
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Peter Aiello

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Simply Christ

Gospel Insight

with Keith Surface

When Something is Very Wrong

Many years ago, a guest minister at our annual Campmeeting shared an incident where he stumbled upon a pornographic magazine on the side of the highway. He told of picking up the magazine, and being compelled within, he began look through it to gaze upon the naked women in their erotic poses. Finally, he became fixated upon the naked woman laid out in the “centerfold.” After a bit, he forced himself to discard the magazine and continued on his way. He then followed this account with this statement: “If any man tells you he is not tempted by a beautiful woman, he is lying to you.” I knew then that this minister was struggling with lusts in his own heart. The depth of this struggle would later bring this man's life and ministry into great shame and reproach.

I believed this man to be a man of God, but knew that he was in a snare. It was evident that something was wrong, and if he did not find an answer, this thing which was “wrong” would destroy him. The problem was that he did not view anything to be wrong. Instead, he took his struggle with lusts and declared it to be normal for everyone. In doing so, he lifted up his personal experience as being “more true” than the word of God.

It was Jesus who said, “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” Matthew 5:27-28. The use of pornography is adultery before God. The Apostle Peter also warned us of those who would have “*eyes full of adultery.*” II Peter 2:14. If your eyes are full of adultery, your heart is full of adultery, and, according to Jesus, you are an adulterer.

It is not my purpose to condemn this preacher. He was in a snare and needed an answer. Yet, because he could not admit that something was very wrong, he could not

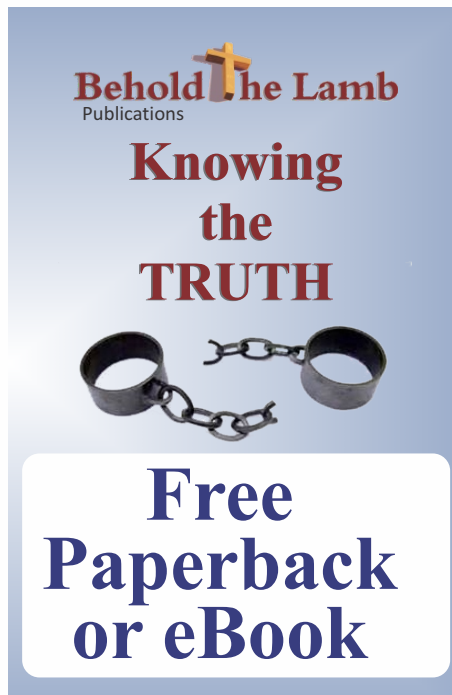
accept an answer. His solution was to justify it as something everyone struggles with. Those who cannot admit that sin in their heart is both destructive and damnable will never find an answer for the things which destroy them from within.

If almost everyone in your community was infected with a deadly disease would the fact that so many were dying make you consider the sickness normal? Would you be one who would seek the cure and want to discover what was causing so many to be infected? Or, would you say, “It's OK! Everyone is dying. This is just normal around here.” In this strange way, the fact that pornography, fornication, deception, and covetousness are rampant in the modern church is often presented as proof that this is just normal for the Christian walk. No one is willing to stand up and say, “Something is very, very wrong!”

Jesus Christ did not come to condemn sinners, but to save us from sin. John 3:17. Yet, many are “*condemned already*” though their unbelief. John 3:18. Jesus gave us the basis of this condemnation when he said, “*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*” John 3:19. The darkness which some men love is their sin. The darkness which other men love are the doctrines which justify or excuse their sin. As long as you love either, Jesus Christ can do nothing for you.

The word of God is clear that the blood of Christ will “*...purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*” Hebrews 9:2. The “*conscience*” spoken of in this passage is your “*innermost thoughts and feelings.*” When this is washed, the worshiper has “*...no more conscience of sins.*” Hebrews 10:2. This means the works of sin are washed from your heart and you are made free.

You can spend your life struggling, believing those who constantly tell you, “Don't worry! We all struggle with sin in our hearts.” Or, you can believe God's word and recognize that such things are both destructive and damnable to you and your eternal soul. Until you realize that something is wrong, you will never find the answer in Jesus Christ which will make things right.



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“This guy is amazing! I’ve never heard anyone express...the gospel message so clearly but also so usefully.”
—Pernelia Lacombe,
Tarpon Springs, FL

SALDIVAR’S MESSAGE IS ON FIRE

I only started following Isaiah Saldivar after I saw something about him on the *Charisma* website, but had never heard of him before (“7 Steps to Freedom,” *Charisma Magazine Online*, October 2024). This guy is amazing! I’ve never heard anyone express the details of the gospel message so clearly but also so usefully. His discussion about revival and deliverance were totally foreign to me, but I feel like I learned so much. I cannot wait to grab a copy of his new book.

Pernelia Lacombe,
Tarpon Springs, FL

PAGANI LAYS DOWN THE WISDOM

Alexander Pagani’s videos on his YouTube channel could be a whole curriculum on how to grow your faith from the inside out (“5 Roles for the Saints,” *Charisma Magazine Online*, October 2024). Everyone needs to hear this, even if you’re new in the faith and this wisdom was never on your radar before. Pagani is a warrior for God who brings the firepower of the gospel.

Elmore Frantz, *Schenectady, NY*

ARE YOU IN OR NOT?

The first time I heard John Ramirez’ testimony it scared me to my bones. How can someone be a satanist and go all the way to the love of Jesus? But that taught me how wide and deep God’s love for us is, and Ramirez tells a great story of all of that (“The Battle Is Joined, But Are You All In?” *Charisma Magazine Online*, October 2024). Thanks John, fight the good fight?

Maude Tumbleton,
Caribou Acres, UT

HADDOCK’S 3 KEYS

Kenza Haddock is a lady wise beyond her years (“3 Keys Unlocking Peace of Heart, Mind & Soul,” *Charisma Magazine Online*, October 2024). She talks about three ways to rely on the Holy Spirit that I’ve learned in Sunday school most of my life, but somehow in her new book it seems almost easy, like it’s just waiting there for me to take hold of and walk out Holy Spirit-led living. I hope *Charisma* magazine does her stories again someday.

Morty Klongman, *Hoopersville, IL*

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Embracing the True Spirit of Christmas: Giving from the Heart

Christmas is known as the most joyous time of the year, and a big part of that happiness stems from the season of giving. More than any other holiday, Christmas encourages people to be generous, emulating the Magi who brought gifts to the Christ child. Yet, in our modern world, with the holiday rush and commercialism, it's easy to become so wrapped up in our own festivities that we forget the deeper call to share with those in need.

Perhaps moreso this year than any in the recent past, after a long slog of a seemingly endless election cycle with one new upheaval after another, we now arrive at the 2024 holidays grateful for the timeless season of goodwill, giving, hope, family, friends and peace. From the start we celebrate the birth of our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus. But Jesus was born of a virgin in His manger for more than just the beloved Christmas story of the book of Luke chapter 2. God gave us Himself, to remind us we are not and never will be alone. God shows us His giving, pouring out Himself in an act of extravagant generosity, as Pastor Greg Locke might say.

As Christians, we are uniquely positioned to model a spirit of generosity. We understand that giving is not just a kind gesture but an essential part of faith — we believe in the principle of sowing and reaping and recognize the blessings that flow from giving. However, we often find ourselves preoccupied, focusing on our own needs and the needs of our immediate circles. It's time to look outward and let this Christmas season be an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

This tradition of giving has been particularly meaningful to me, in part because of an experience I had as a child. When I was five, my father, a pastor in Springfield, Missouri, learned that a family in our church was struggling after the father lost his job. My parents encouraged my siblings and me—all five of us under the age of five—to each take one of our Christmas gifts and give it to the children in that family. This small act of kindness taught me an invaluable lesson: it truly is more blessed to give than to receive. That simple but powerful memory has stayed with me,

especially during the holiday season, reminding me of the real joy found in giving.

Each December, millions of Americans celebrate Christmas with an outpouring of gifts to friends and family, and this tradition is wonderful. More than 30 years ago, we estimated that many Christian families were spending \$600 or more on holiday presents, and I imagine that number has grown. While there's nothing wrong with gift-giving, imagine the impact if we also set aside a portion of what we spend for gifts to the Lord. This is something I've done for the past several years, and it has made the whole holiday season much more meaningful.

In my own family, we take time each December to calculate our spending on Christmas gifts, and then we earmark 10% of that amount as a special “birthday present to Jesus.” This offering

is given in addition to our regular tithes and is directed toward ministries or those in need, reflecting our gratitude for God's greatest gift to us: His Son. I've encouraged readers of *Charisma* magazine to join us in this practice, and it's been heartwarming to hear from others who have felt the joy of giving in this way.

There are countless opportunities to bless others during Christmas. Consider donating to your local church, supporting evangelistic ministries, contributing to relief agencies or helping missions organizations that are actively spreading the message of Christ and caring for those in need. Whether big or small, each gift can make a meaningful difference.

This year, I invite you to make Christ the focal point of your Christmas giving. In a season often defined by hustle and consumption, set aside time and resources for those who need it most. It could be a financial gift, volunteering time or simply reaching out to someone in need of support or encouragement. As you celebrate with family and friends, remember that your generosity reflects the heart of Christmas and extends the love of Christ to others. In this special season, may we all experience the joy of giving generously.

On behalf of my wife, Joy, and the entire team at Charisma Media, I wish you and your family a Christ-centered Christmas filled with peace, joy and love.

“I wish you and your family a Christ-centered Christmas filled with peace, joy and love.”

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 recent book *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World* is available wherever fine Christian books are sold including online at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



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5 Ways to Rediscover Jesus in a Chaotic Christmas

What might extraterrestrials think if they visited earth in December and watched people celebrate Christmas? Would they be able to figure out what this holiday season is about?

I doubt it.

Today the story of Jesus' birth is pretty much buried under election season divisiveness, social media incivility, tons of strung lights, the crass materialism Linus and Charlie Brown discussed in 1965's *Merry Christmas Charlie Brown*, wokeism, arguments over 'Merry Christmas' or 'Happy Holidays,' and songs about cold weather (which is odd, considering most of the world celebrates Christmas in warm climates). The undeniable pattern is, somehow we forgot the point of this celebration.

I proved this recently when I went to one of our large, well-known discount retailers and discovered rows over rows of Christmas trees, Disney ornaments, martini ornaments (Christmas is about drinking?), inflatable penguins, Santa Claus toilet seats, Darth Vader nutcrackers, reindeer oven mitts and battery-operated Christmas hats.

But no nativity scenes.

When I asked a manager why they didn't have any, he said apologetically: "You're right. We should probably stock those."

Of course, I'm not going to depend on Target, Wal-Mart or Macy's to show me the real meaning of this season. I always read the gospel accounts of Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke during the month of December so I can rediscover the miracle of the Incarnation.

I encourage you to study those passages as well. And as you do, meditate on these five different names of Jesus that are recorded in the Christmas story.

1. He is the Son of David (Matt. 1:1). Matthew's gospel, which was written primarily to Jews, stresses that Jesus was in the royal lineage of Israel's kings. The genealogy that appears in Matthew 1 traces Joseph, the husband of the virgin Mary, to David's line—and then back to Abraham. Even though Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph, He could legally claim the family name. He was King of the Jews in the truest sense; yet unlike the sinful kings of Israel, Jesus was the perfect ruler—and His kingdom will never end.

2. He is the Son of Adam (Luke 3:38). Luke's Gospel, written to a Gentile audience, focuses on Jesus' humanity. And the genealogy that appears in Luke 3:23-38 is not about kingly succession. Instead, it traces Jesus' lineage through Mary's family tree and goes all the way to Adam—establishing the case that Jesus was a descendant of the first man. Through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, God's eternal Word impregnated Mary, making her child both God and man. Yet Jesus, unlike Adam, never disobeyed God. He remained sinless so He could sacrifice His life for us.

3. He is Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23). An angel told Joseph in a dream that Mary would conceive a son miraculously—and that His name would be Emmanuel, which means, "God with us." Wrapped up in this name is the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus is, as John's gospel emphasizes, the Word that "became flesh" (John 1:14). He

was with God before the creation of the world as the glorious firstborn Son, but He left the glory of heaven to dwell among sinners on earth.

4. He is Jesus, the Savior (Matt. 1:21).

The angel told Mary she would give birth to the "holy child" and that she would call him Jesus, which is the Greek form of the name Joshua (or *Yeshua* in Hebrew). Jesus means "the Lord saves." Just as Joshua in

the Old Testament succeeded Moses and took God's people across the Jordan into the Promised Land, Jesus led us out of the wilderness of sin and ushered us "by grace" and "through faith" (Eph. 2:8) into the blessings of salvation.

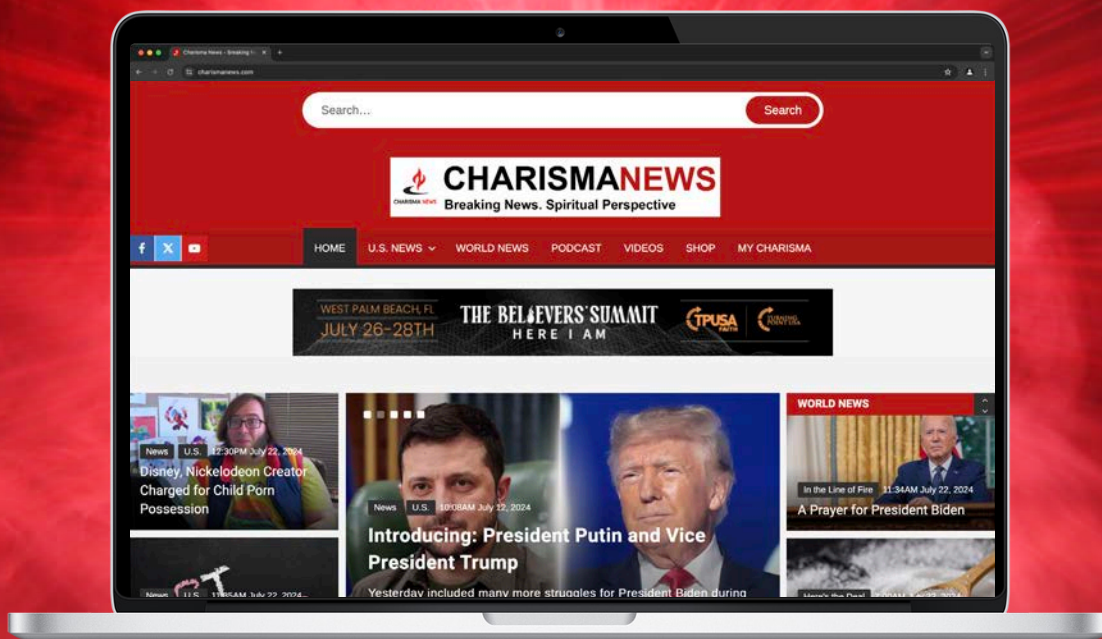
5. He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Angels said to the shepherds in Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14). This harkens back to Isaiah's ancient prophecy that the Messiah would institute peace on earth. The gift of Christ was, in fact, the greatest peace treaty ever enacted. Wherever the true gospel of Christ is preached and believed, hatred is uprooted in human hearts and wars and violence cease.

