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FEBRUARY 2025

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SPIRIT-LED LIVING



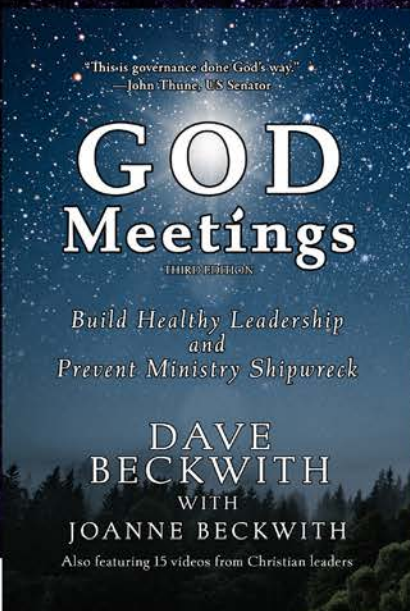
TODD MULLINS

HOW TO FLIP THE
SCRIPT ON **DOUBT**

**FAITH IS A
VERB!**
**KATHRYN
KRICK**

**SERVE GOD'S
KINGDOM**
WITH POWER IN THE
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DEAR CHARISMA



"It is one of the main things we've trusted Charisma for over the years."

—Mary Adams,
Miami, FL

WONDERFUL STORY FOR THE HOLIDAYS
Doug Stringer's "Standing Firm in Faith Through the Holidays" is a compelling and timely report on the holiday season (Charisma Magazine Online, December 2024). It inspired me to anchor my family and friends in faith amidst the season's busyness. Stringer's insights encourage a deeper connection with God, fostering peace, resilience and purpose during the holidays. A truly uplifting and empowering read!

Louise Stein, Kirkwood, MO

2024 IN PROPHECY

Thank you for the story about the prophetic subjects from the year 2024 ("Top 5 Prophetic Stories of 2024," Charisma Magazine Online, December 2024). It gave an enlightening exploration of the year's biggest prophetic moments. It was quite thoughtfully written, highlighted God's hand at work in modern times, inspiring faith and discernment. A must-read for those seeking spiritual insight and encouragement in these transformative times. It is one of the main

things we've trusted *Charisma* for over the years.

Mary Adams, Miami, FL

IMMANUEL AT CHRISTMAS, FROM GARCIA

I was so happy to see the column by Chris Garcia that made sure the name *Immanuel* appeared in this Christmas season ("Immanuel, the Presence and Power of God Is With Us," Charisma Magazine Online, December 2024). It reminded me of one of my favorite Christmas hymns, but most of all the idea that God is with us and loves us, and He gave us Jesus to be with us always. Thank you *Charisma*!

Neal Franklin, Chicago, IL

NEW DR. COLBERT BOOK!

I have collected Dr. Don Colbert's books over the years. I think this thought-provoking article is an excellent way to start the new year ("Reclaiming Your Conscience from the Enemy," Charisma Magazine Online, December 2024). It provides practical steps for spiritual renewal. It's a transformative piece!

Jenny Walker, Flagstaff, AZ

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Holding Trump Accountable to the Christlike Standard

Our faith calls us to a higher standard, not only in our personal lives but also in how we engage with leadership and governance. This sacred responsibility becomes all the more critical when we support leaders who may share our values and vision. As we look toward Donald Trump's second term, we need to hold him—and ourselves—accountable to Christlikeness.

When President Trump was elected in 2016, many in the evangelical community rallied behind him, not because he was a perfect candidate, but because he championed causes important to us: the sanctity of life, religious freedom, the protection of Israel, to name a few. His first term accomplished much and for that, we are grateful. However, the Bible is clear that leadership is a sacred trust. Proverbs 29:2 declares, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan." Leaders are stewards of God's authority, and with that stewardship comes the expectation of righteousness, justice and humility. We must hold our elected leaders—including those we support—responsible to govern in a manner that brings rejoicing rather than groaning.

President Trump's leadership style has been a double-edged sword. His boldness and resolve have been assets in an era when global leadership fades in fear of social media's reliably overheated and irrational heckler's veto. Yet, his rhetoric, demeanor and occasional lapses in humility sometimes have distracted from his message. In his second term, let us pray for and encourage him to lead not only with strength but also with all of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Gal. 5:22-23).

Accountability begins with prayer. Praying for President Trump is not optional; it is essential. We must intercede for his wisdom, character and decision-making, asking God to guide all elected leaders at every level of government in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Beyond prayer, accountability requires us to speak truth in love. As supporters of President Trump, we are not his enemies, nor are we blind followers. Supporting means honesty, and if his actions or words on a given day should happen to fall

short of the Christlike standard, we must lovingly but firmly call him to a higher way.