Amid this crazy holiday madness we endure every year, let's simplify. Filter out all the noise about snow, elves, gift cards, holiday sales and buying sprees and instead rediscover the point. Find the manger scene again—and put Jesus in the middle of your Christmas.

"I always read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke during the month of December."

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).

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It's Time to Shine

Have you ever heard someone say, “There’s just something about them”? This usually means they see something they admire in a person; they stand out from the crowd, but they can’t quite put their finger on what it is.

I like when I hear it said about someone who’s a Christian. Because when we are good to people and God’s love flows through us, there is something that just draws people’s attention.

The Bible says that Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). On the job, in the grocery store, and even among friends and family members who don’t have a relationship with Christ, God’s people are there to bring seasoning to an unsavory situation.

There is so much turmoil in people’s lives today—so much darkness—and they’re looking for hope. As Christians, we are the ones who can help them find what they need through a relationship with God.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus says, “But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything...” (NIV). It seems that somewhere along the way, the lines between godliness and ungodliness have gotten blurred. Things that would have been considered wrong 20 or 30 years ago seem to be “not so bad” today. I wonder what the next 20 years will bring if this continues.

We may need to ask ourselves: What are we showing the world? What is it that keeps us “salty”? How do we, as Christians, keep our lights shining in the darkness around us? What sets us apart?

I believe the answer is *holiness*. And when I say holiness, I don’t mean religion. I’m not talking about a list of dos and don’ts...or going to church on Sunday mornings just to do your Christian duty one day a week. Yes, going to church is a great thing! But living a holy life is about so much more than attending a service once a week.

When I say holiness, I’m talking about behavior that is borne out of a personal, intimate relationship with God. I’m referring to something that helps us love other people and be good to them.

Holiness is the “something” the world needs to see in us. There

are so many people who may never attend a church service or read a Bible, but they *are* reading us! They are watching our behavior and looking to us to find out what God is like. We are God’s ambassadors, and we are meant to be light in the darkness so they can find their way to Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Hebrews 12:14 tells us to pursue holiness. Holiness is the outcome of a work that God does in each of us through our personal relationship with Him. It begins the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior and we are made holy at that moment. And then little by little, He changes us from the inside out so we become more and more like Him. Throughout this process, God slowly strips away our pride and selfishness. We become less focused on how we can please ourselves and become more concerned with blessing other people. We go from, “What about me?” to “How may I help you?”

Now, it’s important to remember that we can’t change ourselves—only God can change us and help us to become more like Him. In John 15:5 (NIV), Jesus says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

So, what is our part? Our part is to regularly take some time to develop our relationship with God. We do this by reading His Word and talking to Him in prayer. Just like a best friend, the Lord desires for us to talk to Him throughout the day about anything and everything.

I like to say that holiness is an “inside job.” As we spend time with God and ask Him to change us, He slowly but surely transforms us from the inside out.

Don’t worry if you feel like you haven’t “arrived.” The fact that you desire to be a better person means you are making progress. God doesn’t promise us that the process will be fast or easy, but He does assure us that He will make us more like Him as we continue to seek Him.

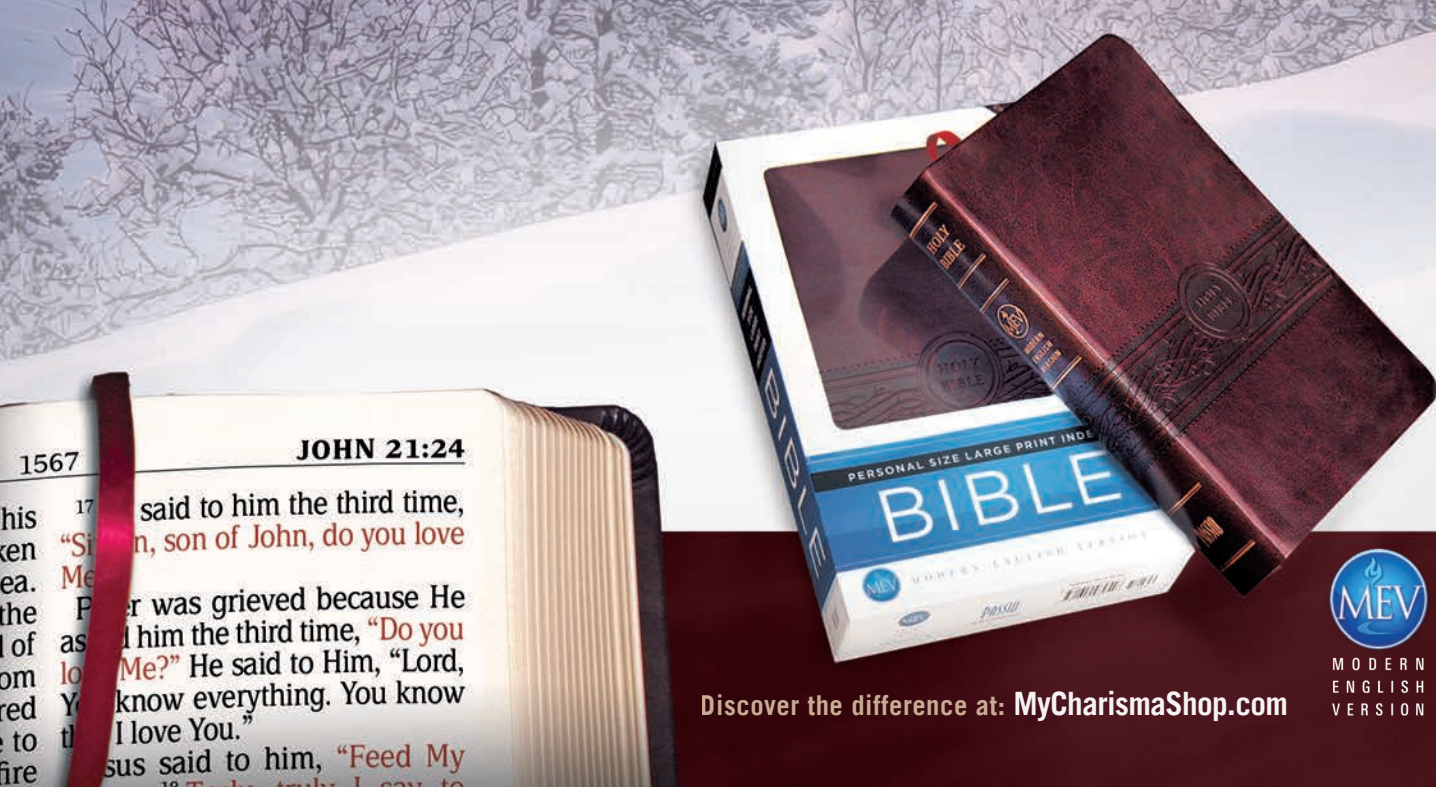
Wherever we are in our process of growing in holiness, it’s important to remember the world is watching. And every day, in every situation, we have the privilege of being salt and light to the people all around us...and showing them what God is really like.

“Every day, in every situation, we have the privilege of being salt and light to the people all around us...and showing them what God is really like.”

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

For He says to the snow,
'Come on the earth,' likewise to the
gentle rain and to the heavy rain
of His strength.

—JOB 37:6, MEV



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JOHN 21:24

his 17 said to him the third time,
ken "Simon, son of John, do you love
ea. Me
the Peter was grieved because He
of as I him the third time, "Do you
om lo Me?" He said to Him, "Lord,
red You know everything. You know
e to I love You."
fire sus said to him, "Feed My
18 Take, truly I say to

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Immanuel, the Presence and Power of God Is With Us

Once there was a man who was invited to a treasure hunt by a teacher. His teacher gave him a map to this treasure as well as a special briefcase he was to keep with him at all times. The treasure hunter was told that the key to the briefcase was buried at the treasure site.

The treasure hunter spent months locating the treasure site. At last, he found it—and the key! He thought he would find within the briefcase special tools to dig up this treasure. But to his amazement, when he put the key into the special briefcase, he didn't find tools to dig up the treasure—he found the treasure itself! The treasure had been with him the entire time, but the valuables had been completely hidden from him.

Something glorious was kept hidden for ages and generations that has now been revealed to us. We find it in Colossians 1:19: “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.” What does that mean? Who is “Him”? Jesus! In Jesus all the fullness should dwell. The fullness of what? The fullness of all things. The fullness of God. The fullness of the Father, the Spirit and the Son.

The Advent season reminds us that God is with us, rejoice! Immanuel our Savior is born! The story of the birth of Jesus in Luke 2 is familiar and beloved especially through the Christmas season. But in Colossians 1:20 we read deeper into why our Father in heaven brought us His Son, “And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

The Jesus we serve, the Jesus preached in the gospel, is not just some philosopher or religious teacher. The fullness of all things resides in Jesus. He is higher than all things. He is supreme above everything that was, is and will be. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega—the First and the Last. He's the Beginning and the End. He's the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is our Prince of Peace. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. He is the highest being that could ever exist. All things

were created by Him and through Him.

Now, what are those things? They are the created things, or things in heaven. The word *heaven* is the created heavens, the expanse. One day they're going to be rolled away like a scroll, but then they will be made new. Paul tells us that the cross of Jesus has already disarmed the principalities and powers. He explains, “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister”

(Col. 1:21–23). Then, in Colossians 1:26 he begins to talk about the secret, or “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.”

We have considered many things here that I hope will be helpful, but there is only one “secret” to a life in God—only

one secret that changes everything—and that is the revelation of Christ in you, Immanuel, God with us in Jesus. The mystery that all of creation has longed to see, and that angels and prophets and patriarchs have all longed to bear witness to, is the Christ who is at work inside you now.

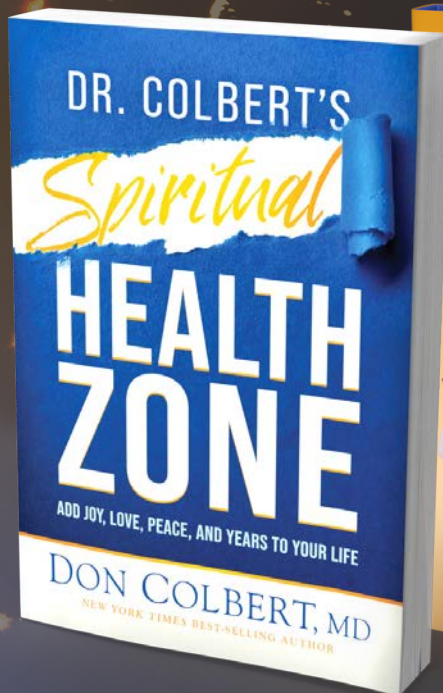
Rejoice in this Christmas season, “Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find the Baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.’ Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men,’” (Luke 2:10-14, MEV). And know that God is with us.

And if you are in Christ, there is nothing “out there” that anyone has to sell or give to you that you need. What if the thing you most desperately need is simply to be jolted awake to recognize the true power that already resides inside you?

“He’s the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is our Prince of Peace.”

Chris Garcia is the Founder of Father's Glory International, and serves as the lead overseer at House of Glory in Fort Smith, Arkansas. House of Glory is a Spirit-filled, Fivefold Apostolic revival hub. His new book, *Fresh Oil*, is available at amazon.com. Garcia and his wife, Zuly, reside in the Fort Smith area with their three children.

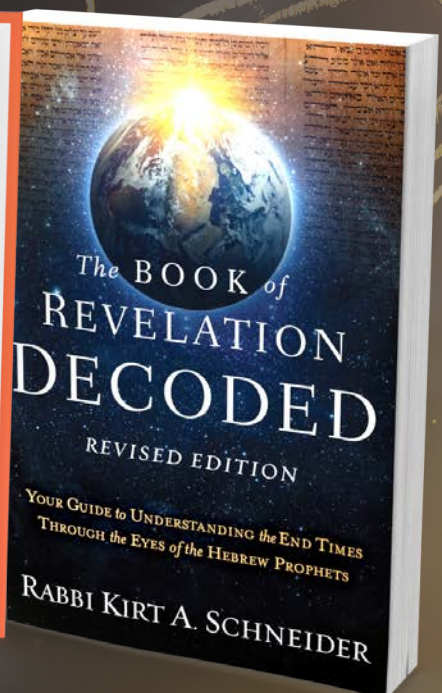
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The Chosen Creator Dallas Jenkins Says He Was 'Born to Make' New Movie

He waited for years for the opportunity to create *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*

Dallas Jenkins, creator, writer, director and executive producer of *The Chosen*, may be having the best Christmas ever with the success of his new movie, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, which released Nov. 8, in theaters nationwide.

"I was born to make this movie," says Jenkins, 49, who had prayed and waited for years to gain film rights to the 1972 novel by Barbara Robinson after learning another studio already held them. God opened the door for Jenkins' prayer to be answered when that studio forgot to renew the rights.

That good news became even better news when

the mother of one of the men who held the rights, who is also a fan of *The Chosen*, intervened.

"You have to give him the rights!" the man's mother said after hearing about Jenkins' recurring request. "He's the only one who can make this movie!"

Today, Jenkins sees the delay as a part of God's plan. "Ten years ago, I wouldn't have known how to handle this," he says. "And I probably wouldn't have made as good of a product because I would not have been quite as surrendered to God in the process."

Is God Moving to Spare America From Judgment?

The Trump Code author calls for prayer and fasting



Some years ago, the late evangelist Billy Graham told investigative journalist and bestselling author Troy Anderson something he never forgot. Reflecting on the story of Jonah and Nineveh, Graham said, “When God sent the prophet Jonah to Nineveh to warn them of impending judgment, the king and the people repented, and God spared the city. I believe the same thing can happen again today, this time in America.”

“Like ancient Nineveh, America faces judgment, and like Nineveh, we have a choice: We can humble ourselves, repent and seek God’s mercy, or we can face the consequences of continuing to turn away from Him,” Anderson, author of *The Trump Code*, says. To this end, he has called on President Trump—via letter and video message—to “lead this charge by serving as a modern-day Nineveh’s king, urging Americans to return to God before it’s too late.”

But Anderson’s message extends beyond Trump. He and his ministry partners are now leading a “77 Days to Save America” campaign of prayer and fasting between Nov. 5, 2024 (Election Day) and Jan. 20, 2025 (Inauguration Day). He adds, “This period is a unique opportunity to place our trust in God and act with bold faith, inviting believers from every corner of the nation and world to join in this journey of divine intercession.”

Canceling Christmas?

Major department store goes with the ‘holiday’ flow

The last several years have brought protests over nativity scenes, the rise of terms such as “winter” break in public schools and the near-banning of the word “Christmas” from multiple venues. Iconic department store Neiman Marcus has now decided to eliminate the term from its catalog formerly known as the Christmas Book, first published in 1926. This year, the colorful, high-gloss catalog is known as the “Holiday Book,” with the words “A Neiman’s Fantasy” on the cover.

The word *fantasy* comes from the popular—and extravagant—fantasy gifts the catalog advertises, along with more modest offerings. Among this year’s fantasy gifts are a royal

caleche (carriage) from Spanish royalty, dating back to the 18th century for the cool price of \$1.9 million, and, for the budget-conscious, a Judith Leiber Couture crystal mahjong set for a mere \$20,000.

Canceling Christmas, at least in name, is yet another change purported to come from new and purportedly unpopular Neiman’s CEO, Geoffroy van Raemdonck.

“If Geoffrey and his team put as much time into running the business as they did on expressing viewpoints about DEI [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion.] we would be buying Saks or launching an IPO,” a Neiman Marcus employee told the *New York Post*.

Great Expectations

For 2025, let’s put our trust in our unchanging God

As we close out 2024, many of us look forward to the promise of the new year. The following excerpt is from a prayer by the late evangelist Billy Graham in 2008. Let’s pray together: “Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future.

We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year. ...

Bring our divided nation together, and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that “*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord*” (Ps. 33:12).

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year.

And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come.”



Standing on the Promises

North Carolina worship pastor's family sees miraculous healing of 6-year-old son

Worship Pastor Ronnie Whitaker believes in trusting God's promises. He believed it when he preached on that topic at his church, 1Hope Assembly of God in Sanford, North Carolina. When he spoke, he had no way of knowing how soon his faith would be tested.

The day after his teaching, his son Gabriel fell ill, diagnosed just two days later with RSV and the flu. The Whitakers expected a quick recovery, but the situation worsened, ending in surgery to remove the fluid now surrounding one of Gabriel's lungs. During his hospital stay, he improved at first, then started another time of rapid decline.

"The doctor looked at us and said, 'Prepare to make some weighty decisions later today, and we couldn't even bring ourselves to ask him what that meant,'" Whitaker says.

For him, what that meant was prayer. Dropping to his knees at his son's bedside, he claimed the promises he had taught about. Suddenly, the fluid around Gabriel's lungs drained at a new and rapid rate. By the next day, all the boy's symptoms began to subside, and he was released from the hospital three days later. At just 6 years old, his testimony to others is "God is always there for you."



Michael Brown

Brownsville Revival Yields Multi-generational Fruit

Michael L. Brown, known as one of the leaders of the Brownsville Revival, which took place in Pensacola, Florida, from 1996-2000, has a word to say to critics of the movement. "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16a, NKJV). In this case, the fruits point not to false prophecy but to a genuine revival experience.

Brown recounts the story of several graduates of his FIRE School of Ministry, birthed out of the revival, who have served in international missions for more than 20 years. One, a youth pastor, struggled with porn and had to resign from ministry prior to a life-changing experience at Brownsville. There, he "experienced deep repentance and complete deliverance, graduated from our ministry school and has now served on the mission field with his family in Asia for more than 20 years," Brown says. In addition, two of the man's daughters now serve as missionaries in Japan and the Philippines, respectively.

But this is not the only example of multigenerational fruit. The first missionaries from the school have served in Mexico for the past 25 years, with all their children now serving the Lord as well.

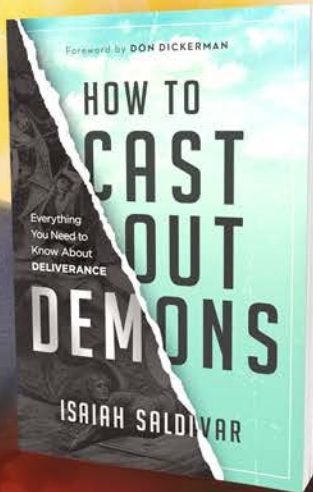
"This is God's answer to the critics and mockers," Brown says. "This is the lasting fruit of a true move of God."



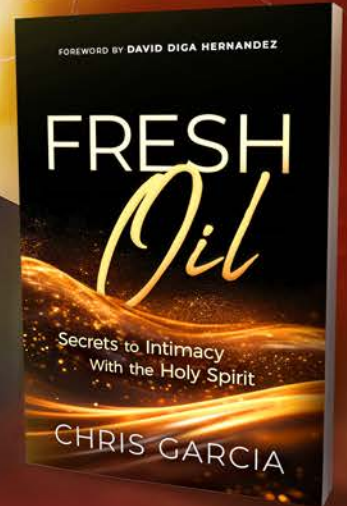
Pastor Ronnie Whitaker and his family. Gabriel (bottom) experienced God's miraculous healing

RONNIE WHITAKER | FACEBOOK | NANCY BROWN

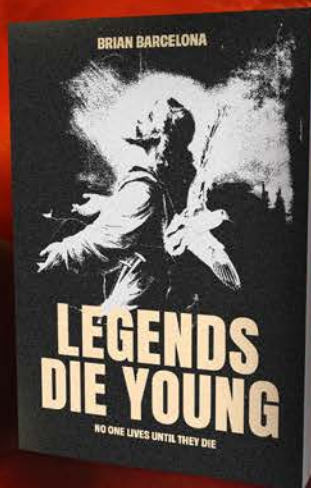
Embrace the Spirit This Fall Season



Stop sitting on the sidelines and confront the evil plaguing our world today! With practical steps, you will be empowered to do the works of Jesus from casting out demons to healing the sick.



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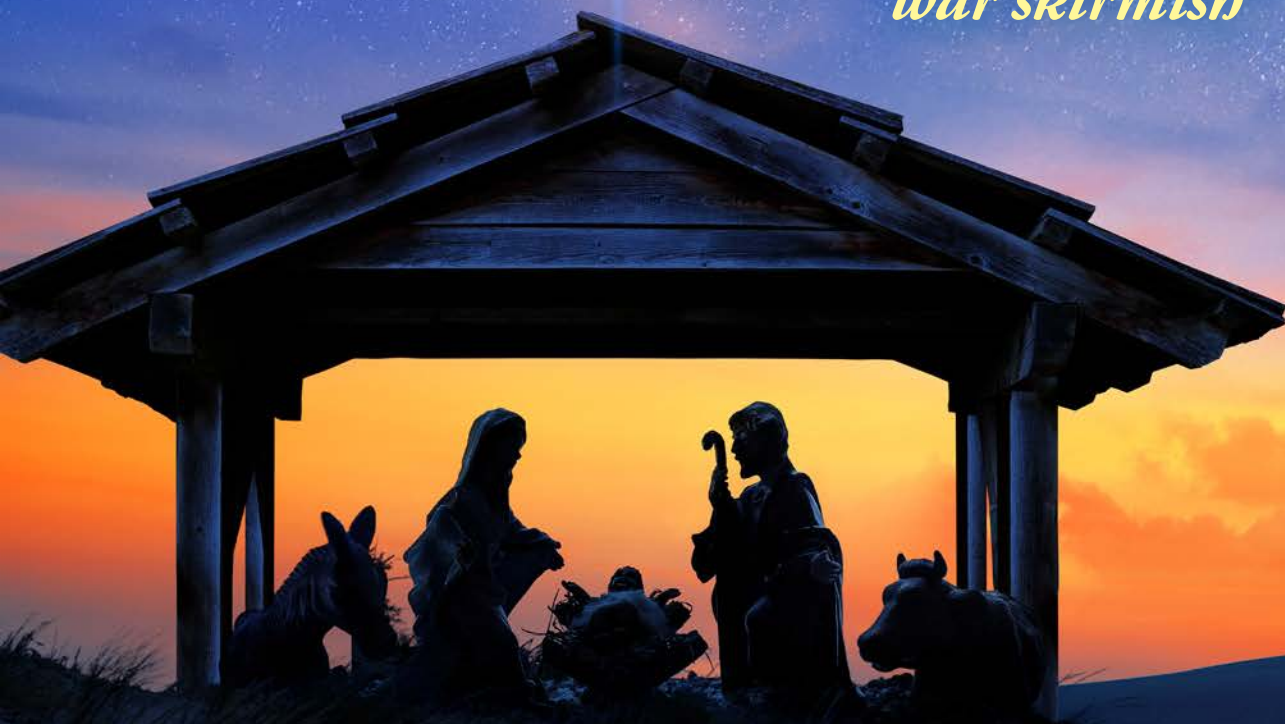
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through the HOLIDAYS

BY DOUG STRINGER

The Light of the world has come! His coming is what we celebrate at Christmas. From the very start, His light drew people who hungered for truth from far and wide.

There has been a lot of discussion about what day of the year Jesus was actually born. The truth is, we may not know the exact day when He was born, but we do know that He was born, He lived, He was crucified and He rose again.

Removing God from Public Display

Statistics say the majority of Americans are favorable to public displays of the Ten Commandments, nativity scenes and other Judeo-Christian and Christmas themes. Yet, it seems there is a minority who are proactively using

the letter of the law to coerce the majority to cower to the beliefs of the few, banning any mention of God in public.

Increasingly over the last few decades, there has been an intentional attempt to remove any semblance of Christ, Christianity, even *CHRIST*-mas from the public square. Sadly, over the years we have seen the affect even in the church. There has been a gradual removal of anything deemed offensive to the very few, even at the behest of the majority.

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting and ministering with Stephan Tchividjian, the eldest grandson of Billy Graham. One of the things I remember Stephen saying was, “Rules without relationship leads to rebellion.” This explains what we see happening more and more in our nation today, as those who have no





“Joy to the world,
the LORD
has come!”

relationship with the God of the Commandments have rebelled to the point of opposing any representation of Him in the public arena.

You may remember that in 2012, during the National Convention of one of the two major political parties in Orlando, there was a vote to reinstate God back into their party platform because He had been removed. It took three different votes to pass the measure, but even the third time, there was much dissension.

Who ever thought there'd be a struggle in our nation to reinstate God? Wow! The good news is that it doesn't take God three times to force a consensus to reinstate us into His platform. Our triune Holy God is already in agreement with Himself. No confusion there.

The tragic removal of God from the public arena has been seen in many places in various ways. Back In 2004, a judge ruled that a Bible had to be removed from a public display from an old monument in front of the Harris County civil courthouse lawn. The monument and Bible display had been there since 1956 honoring Businessman and Philanthropist, William Mosher. Mosher was honored with a small lighted display case in front of the courthouse for his contributions to the Star of Hope Mission, which has served thousands of homeless, desperate, and destitute individuals and families in the city of Houston throughout the years.

The display, which was maintained

by private funds and individual citizens, included a King James Bible, honoring Mosher's faith and love for the Lord, which compelled him to do the work of ministry to others. A judge in 2004 ruled that the Bible must be removed from the display after an individual complained that a Bible displayed on public property was unconstitutional.

In 2011, at the Veterans National Cemetery in Houston, one rogue director censored the language of pastors and chaplains saying that they could not mention God during funerals for veterans. Local veterans and volunteer groups had accused cemetery officials of banning them from using religious speech—including the words Jesus and God, even statements to family like “God Bless you”, during services at the cemetery.

How outrageous! I shudder when I think about how many men and women buried there were people of faith who gave their very lives to defend our freedoms—including the freedom of faith which was now being stripped from them in their final resting place. My grandfather and biological father are both buried in that very cemetery, having served this nation proudly.

Remember the Reason for the Season

Despite many examples of the erosion of the values and freedoms we hold dear, I believe the majority

of people in our nation, regardless of their faith, respect and cherish the Christian values and foundations that they have benefited from. People around the world celebrate, in some capacity, the Christmas season, even if they do not truly understand the significance of why they are doing so. That is why it's important for us as the Church to reflect and demonstrate the true meaning, or as the saying goes, “The Reason for the Season.”

We Three Kings, written by John Henry Hopkins Jr in 1857 for a Christmas pageant, is said to be one of the first Christmas carols written in America that became widely popular. It may even be one of your favorite Christmas carols! Scripture, however, does not refer to kings but rather “magi” or “wise men,” and we are not given a headcount as to how many of them there actually were. But we do know they travelled for up to two years, possibly, following a light in the sky that led them to Jesus. And they brought gifts fit for a king.

Nested in the middle of the Christmas story was the mystery of Jesus' life: Even though He was a king, He was born to die, that we may live.

From the Manger to the Cross

In 2003, we saw the story of the crucifixion minister to thousands throughout the nation and around the world from a surprising source—Hollywood—with the release of Mel Gibson's production of *The Passion of the Christ*. With the movie's graphic depiction of what the suffering Jesus endured for the joy set before Him—our salvation—came a new realization for many of the reality of the crucifixion. For others, the movie generated questions. As the cover of one national magazine boldly inquired, “Did Jesus really have to die?”

Even with the controversy surrounding the graphic violence involved in the scourging and death of Christ, an R rating would not be sufficient to accurately portray the extent of His suffering, from the physical pain of the beatings to the emotional pain and loneliness of betrayal. Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment and considered the most humiliating and brutal way to die. The

word *excruciating* did not exist until a word was needed to describe the pain of death by crucifixion.

I remember reading a description of what Jesus most likely went through from a medical perspective, written by the late Dr. C. Truman Davis. Each time I read it, I still get deeply gripped of heart and moved to tears with the revelation of Christ's love and sacrifice for us.

It is impossible to have a strong foundation as a Christian unless we have a revelation of the passion of Christ, the work of the cross, and the power of the Resurrection and how it can transform our lives today. Without that understanding, we are apathetic believers at best. But that revelation changes everything!

In some circles and especially in our western culture, we have heard about the cross so often that the thought of our sins that put Him there does not still break our hearts or ignite a burning passion of gratitude within us. We sometimes take for granted the high cost of love that was displayed upon the Cross for us. We tend to put more focus on "self" rather than fixing our eyes on the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The timeliness of the message of the cross cannot be overstated. We need it more than ever. We need to be rekindled in heart with a renewed revelation of the work of the cross and the Holy Spirit's power that is available to each of us. From Genesis to Revelation, from the beginning to the closing of scripture, we read of the Tree of Life, the fullness of life through Christ, revealed in full display on the Cross, that we may have life and life more abundantly.

From the manger to the cross, we see the scarlet thread of God's love and redemption revealed.

He Dwells Among Us

It is important, not only during the Christmas season but throughout the year, to reflect the Light of the world, who became man over 2000 years ago. Because He is the Word who dwells among us, we have a joy and a strength beyond human comprehension. We have peace that surpasses all understanding. May we, the church, let our light shine in such a way that it draws others close to the Lord, like the star over Bethlehem

and drew the Magi. May we be an example to those around us so they too can find their faith, hope, peace, and joy in the midst of their difficulties.

Jesus is the Word who dwells among us, and He is the Light of the World. Oh, how we need a whole lot of light in the darkness!