This accountability must extend to policies as well. While President Trump's first term saw significant victories for religious freedom, the pro-life movement and the judiciary, there is still much work to be done. A second term needs wise policies and faithful action guided by compassion and unity in ways that reflect the heart of God. Issues such as immigration, our nation's foreign policy and care for the poor demand a biblical approach that balances law and order with mercy and grace.

We must hold ourselves accountable as the body of Christ. Supporting a political leader is not a substitute for living out the gospel. Our witness must remain rooted in love, humility and truth, regardless of who occupies the Oval Office. It is still important that

we avoid any temptation to conflate the kingdom of God with any political agenda, remembering that we first seek Christ in all our plans and ways and trust in Him to guide us on His path.

The evangelical community's support for President Trump has often been misunderstood and caricatured by most corners of the media establishment. Yet, we can acknowledge also that some criticisms are not unfounded if someone overlooks or excuses behavior that is not in line with

faith for the sake of political expediency. We can risk damaging not just our credibility, but moreso our witness. Our actions and words must reflect the character of the One we serve.

President Trump's reelection is an opportunity to leave a legacy that transcends politics. We should encourage him to focus not just on policy achievements but also an atmosphere of respect, civility, citizenship and unity. As followers of Christ, we must model these values and urge our leaders to do the same.

Our responsibility is not merely to support leaders who share our values but to hold them accountable to those values. President Trump's second term for both him and us is a chance to reflect more fully the character of Christ. Let us commit to prayer and a steadfast witness that honors God above all. We can help ensure that his leadership is marked not only by strength and conviction but also by humility and grace, for the glory of God and the good of the nation.

"Let us pray for and encourage him to lead not only with strength but also with all of the fruits of the Spirit."

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).

Simply Christ

Gospel Insight

with Keith Surface

Born into the Spirit

When a person is born again of the Spirit of God, they become a spiritual creation and they began to live in a realm referred to as being *"in the Spirit."* This realm of the *"Spirit"* is also referred to as *"the Kingdom of God's Son"* [Colossians 1:13](#) and as being *"in Christ."* [II Corinthians 5:17](#). They may know nothing about this new kingdom they now live in just as an infant knows nothing about the world it is born into.

A newborn child of God no longer lives in the realm of flesh. This is why the Apostle Paul refers to events before he came to Christ as *"...when we were in the flesh..."* [Romans 7:5](#). A natural man still lives in the realm of flesh, and cannot even see the realm of the Spirit which the child of God now lives in. As Jesus said, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* [John 3:3](#).

The *"laws"* that govern these two realms are completely different. In the realm of *"the flesh,"* the *"law of sin and death"* reigns absolute. [Romans 5:12, 7:23](#). This *"law"* tells us that *"sin and death(condemnation)"* are as sure to humanity as the pull of gravity is upon objects on planet earth. The realm of *"the Spirit"* has no such law. In fact, the Apostle Paul told us, *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."*

[Romans 8:2](#). Those who live in Christ Jesus are not bound by *"the law of sin and death,"* hence, they are not sinners, and they are not dammed.

Those who continually tell you that the redeemed are still sinners, know very little, if anything, about *"life in Christ Jesus."* All their experiences and beliefs have been shaped by the realm of *"flesh,"* and they cannot even begin to consider what God's word says about life in Christ. They struggle with sin, so they conclude that everyone must be a sinner. They have forbidden lust, so they teach that an unclean heart is acceptable for God's children. Today, over 50% of pastors admit to using pornography. To them

this proves that such bondage is normal for all. Their doctrines are formed, not by God's word, but by their experience of what life is like living in the realm of *"flesh."*

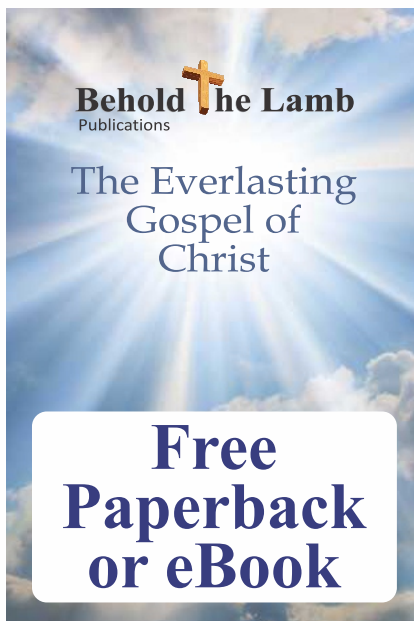
When I was born the second time (*born again*), I did not have a pastor like many have, who constantly assured me that I was still a sinner and would continue to sin as long as I lived in this body. I did not hear that I had to struggle each day with the *"old man"* or *"sinful nature"* as I walked with God. Instead, I heard of the victory given to those who are in Christ Jesus and how Jesus destroyed Satan and Sin upon the cross. I never heard that it was hard to serve God, but was taught that the Christian walk is a walk in *"...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"* [Romans 14:17](#), even in times of great trials and tribulation. I believed what I heard and found it to be very true.