Joyful Expectation

The four weeks leading up to Christmas are known as Advent, a word defined as "the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event." The primary themes of Advent are hope, faith, joy,

Hope came into the world as the Word who dwells amongst us.

Today, the world needs the light of Christ like never before. He loved us so much that He gave Himself to us that we might live in His Word, know His Word, share His Word, and be a witness of His light to a world that desperately needs Him.

In a world of difficulty that seems to be covered with darkness, this season gives us an opportunity to boldly declare the miracle of God, the birth of Christ! We have the Light of the World living in us! It should permeate our lives and



peace, and love. To Christians, Advent is about anticipation, not only for the first coming but also for the second coming of the Lord.

We can't just look at where we've come from, we can't live encamped in the past. We have to focus on the future with an expectation that God will fulfill His promises.

Light Has Come

The Jewish traditions observed in Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, shares some similarities with Advent. Hanukkah celebrates a time when there was only enough oil to keep the lamp in the Temple lit for a few hours, but it lasted for eight full days as the Jews fought to reclaim the Temple from the Greek-Syrians. Then they celebrated the miracle God did for them by providing this light. And during Advent, we celebrate the miraculous birth of Jesus, the Light of the World.

radiate from us to those around us. A little light in a dark room illuminates the entire room.

It is time to remember the promises and the great miracles God has done, the great miracles God is doing, and the great miracles God will continue to do. We need to share our hope, faith, joy, and peace because the Light has come into the world and the Word dwells amongst us!

Joy to the world, the Lord has come! 4

DOUG STRINGER is founder and president of *Somebody Cares America/International*. As an American of Asian descent, Doug is considered a bridge-builder of reconciliation amongst various ethnic and religious groups. He is a sought-after international speaker, addressing topics such as persevering leadership, reconciliation, community transformation, revival and more. He is host of *A Word in Season* with Doug Stringer & Friends, posted weekly on the *Charisma Podcast Network*.

| PROPHETIC



TOP 5

Prophetic Stories of 2024

Here's what Holy Spirit was doing this year



BY JAMES LASHER

The year 2024 has been a historic, and prophetic, year that seemed to fly by in the blink of an eye.

No corner of culture was spared the unprecedented wave of events that marked the past year, and massive change has come to not just America, but to the world.

God is moving, and we are seeing the evidence of this all around us. From college campus revivals breaking out to the historic reelection of Donald Trump as President of the United States, here is a brief breakdown of major events that took place in 2024.

1. Donald Trump Wins the 2024 Presidential Election in a Landslide

Donald Trump's win is the biggest political comeback in modern history. As the country has become less moral and lurched toward socialism in recent decades, millions of Americans (including most Bible-believing Christians) have had enough. We prayed that God would change the downward direction by giving us a leader who would change the course. God answered with a decisive win for Trump, whose life God spared—twice!—for such a time as this.

There is a spiritual aspect to this election that most in the media ignore. They focus on issues they think swung the election—the economy, the border crisis and foreign policies. But they ignore the fact that millions of us consider abortion murder; that we refuse to allow the ever-growing list of perversions to be crammed down our throats; and that we just resent the ungodly trend

toward more government that manifests itself in so many ways.

Those who oppose Trump also oppose what we believers consider to be godly values. Trump famously once said, “They aren’t against me, they are against you, I’m just in the way.” They called Donald Trump a fascist and those of us who support him ‘deplorable,’ ‘nazi’ and this time, ‘garbage.’

Trump’s election is a fulfillment of prophecy which is documented in Stephen E. Strang’s book *God and Donald Trump*. Ten years before Trump announced his first candidacy, Kim Clement and others said God was going to raise up someone who would not be a praying man when he went into the White House, but would become a man of prayer. In other words, as imperfect as Trump may be by evangelical standards

“Now is the time for the church to step forward and fulfill the Great Commission, sharing the love and message of Jesus Christ with a world in need of hope and truth.”

of behavior, God would use him for His purposes.

There’s so much that must be done. At least now, we have a reprieve. And we know that in the same way God spared Trump’s life on July 13, God has spared America on Nov. 5. But our work is just beginning. It’s more than making America great again. We must work and believe that America can be godly again.

2. God Cleaning His Church Out of Sinful Leadership

Are principalities and powers behind the timing of some of the controversies coming out of Dallas megachurches?

Within just a few months, we’ve seen famous pastors and their megachurches in the Dallas, Texas, area come out with controversy and scandal; from Tony Evans stepping down from Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship due to “sin,” to Robert Morris of Gateway Church confessing “inappropriate sexual behavior with a young lady,” the number of leaders falling continues to grow. While not in the same area, we also saw the founder of the International House of Prayer Kansas City,

Mike Bickle, fall from leadership due to sexual acts, including with a minor, that happened years ago.

The falling of these pastors from leadership roles due to sin shows that perhaps there is more happening behind-the-scenes than we may think in a genuine and spiritual way. If we look at the state of Texas, it is a place of major influence for our entire nation. It is also the border to our nation where there is a real crisis related to immigration. Do these cases speak directly to how careful we are supposed to be with what we allow into our lives?

As we approach the return of Jesus, there will be a real falling away, a separation of wheat from chaff. In a 2024 prophetic word with Charisma Media, Bishop Alan DiDio said that this year would be a year of a changing guard that

had to do with “mega pastors.”

“There is coming in 2024 mega pastors, not all; there are many wonderful mega pastors, but mega pastors who are more concerned about the crowd and appeasing the populace than they are about speaking the prophetic word of God,” DiDio said.

“There’s going to be a lot of dog whistles if you will within the Christian community where people are signaling that they’re on the side of Saul...so there’s a changing of the guard that’s taking place right now and the body of Christ is to make a decision of what side of the line we’re going to be on because judgment’s going to fall on the ignorant if they’re unprepared,” he continued.

The moment has come for darkness to be exposed by the light, and those who are committed first and far most to the Lord will stay committed to Him regardless of what news breaks about their favorite pastors and churches.

3. The Return of the Red Heifer and End Times Implications

The Bible story of the red heifer is

found in the Old Testament in Numbers, chapter 19. The red heifer is a ritual element in the Jewish tradition’s purification process. God instructed Moses and Aaron to raise a red heifer unique in that it was required to be completely red and without blemish.

The purification ritual procedure involved sacrificing the red heifer outside the camp, then burning its carcass with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet material. The ashes were mixed with water and used in the ceremonial purification ritual. One of the last pieces needed to restore the third temple is the ashes of a pure, red heifer.

Having a pure, of age, red heifer is an indicator for Christians that these days are fast approaching. Evil is permeating the world just like in the days of Noah, perhaps even more so with how wickedness seems to manifest every week across every sphere from entertainment media to government to academia.

No, we do not believe as the Jews do in the purification through the blood of the red heifer. We believe in the purification through the blood of the Lamb. But these things must come to pass before the return of Jesus Christ.

4. The Rapid Increase in Supernatural Events

In a recent interview with Charisma Media, renowned author and researcher L.A. Marzulli leapt into the topic of supernatural portals and their connection to the biblical promised land of Israel. Known for his expertise in the fields of the paranormal and spiritual warfare, Marzulli raises concerns about the spiritual battle that exists both in the natural and supernatural realms.

“There are gateways and portals over the promised land, there’s no doubt about that,” Marzulli states, emphasizing that these openings allow entities to pass through from other realms. He draws a direct connection between the supernatural activity in Israel and the spiritual forces described in the Bible. “Just like there are gateways and portals in other places on the Earth, this is how these entities pass through.”

Through 2024 there were both natural phenomena, such as the Great North American Eclipse along with earthquakes

and wildfires, and supernatural signs and wonders that Marzulli references in the book of Daniel to provide a biblical foundation for his claims. He points to Daniel 10:13, where an angel sent to deliver a message to Daniel is delayed for 21 days by the “prince of Persia,” a demonic territorial spirit. Marzulli believes that similar spirits are still active in regions like Iran and Gaza today. “There are territorial spirits,” he explains. “The Bible tells us who the Prince of Persia is. I would posit that the Prince of Persia is still operating.”

He further connects these supernatural events to the ancient Nephilim, the hybrid offspring of fallen angels and human women mentioned in Genesis 6:4. Marzulli also touches on the significance of the Middle East in biblical prophecy, specifically highlighting Damascus and its connection to the last days.

Believing the turmoil in the region is tied not just to geopolitical tensions but also to spiritual forces at work, Marzulli suggests that ancient portals in the Middle East may be linked to the Nephilim, influencing human history throughout the ages.

“I think these portals are ancient and have been used to access our world by beings that have influenced human history,” Marzulli explains. He warns that the escalating spiritual war is directly connected to events unfolding in this region, namely Israel’s war with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, emphasizing the need for believers to remain vigilant as these signs align with the fulfillment of end-time prophecies.

5. Revivals Across America

Students at Texas A&M Corpus Christi are rejoicing at the joy and salvation being found on campus.

A student event hosted by New Life Church and the New Life Young Adults ministry saw “nearly 1,500 students” attend and 62 baptisms take place, according to New Life pastors Mike and Bonnie Fehlauer’s Facebook post.

New Life Young Adults Pastor Tarik Whitmore detailed how his message to those gathered was focused on Isaiah 6, which details the “conviction, cleansing and commissioning that follows a genuine encounter with God.”

“This was followed by testimonies from students and former students—sharing how God saved them, set them free, healed them physically and is now using them to change the lives of others,” Whitmore shared.

This magnificent surrendering to God by America’s young people is a continuation of the movement that has been taking place in greater numbers ever since the Asbury Awakening in February 2023. Just a week before the event held at Texas A&M took place, members of The Ohio State football team held a similar event the group had been praying over for a long time.

As previously reported by Charisma News on the event at Ohio State, “The number of those in attendance varies, with some reports claiming 800-1,000 people, and others saying some 2,000 attended the spiritual awakening.

“We were praying for years and years for an event like this, and we were praying with expectation—we serve a miracle-working God,” Ohio State wide receiver Emeka Egbuka says. “So we definitely had an expectation when it came out, but God did increasingly and abundantly more than what we thought. So, we’re just so blessed and thankful.”

Looking Ahead to 2025

We are living in prophetic and accelerated times, and thank the Lord He has granted America a period of reprieve. Now is the time for the church to step forward and fulfill the Great Commission, sharing the love and message of Jesus Christ with a world in need of hope and truth. Just as Christ showed us His love through sacrifice and compassion, the church must embody that same love in action and word, reaching out to the lost, the hurting and the overlooked. This calling is not just a duty but a profound privilege, empowering us, His church, to be His hands and feet, carrying the message of salvation to every nation, just as Jesus commanded. ◀

JAMES LASHER is staff writer and copy editor at Charisma Media. His first book, *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man’s Commentary*, will debut in October 2025.

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.



Witness how the Lord shows up in miraculous ways this Christmas season.



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RECLAIMING YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM THE ENEMY



Banish the enemy's lies and escape his imaginary prison cell

BY DON COLBERT, MD

Let me expose one of the enemy's most devious and effective strategies to drain the power from our lives. After causing us to look back in regret, he then partners with our own consciences to condemn us! In this way he uses our God-given internal compasses against us. Our consciences are designed to keep us in God's will, but the enemy twists the signals they are sending and interprets them as condemning us.

His Perfect Design & Purpose

God graciously endowed every human being with an internal guidance system called the conscience. It's an internal security system that sounds the alarm whenever we step out of the love walk and harbor deadly emotions such as bitterness, lust, envy, anger, and any other sinful attitude or behavior. Our consciences blare at us to quit the offending behavior and jump back into the river of God's love. As John the apostle put it, "our heart condemns us" (1 John 3:20). If we don't repent of the wrong we are doing, we begin to feel shame, blame, and guilt instead of love, peace, joy, and so on. Our hearts condemn us because our consciences are trying to rescue us from the tormentors. Love and condemnation do not work together. One has to go; the other will reign supreme.

This is why Paul wrote so often about the conscience. One time he was giving his testimony, and "looking earnestly at the council, [he] said, 'Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day'" (Acts 23:1, emphasis added). On another occasion he said, "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16, emphasis added). In his letter to the Romans, he said even people who have not yet heard the gospel have experienced a level of God-given awareness of the principles of righteousness, "their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them" (Rom. 2:15, emphasis added).

He wrote about being subject to ruling authorities "for conscience' sake" and about brothers and sisters in the Lord who have a "weak conscience" (Rom. 13:5; 1 Cor. 8:12). He wrote of having a "good conscience," a "pure conscience" (1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9), and even said, "But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2, emphasis added). It is possible to "sear" our consciences and to "cleanse" them (1 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 9:14). It is possible

to have an "evil" conscience—that is, one made accustomed to wrongdoing (Heb. 10:22). Peter wrote of the nobility of believers suffering unjustly, "For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Pet. 2:19, emphasis added).

The work of our consciences is good, but when the enemy is able to warp what our consciences are telling us, turning them from a righteous warning to a merciless judgment, he employs God's own weapon against our minds and bodies. This quickly turns to self-hatred, which erodes the health of even committed Christians.

A study in *Psychological Reports* looked at the effect of self-directed compassion on the relationship between bitterness and depression. More than 300 participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their forgiveness, the level of grace and love they held toward themselves and their levels of depressive symptoms. Results showed that the more compassion and forgiveness we hold toward ourselves, the less depression we experience and the easier we find it to forgive others.

The authors of that study had discovered a biblical truth: that the antidote for self-condemnation is confidence toward God. A powerful passage in 1 John 3:20–24 (KJV) shines a bold light on the method of escape from this deceptive plan: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

Notice the specific steps to overcoming this common problem:

We recognize that our hearts are condemning us.

We declare that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

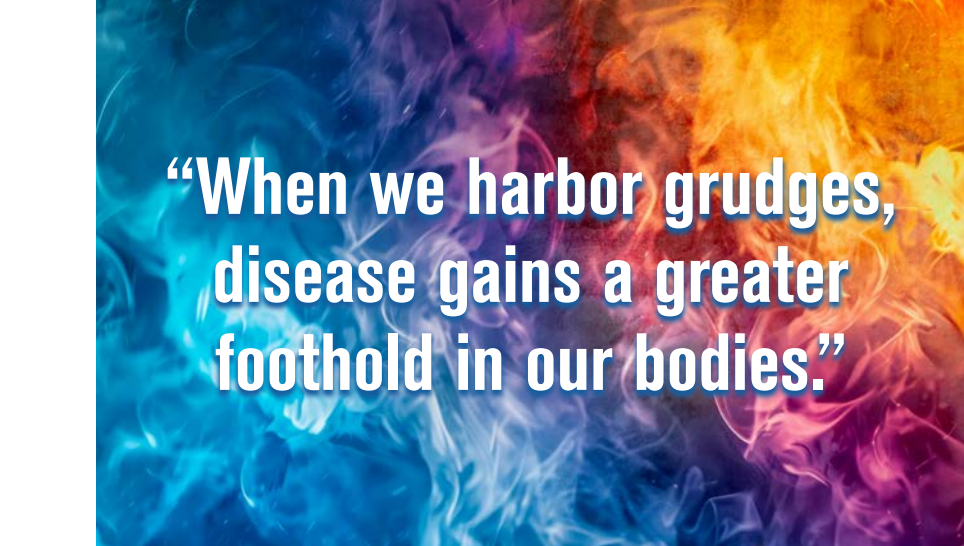
We have confidence toward God.

We know that we will receive any good thing we ask of Him.

Our part of the deal is to walk the love walk by keeping His commandments and doing the things that are pleasing in His sight.

The primary ways of staying in the love walk are believing in Jesus Christ and loving each other.

continued »



**“When we harbor grudges,
disease gains a greater
foothold in our bodies.”**

By keeping these commands, we dwell in Him, and He in us.

We know for certain that He abides in us because we have His Spirit.

As a result, we stop experiencing needless condemnation from our consciences! This is an amazing way to banish the enemy’s accusations and a powerful principle we can apply in many areas of our lives daily. If you have fallen into a cycle of condemnation, holding on to bitterness and self-hatred (or any other sinful habit), then instead of entertaining fiery darts of the devil—which encourage resentful thoughts—cast those thoughts out. Philippians 4:6–8 says we are not allowed to worry about anything. If a thought occurs to us that does not conform to the qualifications of the love walk, cast it out! Do not tolerate it for one minute.

Forgiveness = Breaking Bitterness

Multiple studies have confirmed the life-giving effects of forgiving ourselves and others and the fact that bitterness is disastrous for the body, mind and emotions. Bitterness causes stress, and stress interferes with normal, healthy body processes. Stress hormones can inhibit a process called *autophagy*, which kills diseased cells and prevents them from spreading. That means when we harbor grudges, disease gains a greater foothold in our bodies. Chronic stress also increases the production of certain growth factors that increase in our blood supply, which can speed the development of cancerous tumors.

We literally decide moment by moment what our physical health will

be. Approximately 15 minutes after the onset of stress, cortisol levels rise, and they remain elevated for several hours. Stress can also enhance weight gain and fat deposition through changes in feeding behavior. Chronic stress is known to alter the patterns of how people eat, their dietary preference and the rewarding properties of foods.

When we entertain stressful thoughts, we shape our mental and physical health. It’s as simple as that. But when we flood our minds with thoughts of mercy and forgiveness, it enhances our health in every regard. Dodie Osteen, wife of the late, great John Osteen and mother of Joel Osteen, told me years ago about how she had to forgive others as part of her supernatural healing from stage IV liver cancer, during which doctors gave her just a couple of months to live.

Some people discover that the one they have to “forgive” is God. Many people, including Christians, hold grudges against God even though He has never done anything wrong. He brings life, not death, yet people still say foolish things like, “God gave my mom cancer to teach her a lesson.” That is just bad theology. God is not a child abuser. He loves us and heals us. It is Satan who steals, kills and destroys, Jesus revealed (John 10:10).

Satan’s goal is to tear us down in every area of life, but research confirms that God’s antidote of forgiveness impacts our health very positively in three major areas: physical, mental and social (relational).

I am reminded of a profound truth shared by Holocaust survivor Corrie ten Boom in her book *Tramp for the Lord*. Of her fellow concentration camp survivors, she wrote the ones able to forgive

Nazi forces were the ones able to return to normal life after the war.

Prayer and Declarations

God, I commit to forgive quickly and fully. I will not hold on to bitterness and let my heart condemn me. I choose to exercise my forgiveness regularly so that forgiveness becomes part of my love nature. Only in You am I able to walk this through. Express Your mercy through my thoughts, attitudes, and actions today. Help me never to slip back into resentment. I also banish self-hatred, which has corroded and corrupted my inner life for too long. Lord, I love myself as You love me. You made me to be a carrier of Your love! I embrace my original identity in You as a fearfully and wonderfully made—and now redeemed—child of God. In Jesus’ name, amen.

I will not fall into the trap of the enemy to use my conscience to condemn me. When I sense God’s righteous correction, I will repent and change my behavior, walking free of the enemy’s accusations.

I will not hate myself but will see myself as God sees me—as a cherished child, strong and mighty unto great works, forgiven and righteous before Him by the blood of the Lamb.

Divine Health In the End Times

God’s plan for believers in all times is that we walk in greater and greater health, even if we are present on earth during the great falling away. The Bible indicates many times that when things worsen around us, Christians only grow brighter and stronger. Paul said that when the culture around us becomes crooked and perverse, Jesus’ followers “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). God’s love imparts not only spiritual health but the highest level of physical and mental health. For believers who walk in love with Jesus and others, wellness will actually accelerate as we near the end of the age. In a famous passage, Paul wrote beautifully about how believers act and speak in the power of God’s love. “Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech,” he began, indicating a vibrancy and robustness inside and out (2 Cor. 3:12). He continued a few verses later, “Now the Lord is the

Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” (v. 17). Christians usually spiritualize this verse to mean liberty in worship, but this liberty is all-encompassing and includes things like freedom of physical movement, facility of thought and freedom from emotional or mental shackles or weights. Paul then added, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord,” (v. 18, emphasis added). How amazing is that? As we walk “by the Spirit” we go “from glory to glory.” This is why the writer of Hebrews could confidently encourage us, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus,” (Heb. 12:1–2). While others are falling apart, love-fueled believers will be running at marathon levels!

While darkness and dysfunction may increase, light and glory will always increase for those who accept God’s love. We will again see days like those of Charles Finney, when entire cities were converted through his revival meetings. We will see out-pourings of the Spirit like the ones described in the book of Acts, but they will be happening all over the globe at the same time.

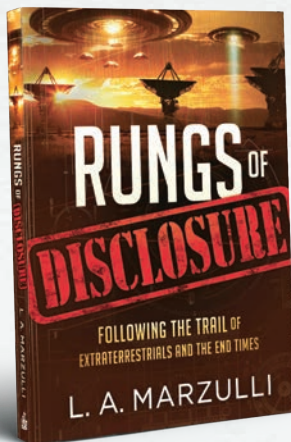
Nothing in all of history can compare to the move of God that will come upon the earth in those last days for all who will receive it—and this revival will include top levels of physical and mental health. Right now, the best thing we can do for our minds, bodies and souls is learn to walk in the empowering, cleansing, strengthening love of God, which has the power to transform your life in every way. ◀

DON COLBERT, MD, is board-certified in family practice and anti-aging medicine. He has also received extensive training in nutritional and preventative medicine, and he has helped millions of people to discover the joy of living in divine health. In addition to speaking at conferences, he is the author of the New York Times best sellers *The Seven Pillars of Health* and *Dr. Colbert’s “I Can Do This” Diet*. His newest book, *Dr. Colbert’s Spiritual Health Zone*, releases in January and is available now at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



THEY’VE BEEN HERE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, making their presence known in the shadows. In L.A. Marzulli’s *Rungs of Disclosure*, what once was fringe is now reality! While reading, you’ll meet regular people—just like you—who have encountered something beyond their ability to explain. You’ll also hear from people of great faith and deep religious belief who continue to have these strange and deeply unsettling encounters. Find out the answers to these spine-chilling questions:


- Who are they?
- What do they want?
- And why are they here?



Available
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HOW TO STEWARD
YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS
OVER THE
**CHRISTMAS
SEASON**



*Turn those holiday blues
into shouts of praise*

BY KENZA HADDOCK, LPCS, BCPC

The months of November through January are known for months where people experience the highest levels of depression. This type of depression has gained a term called “holiday blues.” That is because it often occurs during the holiday season. Here are four powerful strategies, drawing on both clinical insights and biblical wisdom, to help you stay ahead of and overcome the holiday blues.

#1 Maintain a Routine

I use the term *routine* somewhat loosely because I understand that holidays bring their own slew of hectic schedules: from children being off school to having to go out of town to visit family or host family, which brings on its own type of stress. So often we remain on the defensive side of the holiday season meaning we just take issues as they come rather than remaining on the offensive, as in, looking ahead on our calendar and saying to ourselves, “OK, regardless of what’s going on over the next month or two, I’m going to make sure that I go to bed within one hour of my usual bedtime.” Listen, while it is understandable that you can’t always go to bed at 10 p.m. if that’s your usual bedtime if you have family over or if you’re up baking or wrapping presents and let me preface with this. It’s not getting out of routine one day for one day that may cause a ripple effect of subconscious stress, but rather when you do it on the first day followed by the next day, so one is a fourth.

Promise yourself that regardless of what’s going on throughout the holidays, if you and your spouse, for example, have date nights on Thursdays, stick to those date nights as best as you can. If you miss a Thursday, that’s fine, but get back on track the next week. Remember, we are creatures of habit. When you switch up your routine little by little, if during the winter blues months and the stress of the busy season you give up date nights, then you miss out on your sleep routine, you likely begin to create a domino effect that eventually increases a stress hormone called cortisol; leading to anxiety and depression. The best way to defeat the odds of winter blues is to write down three things that will make sure you continue to maintain your routine during the holidays and stick to them. For me, those three things are: My time with the Lord. So, if I set my schedule to wake up earlier to spend time with the Lord, then that’s going to force me to maintain a consistent sleep schedule, so going to bed within one hour of my usual bedtime no matter how badly I want to finish that movie I started. And number three for me, is making sure I hang out with one loved one whether that’s a friend or a family member during the holiday season just to catch up regardless of how busy I am because of something I normally do throughout the week. What are your three?

#2 Set Healthy Boundaries

I know so many people who say “yes” impulsively, sign up for extra activities or extra service opportunities out of guilt when their plate is already overflowing. Before Christmas gets here, and before you begin putting things on your calendar for the upcoming year and signing yourself up, committing yourself for the next year, I’d like to encourage you to take a step back and commit to praying about whatever decision it is you’re about to make for three days. Because the reality is, the decision is still going to be there for you to make, but what you won’t have to do is sign up, commit yourself, feel overwhelmed for committing yourself or over-committing yourself and then feel guilty for having to back out and/or feeling overwhelmed for not backing out.

So, to skip that whole cycle to begin with and overcome your chances of falling into the holiday blues because of over commitment, take three days and ask the Lord, regardless of how “Christian” the activity or the act may seem, “Lord, is this something you want me to partake in? If so, please give me peace about it. If not, please help me to let go of it.” Psalm 32:8 says “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

continued »

Friend, if hosting extended family members at your house is going to create extra conflict between you and your spouse, then maybe, hosting them is not a good idea. If signing up for extra church activities throughout the year will cause you undue stress then my question to you is “are you trying to carry a load that Jesus didn’t ask you to carry?” Matthew 11:30 says: “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” That’s not to say that the Christian life is easy, but God will never ask you to misplace the priorities He has already given you. As His child, your priorities are: your time with Him number one, your ministry at home number two, and then the rest as He instructs you.

#3 Watch How You Speak to Yourself

We talk to ourselves more than we talk to anyone. In times of stress when we’re trying to get things done or things aren’t going our way, it can be too easy to go down a spiral and turn our negativity inward. Just like you would guard your heart against anyone who would be emotionally toxic to you, it’s important to pay close attention and watch how you speak to yourself and ask yourself: Is the devil using me as my own mouthpiece to put myself down? What I found so often is especially around the holidays, or after the holidays when we have gathered around family members who may have exchanged hurtful words with us before or during the holiday time while we hung out with them, if we don’t take the time to process through that hurt, we may stew on the words they said to us long enough that they become part of our own inner monologue; and that’s not healthy.

You see, you may not be able to control what other people say to you or the backhanded compliments you may receive from aunt Melba or the comments like “you’re not married yet?” From well-intended or maybe not so well-intended loved ones, causing you to cringe every time you see them. You may not be able to help the way your in-law tries to overstep your parenting or the way your family constantly compares

you to your sibling, or maybe even how your husband is treated in comparison to your sister’s. So rather than entering the environment feeling vulnerable, anxious, then coming out feeling filled with inner turmoil, I encourage you to pray. Ask the Lord to guard your heart by the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to give you his peace that surpasses understanding and to pro-

“It can be too easy to go down a spiral and turn our negativity inward.”

tect you throughout the holiday season and beyond. Pray that God will give you discernment in the spirit so that you can tell when the enemy is whispering lies in your ears so as to not receive them. Invest time in God’s Word. Which goes back to point number one: make sure that as you protect your somewhat of a routine, that your routine includes spending time reading about who God says you are.

Over the next few weeks, I encourage you to look up and meditate on these three verses, which talk about who you are God’s love for you.

A) Psalm 103:12 says: “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Which means, it doesn’t matter how many sins came into your relationship with God with, no matter how many mistakes loved ones keep reminding you of. God, who has the ultimate authority over heaven and earth shows that in Jesus, He has forgiven you and therefore you are forgiven.

B) Romans 8:38 and 39 say: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There’s nothing that you’re going through right now that is indicative that God has stopped loving you. Nothing and no one has the power to separate you from God’s love that He

shows you in Christ. No struggle you are enduring right now has the power to separate you from God’s love for you. In times of struggle, you may feel that God is absent from you but remember no power in hell is that powerful. Even if you don’t feel Him with you in the midst of your struggle, remind yourself “God has not left me” because His Word says “He will never leave you nor forsake you,” (Deut. 31:6).

C) John 15:5 says: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” As the new year begins and in the coming months, just remember that there is nothing this world can

offer you that can substitute for the peace and joy you can have in Jesus. Trying to maintain joy and peace without staying connected to Jesus is like watering a branch that’s fallen on the sidewalk, hoping it will come back to life. It won’t work. Instead, stay rooted in God’s Word and get to know Him and what He says about you. If this means reading a version of the Bible that’s easier for you to understand then so be it. Appropriating the truth of God’s Word over your life is how you win the war against a toxic inner monologue.

#4 Reframe Isolation

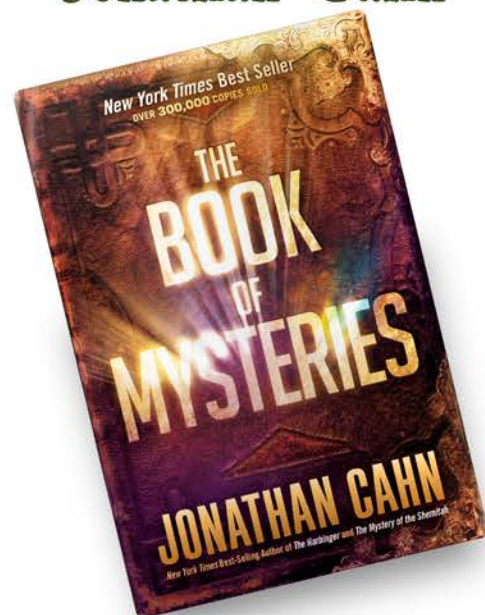
One of the greatest contributors to holiday blues is when we experience periods of isolation. This is especially true if the year has brought on loss of loved ones or we feel estranged from family members. I come across many patients who are estranged from their adult children and during this time, they feel like they’re grieving the loss of their family over and over to the point where they dread the holidays and don’t look forward to the coming year.