Unfortunately, many converts to Christ have pastors who are well versed in how to live in the kingdom of *"the flesh."* They assure you that you will struggle, grow weak, and succumb to sinful desires. They tell you it is hard to walk with God, hard to forgive others, and hard love your enemy. You are informed that sin is not only around every corner but also embedded in your very heart and nature. They present these fallacies as truth, then give you fleshly answers to deal with such things.

Listening to such teachers, multitudes of people who have had a true *"born of God"* experience become like fish who are being instructed to live on dry land. The fish may be taught to lay in the shade so the sun does not parch them too quickly, or practice breathing in hopes of getting a little oxygen into their gills. Maybe it

even learns to exercise its flopping skills so it can move around in the sand. The problem is a fish cannot survive on dry land. It was made to live in the sea. There it will find everything it needs. Even so, a child of God will not survive if they try walk like those who are *"in the flesh."* This is why the Apostle Paul said, *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* [Galatians 5:25](#).

God has a kingdom prepared for his children to walk in. It is a place of liberty, righteousness, peace, and joy. Neither Satan nor sin exists in God's kingdom. None can access this kingdom through religious works. You must, however, believe the gospel and trust in Jesus Christ to do what his word declares.



Behold the Lamb
PO Box 750 Porter, TX 77365



How to Prepare Your Heart for Jesus' Return

Imagine you're getting ready for the biggest day of your life. It's like your favorite artist is coming to your house, or your team just made it to the championship game. You'd be hyped, right? You'd make sure everything was ready because you wouldn't want to miss the moment.

Now, think about this: Jesus is coming back. The Bible says it's going to happen, but here's the thing—no one knows when. It could be tomorrow, next year or decades from now. The question is: are we ready? And no, I don't mean ready like wearing your Sunday best or knowing all the Bible verses. I mean, is your heart ready?

As Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently stated, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." Our journey of faith often begins with uncertainty, but it is through pressing in to the heart of our Lord that we illuminate the path for others, guiding them toward the light of God's love

Here are three strong ways you can prepare for the return of our Lord Jesus that make sense for your daily life today.

1. Be Real With Jesus

First, Jesus isn't looking for you to be perfect. He wants you to be real. If you've got struggles, doubts or you've messed up, guess what? You're not alone. We all have. Jesus cares about what's in your heart, not how perfect you act.

Think of it like when you're talking to a close friend. You don't have to fake it—you just keep it real. That's how Jesus wants you to come to Him.

What to do: Take a moment to talk to Him about what's on your mind, what's in your heart, whatever things you have deepest in your gut that you want to bring to Him at the foot of His cross. Say something like, "Jesus, I don't have it all together, but I want to know You better."

Scripture: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest," (Matt. 11:28, MEV).

2. Stay Connected Every Day

Have you ever stopped talking to a friend for a while and felt the connection fade? That happens with Jesus too, if we don't make time for Him. But here's the good news—Jesus is always ready to

pick up where you left off.

What to do: Pray. And no, it doesn't have to be fancy. Just talk to Him like you'd talk to someone who really cares. And read your Bible. Even just a few verses a day can show you more about who Jesus is. Try starting with the book of Matthew or Psalms. It's not about doing it perfectly—it's about making it a habit.

Scripture: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you," (James 4:8, MEV).

3. Live Like It Matters

Let's be honest. It's easy to get caught up in stuff that doesn't really matter. But when we know Jesus is coming back, it changes how we live. Think of it like this: if you knew your coach was watching, you'd give your best effort, right? It's the same with Jesus.

Living ready means loving others, standing up for what's right and showing kindness—even when it's hard. It's about making choices that honor God because you know He's worth it.

What to do: This week, do one thing that shows Jesus you're serious about living for Him. Maybe it's forgiving

someone, encouraging a friend or spending less time on stuff that distracts you.

Scripture: "Therefore you also must be ready, for in an hour when you least expect," (Matt. 24:44, MEV).

Why It Matters

Here's the deal: Jesus isn't coming back to catch you off guard or make you feel bad. He's coming back because He loves you and wants to be with you forever. Preparing your heart isn't about fear, it's about hope. It's about living with purpose and getting excited for what's ahead.

Let's Pray

Jesus, thank You for loving me and giving me a chance to know You. Help me to get my heart ready for Your return by focusing on what really matters. Show me how to live in a way that honors You, and help me love others like You do. Please guide me to grow to be like You a little bit each day. Amen.

So, are you ready? Let's get our hearts prepared today!

Mondo De La Vega is co-host and executive producer of *The Jim Bakker Show*, host of *The Mondo Show* and executive vice president of television programming for the PTL Television Network. With the support of his wife, Elizabeth, and their twins, Mila and Mateo, De La Vega continues to follow the path God laid out for his life as he shares his story around the world. His new book, *My Crazy Life*, is available now at amazon.com.



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Faith Is A Verb!

The most common misconception about faith is that it is based on feeling. The truth is that faith is a choice. God reveals His love to you, and you become aware that His existence is undeniable. You can't see Him physically or prove Him scientifically, but deep down you know He's real. It's up to you to choose to believe He is Lord. If you're someone who must have proof and loves logic, you will be tempted with thoughts and feelings that go against the belief that God is real and that He is Lord. You must make the choice to resist the doubting thoughts.

When you first gave your life to Jesus, you probably had strong feelings of faith. But that doesn't mean feelings always have to be there. Real faith is enduring. Real faith is making the choice to submit your thoughts and feelings to the covenant you made with God the day you decided to follow Him. Real faith is choosing to believe the Word of God when your feelings don't align with God's truth. Faith is about obedience—obedience in taking God's Word as truth.

The Scripture doesn't say "faith without feelings" is dead. It says "faith without works" is dead. Faith is an action, a choice to take what God says in His Word as truth. Faith is being like a child who just takes whatever their parent says as truth. The child doesn't need evidence.

The child doesn't take time to question what the parent says. The child doesn't believe only if their feelings match up with their belief. The child simply believes.

One of the ways to "become like little children" is to have childlike faith. In the Gospels, when Jesus says things like "Your faith has made you well," this is the faith He is talking about. In speaking to Jairus after his daughter had died, Jesus revealed a key that would release the miracle of Resurrection: just believe! Many times after Jesus healed or delivered a person, He shared with them why this miracle took place: because they believed!

God measures faith by your words and actions, not your feelings. With this revelation nothing can stop you from having huge faith. Without this revelation you would always have a wishy-washy, up-and-down faith; on the mountain-tops you would have faith, but in the valleys you would doubt. The spiritual war we are

in is centered mostly in the mind. The mind is where our thoughts and feelings are. If you've ever had an unwelcome thought intrude into your mind, that was not your thought. It was the devil's ammunition. He was hoping you would be tricked into thinking it was your own original thought and therefore would believe the thought was the truth. From there you would then act out that truth and live in it. This is the enemy's main strategy against every person. By getting you to believe his lies, he's actually granted authority by you and therefore can dictate your life.

By saying, "Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ," (2 Cor. 10:5), the Bible is telling you that you will have thoughts that are not your own but are from the enemy. That includes thoughts of doubt such as "I don't think I will be healed" and "I don't know if God really wants to heal me." You don't have

to accept those thoughts as your own. When you accept Jesus as Lord, you accept Him in all His ways. His main way of speaking is through His Word. Jesus is the embodiment of the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," (John 1:1).

When you choose to make Jesus your Lord, you're also choosing to make the Word your truth. In the Word it says that by His stripes you are healed. It also says

that you have an inheritance from God and that "the thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]," (John 10:10, AMP).

These Scriptures are now your truth, no matter how you feel about them on any given day. Your choice is more powerful than your feelings. You have authority over your feelings. Your feelings must submit to your authority. God does not make it difficult to have faith. You don't have to wait for the feelings to come. You don't have to wait for the devil to stop attacking your mind. You can use the authority God has given you and take action now! You can reject the devil's lies and choose God's truth by speaking it aloud. Your confession is what God counts as faith. You can have many thoughts that you won't be healed, but God is not looking at your feelings. He's listening to what you speak.