In order to stay ahead of this feeling, let’s identify what’s causing it. Is it a lie you’re believing from the enemy of your soul? Study these four lies people often believe when facing isolation and how to address each one in order to reframe them properly.

“God is punishing me”: although as believers, we may bear natural



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consequences of our actions, in Christ, Jesus took our punishment on the cross (Isa. 53:5), and therefore God doesn't sit there and say: "because you did this I'm going to punish you this way." That's not how God works. God's Word says His mercies are new for you each and every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). Which means if you messed up today, you can run to your Father (Heb. 4:16), ask Him to forgive you and to help you to walk in His ways and know with full confidence that He has forgiven you (1 John 1: 9).

"God is mad at me": This is often the result of us projecting how others have treated us onto God. People will fail you day in and day out, but God is faithful to you. In fact, God is so committed to you that in Christ, He put his Holy Spirit within you to keep you from self-destructing. John 14:26-28 refers to the Holy Spirit as the Counselor and the Comforter. If you need comforting, seek His presence. His Word says if you seek Him with all your heart, "you will find me," (Jer. 29:13).

"God has left me": Many of us fall into this pattern of thinking in times of struggle because we feel that the reason we're struggling is because God who is all sovereign has left us. My friend, remember that your relationship with Jesus is not contingent on the absence of struggle, but rather the faithfulness of your heavenly Father who promises to never leave you nor forsake you. Whenever you're tempted to believe God has left you, remember that if God is allowing a struggle in your life, even when it doesn't feel good, trust that He will bring something good out of it. Your enemy the devil doesn't have the final say. God does! This is not our home, heaven is our home. And as awful as what you're going through may be, trust that one day, because of Jesus, you're going to be rejoicing in everlasting glory where there are no tears, no scars and no pain. All because you have a Savior who decided to come down in human form to die on your behalf so that you could have a relationship with Him forever. If that's not love, I don't know what is!

"I'm worthless": don't let the enemy put a damper on your witness by convincing you that your life has no meaning. During holiday blues,

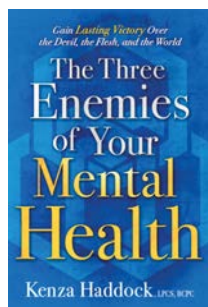
especially in times when you want to just withdraw, remind yourself that there are times when God will set people apart for Himself to use them for His glory. So rather than closing yourself off, ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to use bits and pieces of your testimony to share with someone who needs to hear it. Matthew 9:35-38 talks about how there are plenty of people hungry to hear what God has done in someone's life. I implore you to use this time God has given you free of distraction to wake up ready for Him to present you with opportunity. There are plenty of people who need to hear those bits and pieces of what God has done in your life. You don't need to give a grand speech, all you need to do is be willing to be a vessel for His kingdom and when God works through you, you feel joy that nothing in this world and no one in this world can give you. All you have to do is be a willing vessel and watch how God uses you to inspire others in a way you never thought possible.

Celebrate the Joyful Season

As the holidays approach, get ahead of the holiday blues by maintaining a few key items in your routine that you'll continue to do; set healthy boundaries around your life to make sure you're taking care of yourself; and watch your internal monologue. Finally, remember to pray for opportunities to use your story for His glory! ♣

KENZA HADDOCK, LPCS, BCPC, is a licensed counselor supervisor and clinical trauma specialist with expertise in treating complex mental health conditions through both clinical and biblical methods. A former Muslim, she has been featured in numerous news outlets regarding the intersection of Christianity and mental health counseling. Haddock

and her husband own Oceanic Counseling Group LLC, in South Carolina. Her new book, The Three Enemies of Your Mental Health, is available now at amazon.com.



SMASHING THE DEVIL'S MOST INSIDIOUS WEAPONS

Here's how to confront, neutralize
master the **disappointment** trap

BY BRIAN BARCELONA

What do you do when your pain feels more overwhelming than your faith? What do you do when what you prayed for doesn't just go unanswered but the unthinkable happens? What happens when you see others receive God's breakthrough and you are left with disappointment?

In our disappointments lie the choice to either fall away or continue to follow

Jesus when we are met with great let-downs. I have heard these phrases over the years: "If God was good, then..." or "If God was real, then..." We have attached His goodness and, even worse, His existence to our senses of fulfillment. This means that our disappointments become indicators that He must not be real. We have sometimes linked our happiness and everything working out for

us to God's nature. Conversely, we have attributed our pain to His actions. We have even associated our struggles with fellow believers as being the Father's fault.

Danger Hiding In Plain Sight

Disappointment is by far an underestimated tool in the devil's hand. He uses it as a blinding light to point us away from God. Disappointment, meant to lead us into conversations with God, is a wedge that works its way into the

DISAPPOINTMENT

and
ap

middle of our relationship with God. In our disappointments we often turn to friends, podcasts, or therapists to try to make sense of things that only God can bring peace to.

Situations like deaths and sicknesses become our ammunition either to fall away from or to follow more fervently after Jesus. These events, if not seen through the lens of faith and endurance, will create a view of God as destructive as leaving the faith. Your faith is a home in which you will rest securely knowing your redemption, but its foundation is your views and beliefs. This is why we are to worship the God who made us in His image, not the God we made in ours.

“Fall or follow” is a phrase that came up in a discussion I had about handling disappointments as a Christian. I have witnessed many believers whose faith was shipwrecked because they didn’t know how to process disappointment. The Bible says that nothing can separate us from the love of God, but it never says we can’t willfully walk away from Him (Rom. 8:38–39). I believe more people walk away because of disappointment than we realize. If anybody knew of mistreatment from religious leaders, it was our Savior, Jesus. Sadly, many have chosen not to follow Him anymore because of their own brokenness and the brokenness of others. We are now at a pivotal time when we will either fall or follow.

Our default reactions when we face disappointments or letdowns—or when we think we heard God but our experiences don’t align with what we heard—are often to ignore what happened or to throw a lot of Christian jargon at the situation instead of really facing the realities of what we went through. I am primarily referring to those whose disappointment results from the sensation that God has let them down based on the promises found in His Word. Here are some examples of the types of disappointment I am *not* referring to:

You prayed for God to have you marry an actor, and it didn’t happen.

You asked God to prove Himself by telling Him to knock down a picture from the wall, and that didn’t happen.

You asked God to give you a new pair of shoes for your birthday, and that didn’t happen.

Yes, these situations can cause us to feel disappointed at the moment, but they don’t necessarily lead to a state of deep disappointment within us. These examples don’t fall within the context of God’s will and promises as described in His Word.

Life has a way of throwing curveballs that we never expected. Allow me to share what some of these curveballs can look like. Better yet, I’ll list a few situations that you may be able to relate to that are genuinely disappointing situations we face as believers:

Someone you love gets sick. You pray for them, and they are not healed.

Someone you love was terminally ill; you felt as if God said He was going to heal them,

but they ended up passing away.

You felt as if the Lord was going to restore a relationship or friendship, but it turned south, and you haven’t spoken to the person since.

You felt that God was going to turn around a situation you were in, but instead you had to walk through it.

You felt as if God was going to take away all your depression and suicidal thoughts at the prayer meeting, but you left still battling them.

You feel as though you should have been free from that addiction you were in, but years later you find yourself still repenting.

continued »



“Disappointment is by far an underestimated tool in the devil’s hand.”

WE INEVITABLY WILL ALWAYS TOUCH OUR EMOTIONS

We can get really technical here and delve into all the reasons that we think someone didn't get free—I've heard a lot of them. They didn't pray enough, they didn't fast enough, they didn't read their Bible enough, they weren't serious about their faith, they left open doors to things in the spirit, they didn't break off generational curses from ten generations ago, or they're not tithing or giving. Whatever reason we give, the outcome is the same: The person who is going through whatever they are facing is left with disappointment.

So what do we do when faced with disappointing situations? What do we do when what we thought we believed takes a turn for the worst? How do we navigate deep sorrow and anger in these moments, and how do we start believing in God again when we feel He didn't come through the last time?

The danger of disappointment, if not dealt with, is that it leads believers to unbelief. Enough disappointment over a period of time, if not taken captive and nourished with the Word of God, can lead even the strongest Christians to unbelief. After all, I don't know any other Christians who actually physically walked with Jesus other than the apostles, yet even they found themselves in this place.

Facing Disappointing Situations

Our pain can drive out our faith faster than we grow in it. Have you ever seen someone who followed God—who loved God and even

preached and did mighty works in His name—fall away faster than you could have imagined? Deep sorrow replaces the place in their heart that God once occupied; pain now takes that place. The place where they worshipped and thanked God, the place where they once gave Him glory, is now substituted with their heart, mind, and soul being fixed on the issue before them. Their thankfulness becomes grumbling. Instead of glory ascribed to His name, it becomes accusations like, "That's not what You said." And who God is to us is who He'll be through us. Our lives begin to preach our broken views of God, without words.

Inevitably, disappointment will always touch our emotions. It will create a million scenarios of what could have, should have, and would have been. Disappointment has a funny way of leading us back to Jesus if we let it. When it comes to people who have passed in our lives as Christians, we know this truth: We never truly die. Our bodies are mere space suits that house our spirits.

Navigating our emotions through it can feel as though we're in a tiny boat in a massive ocean during a storm. We quickly turn to survival mode, trying to protect and preserve ourselves from further pain. Self-preservation often becomes our shield and is an outcome

of disappointment. We distance ourselves from areas of disappointment, from the people or groups we were disappointed by, and we even sometimes question or abandon a theology of God we once believed because of a situation or scenario.

I once heard that our emotions are incredible followers but terrible leaders. Disappointment will sometimes try to take the hand of Jesus from the steering wheels of our lives and hand them over to our emotions. In these seasons we must walk by faith and not by sight. (See 2 Corinthians 5:7.) The emotions we sometimes feel with disappointment can be:

- » nervousness to trust,
- » worry or anxiety,
- » regret that we ever trusted,
- » feeling excluded,
- » insecurity,
- » embarrassment for how we believed God,
- » terror to try to believe Him again,
- » hesitancy to move forward,
- » confusion,
- » anger, which can lead to hate and rage when undealt with,
- » hostility toward the Word of God or people wanting to speak truth, and
- » feeling trapped between what we know is true and what we just experienced.

All these feelings are very normal for a human being. Nowhere have I read that Jesus is scared of our emotions. But He does desire to walk us through them. If our emotions were created, then we were never meant to follow them; we are meant to follow the Creator.

Believing God Again

Believing God again can be hard if the concrete of disappointment has settled, and sometimes the only way to lay a new foundation is to completely break apart the old. While that process may be painful, it might be the only option. Believing God again often means facing the realities of our disappointments, embracing them, and embarking on the journey to trust God again. It means accepting that being made new sometimes requires dying to and removing what is old.

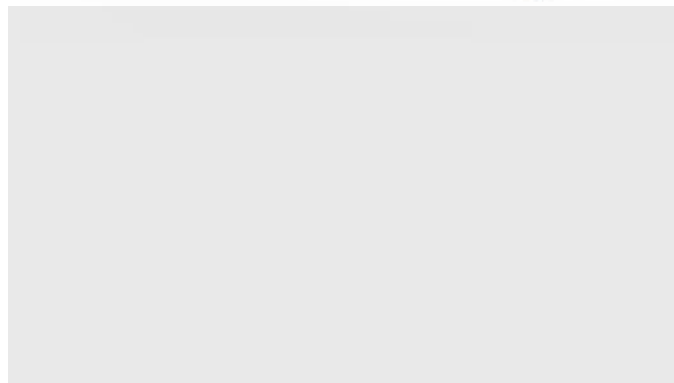
There might be many things you've gone through that have created disappointment, but it's important that as you continue to follow Jesus, you let Him drown those disappointments just as He did the Egyptians. Laying down our lives daily and picking up our crosses also means laying down yesterday's disappointments. There comes a point when we want to believe God again—believe His promises, His goodness, and that He works for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). We want to know that although He didn't cause the issue or the problem, He can surely see us through it.

I've seen disappointment take out so many believers or keep them just attending weekly services but not really living out all that God has for them. I know there is a wave of grace and mercy coming to the body of Christ to lead us out of things we've been enslaved to.

I even feel right now that some of those reading this have disappointments and struggles with sin that have lingered since childhood. There may be disappointment that God can set other people free but not you. But just as Moses came representing the Lord, proclaiming deliverance to the Israelites who thought slavery would be their fate forever, I proclaim to you that deliverance is coming from your disappointments. You will find freedom, and although you might have spent years wandering, there is a promised land that God wants you to walk into. ◀

BRIAN BARCELONA is the founder of *One Voice Student Missions* and *The Jesus Clubs*. Since 2009, Brian has been a leader on the forefront of youth evangelism and is calling the high school students of America to surrender their lives to Jesus and calling the church to our nation's most unreached mission field: public high schools. Since 2020, *The Jesus Clubs* has grown to be a youth movement in the digital space, where millions have heard the gospel and thousands have come to know Jesus. Brian lives with his family and community in Texas. His newest book, *Legends Die Young*, is available at amazon.com now.

JUST BECAUSE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN
BONDAGE, IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO
STAY THERE.

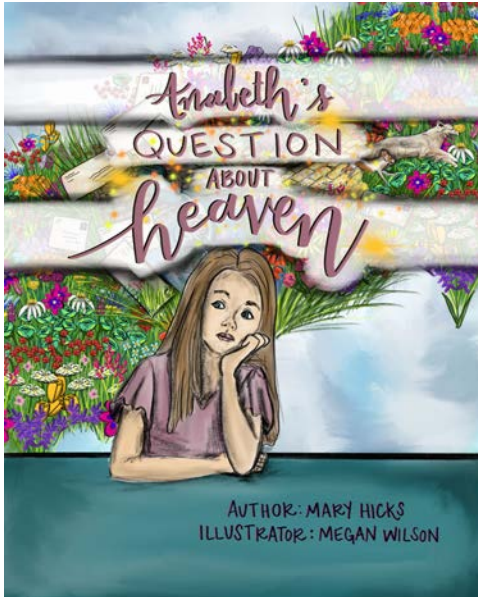


Do you know your purpose in life? In John Ramirez's *Exposing the Devil's Playbook*, we, as believers, are called to stop snoozing and start fighting the good fight! Unlocking your spiritual handcuffs and exposing the devil's schemes is the only way to save our souls. The war has already been waged; **Are you prepared?**

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CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE



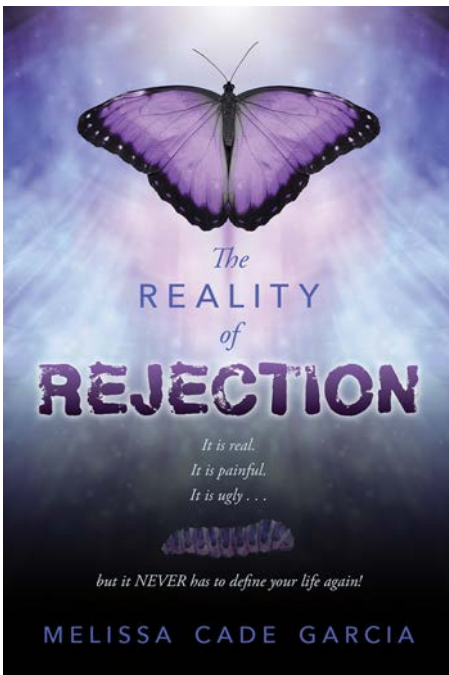
Anabeth's Question About Heaven

Anabeth's Question About Heaven offers a heartfelt glimpse into what heaven might be like for our cherished pets. Anabeth deeply misses her dog, Goldie, and wonders what her life in heaven is like. She prays, asking God this very question, and receives a beautiful and unexpected answer!

A recent top Amazon review from K-Mac82 describes it as “an excellent book for kids of all ages,” saying, “Everyone who has a special family pet needs this book. It’s a beautiful story of a beloved dog, Goldie, and her heavenly experience. This book provides so much comfort, and the illustrations are beautiful. It captivated the attention of both my 4- and 9-year-old boys.”

With a hidden dog paw to find on each page, this story brings comfort and joy to anyone who has ever lost a pet. A perfect gift for the holiday season!

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Transform Your Pain into Purpose with *The Reality of Rejection*

Rejection can leave deep scars that shape every aspect of our lives. In *The Reality of Rejection*, author Melissa Cade Garcia uncovers how hidden wounds can hold us back and offers a powerful path to healing and freedom. Through personal insights and spiritual wisdom, she helps readers recognize the effects of past rejections and find their true worth in God.

This transformative book guides you through understanding rejection, identifying toxic patterns, and stepping into the fullness of who you were created to be. With relatable stories and practical advice, you’ll learn how to overcome emotional wounds, build healthier relationships, and embrace a renewed sense of purpose.

For anyone struggling with the weight of rejection or wanting to support others on their healing journey, *The Reality of Rejection* is an essential read. Ready to reclaim your peace and live free? Join the countless others who have found hope and healing. Order your copy today and start your journey toward freedom!

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Crown & Nails

Crown & Nails is a Contemporary Christian Clothing and Jewelry Brand inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and designed to share the message of the Gospel.

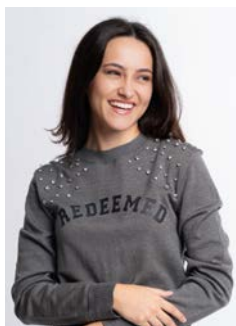
All of our clothing and jewelry designs are modern, trendy, and carry a powerful scriptural message.

Crown & Nails was birth out of my love for Jesus Christ and remembering the sacrifice He made for us.

"Jesus, I say thank you, just like you wore a crown of thorns and nails to set me free I will always remember that heavy price you paid for me." – Aneesa

Crown & Nails offer an array of uniquely custom-designed items for the whole family that will be sure to be the most special Christmas presents ever. Please visit our website for more information.

www.crownandnails.com



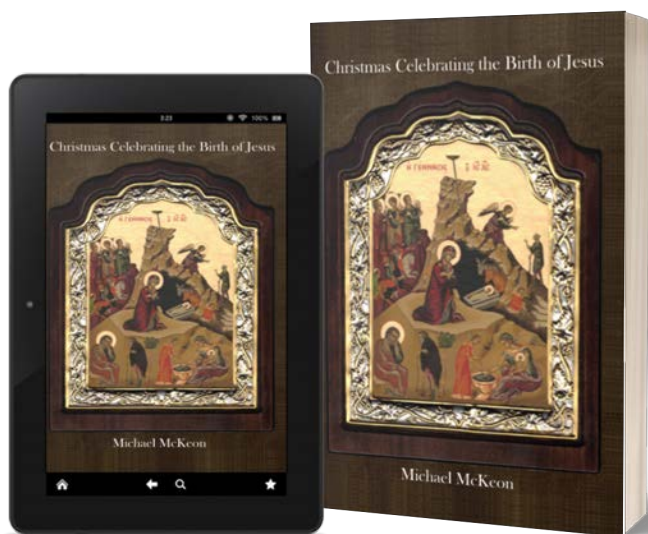
Christmas Celebrating the Birth of Jesus

Christmas Celebrating the Birth of Jesus is a reflection on scripture explaining why Jesus, King of heaven, was born into the world as one of us, fully God and fully human to restore humankind's broken relationship with God.

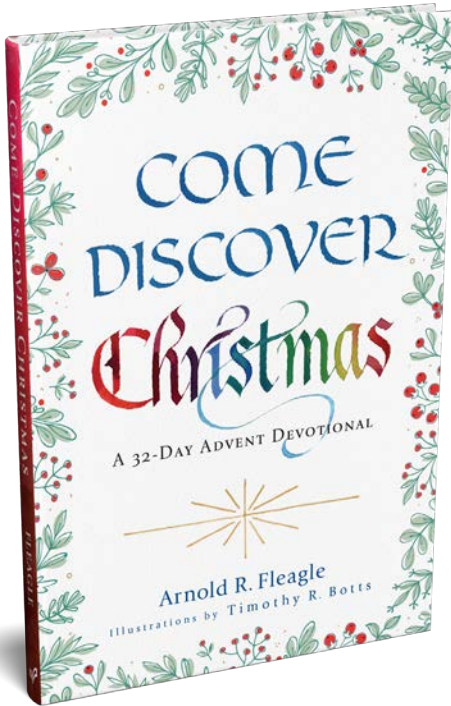
Jesus paid the ransom for our lives. Only He could pay the spiritual debt of our sin through His death and by His blood to redeem people from every tribe, people, and nation into a right relationship with the Father, Himself and the Holy Spirit forever.

e-Books by Michael McKeon Available on Amazon Kindle

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CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE



Rediscover the Joy and Hope of Christmas

This year, breathe fresh wonder and purpose back into the celebration of the Advent. Designed as a road map back to Bethlehem, this captivating devotional takes you on an unforgettable journey through the season.

This season, infuse peace and joy back into your celebrations—and come discover Christmas.

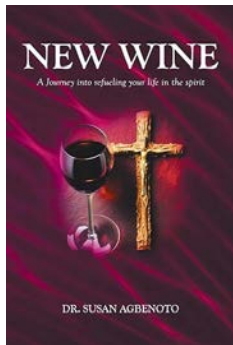
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Thrive Devotional Bible for Women

Our Savior paid too high a price on the cross for us to live powerless lives. *Thrive* was created for woman who desire to know God more deeply and follow Him more closely. Daily devotionals and daily prayers for the reader focus on her identity in Christ; God's purpose and plan for her life; and how to flourish in a faith that is pure, genuine, and life-giving.

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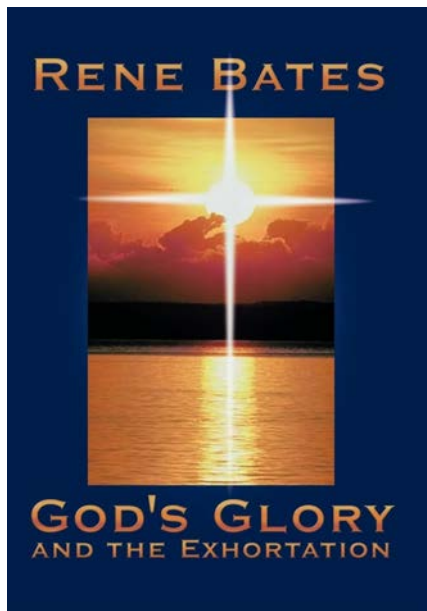
A Gift of Restoration

Whether you are in need of personal restoration or looking for that perfect gift to give, Dr. Susan Agbenoto's *Restore Me!* and *New Wine* are unique reads. *Restore Me! But Privately, Please* is an uplifting book about finding restoration in God through mending the brokenness in the soul. Through these dynamic pages, Dr. Agbenoto has one-on-one sessions with you in the privacy of your home, urging you to take off the mask and release all brokenness to the Lord.

New Wine will provoke you and stir up an insatiable hunger for the extraordinary. Dr. Agbenoto compares phases of life we go through to that of a grape. There are seasons you feel buried, pressed, crushed and even left to 'age.' The end result however is the *New Wine* the Lord is creating in each of us. Interwoven with brief snippets of church history, *New Wine* places you in the midst of what God is doing with the assurance that the best is yet to come!



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THE FINAL TESTAMENT

A Warning from God to the Saved and Lost.

To the Lost: Receive Jesus Now.

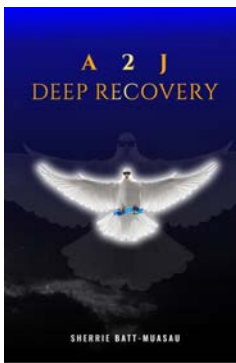
To the Saved: Get Rid of Your "Traditions of Men" Before the Soon Coming of Christ.

God's Glory and the Exhortation is an astute and provocative point of view on the ways and follies of the modern church.

Brother Rene speaks God's truth, refusing to bow to the weight of misguided tradition. His work is in line with the great but opposed prophets of the Old Testament as well as the hard-pressed apostles of the New. His writings bear the same weight of divine wisdom to both bless and course-correct the faithful few.

84% of book owners are giving a 5-STAR RATING on the content of the book.

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A 2 J Deep Recovery

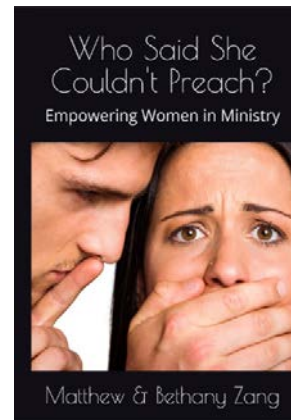
Whether you're struggling with addiction yourself, supporting a loved one through it, or simply seeking transformation in your own life, this book will offer valuable insights and encouragement. Sherrie shares her powerful journey, overcoming sexual abuse, drug addiction, prison, and mental illness to find true freedom and deliverance.

In this book, you'll learn to:

- Break the chains of addiction
- Forgive those who have hurt you
- Deepen your relationship with Jesus
- Build a life-transforming friendship with the Holy Spirit

Discover how to live in grace, peace, forgiveness, and freedom.

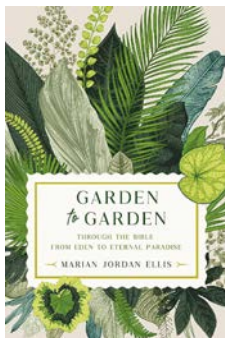
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Who Said She Couldn't Preach?

The longstanding debate over women in ministry has often restricted those who feel called to serve. This book opens with Pastor Bethany sharing her personal journey and challenges of being called to ministry without being empowered to pursue it fully. Pastor Matthew then provides clarity and historical insight into the Scriptures commonly referenced in this discussion, including the passage where Paul seems to instruct women to remain silent in church. Readers will gain a deeper understanding of scriptural context, history, and biblical interpretation—presented in an accessible way that doesn't require a theological background.

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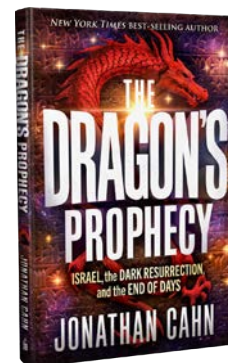


Garden to Garden 30 Days Through the Bible

Garden to Garden is a 30-day devotional journey from the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the Eternal Garden Paradise revealed in Revelation. In just 30 days, readers will discover the full redemption story, learn how all the Bible characters and stories flow together, and how each book of the Bible points to Jesus Christ.

Scripture is God-breathed; by reading it, we discover who we are, why we are here, what happened to us, and our eternal destiny. In *Garden to Garden*, Marian Jordan Ellis walks alongside readers as they experience the Bible through short devotional readings and explains the story arc of God's great redemptive plan. *Garden to Garden* is the perfect gift for mature Believers and seekers.

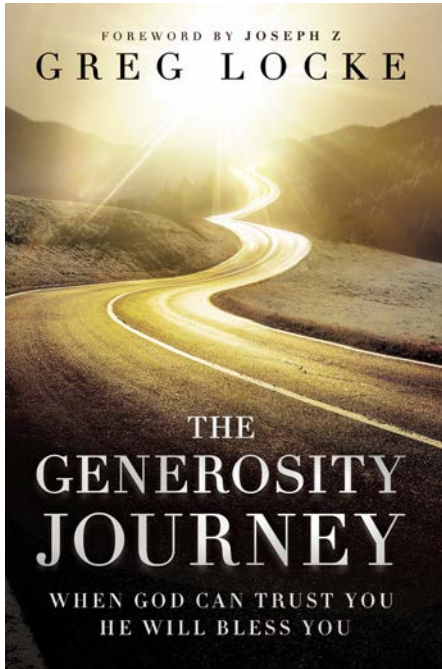
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The Dragon's Prophecy by Jonathan Cahn

Is there more to the world than we see with our eyes, unseen forces and ancient prophecies playing out to the *End of Days*? *New York Times* best-selling author Jonathan Cahn is back with another spiritual bomb to drop in ***THE DRAGON'S PROPHECY: Israel, the Dark Resurrection, and the End of Days***. In this mind-blowing book, your readers will reveal the ancient forces at work transforming our world, the mysteries of the future, and the ancient secrets given to overcome and prevail in view of what lies ahead! Your readers will never be the same after reading this mind-bending revelation!

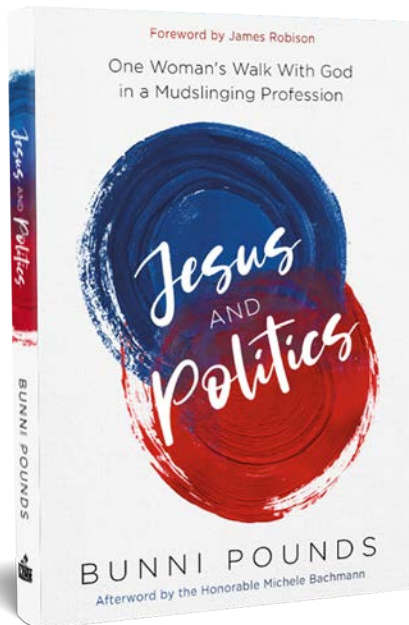
BooksByJonathanCahn.com



The Generosity Journey **by Greg Locke**

Nothing will change a believer's life more than biblical giving. Greg Locke's *The Generosity Journey* shows that generosity is the remedy for materialism and the ultimate game-changer for walking in the abundance and favor of God. Generosity is not just a gift to others but also a weapon in spiritual warfare against the negative influences of the enemy. Through generosity, you *can* and *will* experience spiritual breakthrough! After reading this book, you will not only discover the joy of giving, but you will also receive the extraordinary rewards that comes when you align yourself with God's generous plan for your life. Additionally, you will walk away with the confidence that God will take what you give and do exceedingly and abundantly more with it than you could ever have imagined.

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Jesus and Politics **by Bunni Pounds**

The Christian life isn't about doing things the easy way—it's about living as Christ even in a hostile environment. With Bunni Pounds' *Jesus and Politics*, you will gain insight from Pounds' sixteen-year career in the political atmosphere on how you can disciple a nation one heart at a time. Christians don't have to sit on the sidelines while we see a crumbling world around us, even in the political realm—we can be a light in the darkness to all people, in all situations.

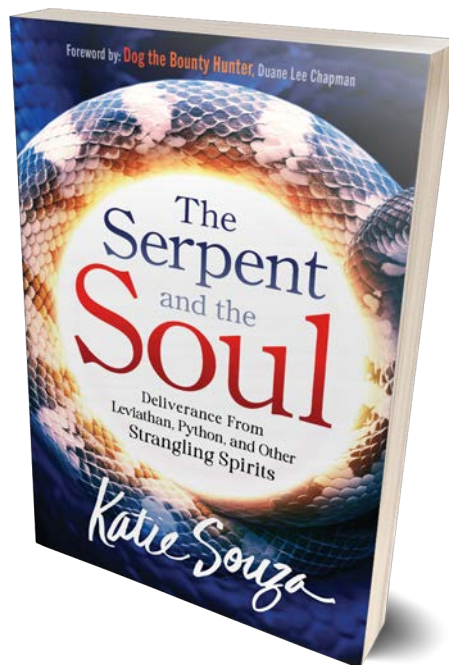
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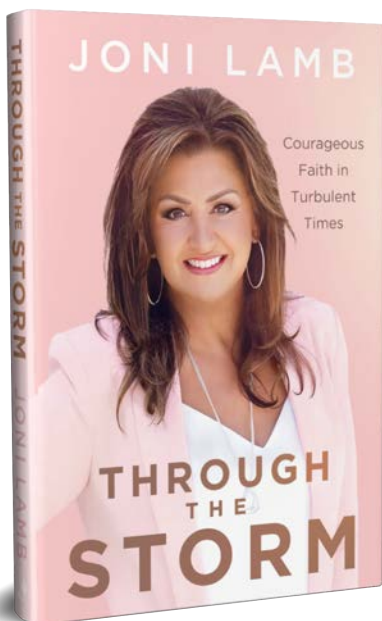
CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

The Serpent and the Soul **by Katie Souza**

Deadly serpent spirits are seeking to destroy your soul! Katie Souza's *The Serpent and the Soul* reveals the sly strategies of Python, Leviathan, and other demonic spirits, as they attempt to attack you at all levels: *financially, physically, and spiritually*. Working against our relationships, our faith, and our future, these serpent spirits want to constrict you so that you suffer like they will in eternity. But have no fear! In Luke 10:19, Jesus gave us the power to trample serpents and have authority over the enemy. Although the serpent spirits may seem intimidating at first, they will run away as soon as you take back what they have stolen from you. Using the powerful prayers and spiritual tools inside this practical guide, you will be able to break free from the serpents' deadly grip and restore peace in your life! Likewise, you will be able to see that your life was created for *wholeness*, not *brokenness*.



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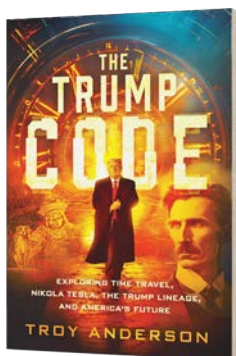


Through the Storm **by Joni Lamb**

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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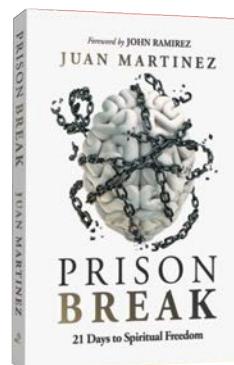




The Trump Code by Troy Anderson

Could the Trump family's connections to time travel theories, esoteric knowledge, and secret societies hold clues to unlocking the mysteries of our past and future? Troy Anderson's *The Trump Code* delves into the connections between the Baron Trump novels and the enigmatic Trump family legacy, asking whether this nineteenth-century novelist foresaw the future of Trump, America, and the world. It also uncovers a web of historical events and divine providence. While reading this book, your readers will have to confront questions that defy easy answers such as: Is there a divine hand guiding the course of human events?

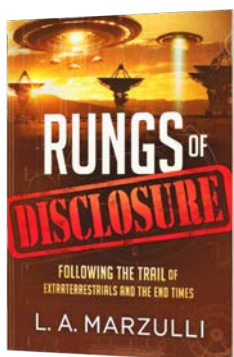
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Prison Break by Juan Martinez

A life with Christ is about unshackling your chains of bondage to embrace a life of freedom. Juan Martinez's twenty-one-day devotional, *Prison Break*, encourages life change through practical steps such as challenging negative thinking patterns with positive affirmations and setting realistic goals. It also serves as a poignant reminder that freedom is possible and shows you that with the right mindset, you can overcome past mistakes, forgive others, be renewed by the transformation of your minds, and lead a fulfilling life. By reading this book, your readers will recognize the root causes of the psychological chains breaking them so they can reach greater personal growth.

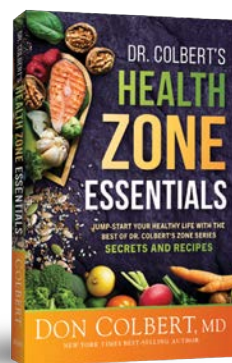
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Rungs of Disclosure by L.A. Marzulli

Is this the coming Great Deception? In *Rungs of Disclosure*, what once was fringe is now reality! While reading, you'll meet regular people—just like you—who have encountered something beyond their ability to explain. You'll also hear from people of great faith and religious belief who continue to have these strange and deeply unsettling encounters. L. A. Marzulli explores these ongoing incidents to discover the answers to these questions: Who are "they"? What do they want? And why are they here? If your readers can handle the truth, they should read this book—if they dare.

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Dr. Colbert's Health Zone Essentials by Don Colbert

So many people are looking to take their health goals to the next level, but have no idea how. With *Dr. Colbert's Health Zone Essentials*, you will gain a treasure trove of wisdom and practical advice to restore your body's health at its foundation. Discover what it means to optimize your health with powerful dietary tools and techniques utilizing the Mediterranean and keto diets along with healing solutions for both your body and brain. Now is the time to discover how to enhance and experience brain and physical restoration.

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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/.

“But the angel said to them, ‘Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!’” —Luke 2:10-11, MEV

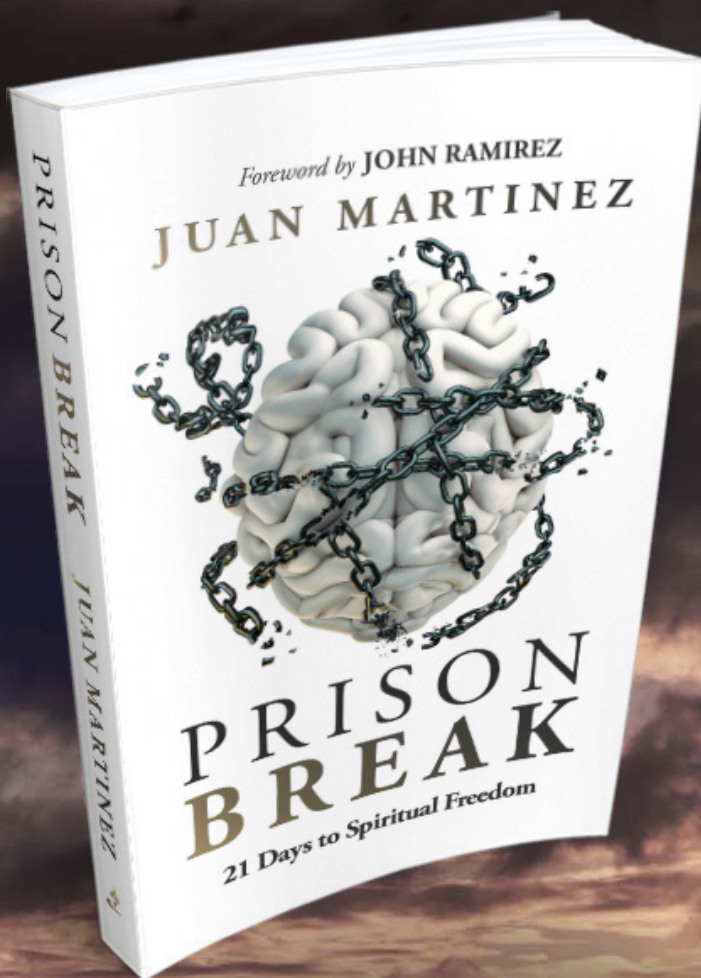
DECEMBER

Dec. 1	Rom. 5-8
Dec. 2	Rom. 9-12
Dec. 3	Rom. 13-16
Dec. 4	Eph. 1-4
Dec. 5	Eph. 5-6; Ps. 119:1-80
Dec. 6	Phil. 1-4
Dec. 7	Col. 1-4
Dec. 8	1Tim. 1-4
Dec. 9	1Tim. 5-6; Titus 1-3
Dec. 10	2Tim. 1-4
Dec. 11	Philemon; Heb. 1-4
Dec. 12	Heb. 5-8
Dec. 13	Heb. 9-11
Dec. 14	Heb. 12-13; Jude
Dec. 15	James 1-5
Dec. 16	1Pet. 1-5
Dec. 17	2Pet. 1-3; John 1
Dec. 18	John 2-4
Dec. 19	John 5-6
Dec. 20	John 7-8
Dec. 21	John 9-11
Dec. 22	John 12-14
Dec. 23	John 15-18
Dec. 24	John 19-21
Dec. 25	1John 1-5
Dec. 26	Ps. 117, 119:81-176; 2-3 John
Dec. 27	Rev. 1-4
Dec. 28	Rev. 5-9
Dec. 29	Rev. 10-14
Dec. 30	Rev. 15-18
Dec. 31	Rev. 19-22

A life with
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**IS ABOUT UNSHACKLING YOUR CHAINS
OF BONDAGE TO EMBRACE A LIFE OF**

FREEDOM

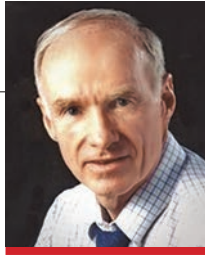


Are you shackled by your sins? Pastor Juan Martinez's **Prison Break** reveals how you can achieve true freedom in every way possible: emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Your past traumas will be healed and **true freedom will be obtained in Jesus Christ**. If you are searching for real change, then why wait?



ORDER YOUR COPY *TODAY!*

CHARISMA 



Christmas: A Time for Wishing & Wonder (March 1982)

I sat silently across the room, watching my 3-year-old granddaughter turning the pages of the J. C. Penney Christmas catalogue. Unaware of my presence, she was softly whispering the names of the hundreds of marvelous items pictured in the big “wish book” which lay across her knees.

“Fuzzy bear, rocky horse, bubble gum machine, roller skates, fire truck ... “

I was mesmerized. Kristin’s bright blue eyes twinkled as she put her stubby, little finger on each picture.

“Cinderella doll, red wagon, Big Bird, tricycle ... “

I listened carefully. Is it so wrong to wish? I’m not sure I ever really believed in Santa Claus. But it was fun to wonder. And to wish. Each year, early on Christmas Eve, Daddy would take us downtown. The main street, which was only three blocks long, ended at the park.

Pretty soon the city fire truck, siren howling, would arrive as the climax to the Christmas parade. Mr. O’Malley, who owned the restaurant, always dressed up like Santa and rode on the back of the truck. He carried a big bagful of hard candy and Cracker Jack boxes. Each kid, no matter how poor, got something.

Then Mr. McWilliams, the mayor, would turn on the lights on the big tree in the center of the park next to the old World War I cannons. The choir from the Baptist church would sing carols. Then it would be time to go back to the house. To wait. To wish.

Is it so wrong to wish?

Christmas Eve was a time of wonderful expectation. Daddy would bring us together around the tree which always stood in the same place, in a small alcove next to the stairs. The rest of the year an ancient spinning wheel sat there, but we kids knew that it was just guarding the spot until next Christmas when the tree would appear—that wonderful tree with the wonderful ornaments. When all the kids were in place, sitting cross-legged on the floor, Daddy would recite from memory: “’Twas the night before Christmas / And all through the house ... ”

Lying in my bed upstairs, listening, I could hear the sound of my younger brother’s breathing as he lay in the bed across the room. We would not speak. To do so would have broken the spell. But I knew he was wishing, as I was.

I wondered what it would be like, spending Christmas as my mother and daddy used to spend theirs with snow on the ground and the sound of sleigh bells ringing...are you listening?...Instead there was the sound of the balmy, Florida breeze rustling the palm trees outside my window.

Would he come tonight? Would Donner and Blitzen find our house in the orange grove? Was Santa Claus really coming to town? If so, would he really show up in our fireplace where the stockings were hung by the chimney with care? I’m grateful for that happy home of childhood with wonderful memories. I’m grateful for the sense of Christmas expectancy that I’ve brought with me into adulthood.

Life has a way, as you move into middle age, of becoming routine. The fascinations which once excited me are now slightly frayed; the things which once thrilled are sometimes tepid.

But, once a year, time turns backward in its flight, and on Christmas Eve I’m a child again—just for the night. Is it wrong to wish—as a child? Where else does prayer begin...and faith start? Long before I knew God, I would kneel beside my window: “Star light, star bright / First star I’ve seen tonight / I wish I may, I wish I might / Have the wish I wish tonight.”

C’mon! I know it’s not a prayer. But it was the best I could do as a child. It wasn’t until many years later, after Daddy became a Christian, that we started reading Luke 2 rather than *The Night Before Christmas* on Christmas Eve. But was all that other wrong? Does not God sometimes use fantasy to prepare our hearts for reality? The people I pity at Christmas are those who have no expectations. Those who no longer wish. The spiritual fuddy-duddies who have lost the wonder of childhood. How easy it is to become sophisticated. Super spiritual. To condemn Christmas trees, and Santa Claus, and the wonder of childlike wishing—because we’ve grown old...and correct.

“Look Pa-pa, here’s Baby Jesus in the manger. I wish for Him most of all.” I held her close so she could not see what was happening in my eyes.

I know there’s a difference between wishing and praying, but for some of us, it’s the only way we can begin. I hope I never grow so old, so stodgy, so theologically stiff that I no longer go to bed on Christmas Eve without listening for the sound of hoofbeats on the roof.

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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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