***"When you choose
to make Jesus your
Lord, you're also
choosing to make the
Word your truth."***

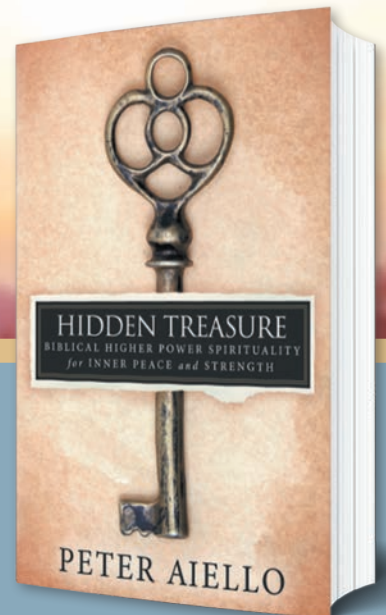
Kathryn Krick is a rising online influencer, and founding lead pastor of Five-Fold Church in Los Angeles, where many miracles happen and people are healed, delivered and equipped to be powerful vessels of God. Her new book, *Unlock Your Deliverance*, is available for pre-sale now at Amazon.com.

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Peter Aiello

CHARISMATA

Spirit-Led Names and News *Compiled by Charisma Staff*

41%

OF GEN-ZERS DO
NOT BELIEVE THEY
ARE WORTHY OF
BEING LOVED.

ABOVE: Relate Project's Gallup survey statistic post on Facebook
LEFT: Young Life of Longview, Texas, group with message of hope for today's youth



Young Life Turns Negative Into Positive

New study helps ministry move Gen Z toward faith

Valentine's Day may bring thoughts of love, but a recent Gallup survey showed a surprising number of young people feeling pressure to be perfect all the time and accompanying negative emotions. But Young Life, a Christ-centered ministry that helps students to know Jesus, is turning these negatives to a more positive direction through its Relate Project, a study that seeks to offer a deeper understanding of Gen Z.

"Around 40% of young people don't know or don't believe they're worthy of love," Young Life Ministry Vice President Arthur Satterwhite says. "It's something that should burden us all."

The study revealed that young people are

interested in relationships, with more than half communicating mostly one-on-one with their closest friend, while others use phone calls, FaceTime or WhatsApp to stay in touch, and 25% using emails, texts and direct messages to contact friends. In addition, 40% of them are concerned for their mental health.

But when it comes to faith, there's a net positive, Young Life staffers say. "What we found was that faith as a framing story helps folks, especially young people, to contextualize what 'belonging' means? 'Where do I fit in?' and what could that look like as we help them to know not just who they are but who they are and what they're called to."



Women of Faith Share Their Marital Meet-Cutes

Candace Cameron Bure, Priscilla Shirer on how they met their longtime spouses

Let's talk husbands for a minute because you adore yours and I adore mine." That's how Candace Cameron Bure introduced a recent episode of her podcast featuring actress, ministry leader and bestselling author Priscilla Shirer.

Priscilla explained that she first encountered her husband, Jerry Shirer, at a meeting where she was speaking to executives. For some reason, the event planner wanted the two to meet, but Priscilla wasn't interested—and he was avoiding her because her father, bestselling author Tony Evans, was his pastor! After the session, where they barely spoke, Jerry was interested right away, but Priscilla wanted to take it slow.

Before long, however, she discovered her would-be boyfriend had been talking to her father. It must have worked, as Jerry and Priscilla have now been married more than 25 years.

Candace also had a quick introduction to her husband, former professional hockey player Valeri Bure. The two met at a charity event, and Valeri called her the next morning to ask if she wanted to go to lunch. Thus began a whirlwind, two-coast relationship that, less than two years later, culminated in a marriage that has endured for more than 28 years.



Cameron Bure

North Carolina Pastor Receives \$4.4 Million for False Arrest, Imprisonment

The Rev. Darren Cameron was convicted in 1994

A North Carolina pastor who spent eight years in prison for a crime he didn't commit has not only been pardoned by Gov. Roy Cooper but also settled with the Town of Winterville for \$4.4 million. The Rev. Darron Cameron was convicted of armed robbery in 1994, serving eight years before being released for good behavior in 2002. He went on to found the Rebuild Christian Center Church in Winterville and the Greater Village Gate Church in Lewiston.

In 2022, Superior Court Judge Marvin Blount overturned the pastor's conviction, and this past November, Cameron received the governor's pardon. He and his attorneys filed the lawsuit after attempts to negotiate with Winterville fell through. His complaint accused officers of concealing fingerprint evidence taken from the Fresh Way Convenience Store, which he was convicted of robbing, that did not match his. The town insists its representatives did no wrong but ultimately settled with Cameron through a mediator.

"Next for me is to continue what I have already been doing," Cameron says in a statement shared by ABC11. "I have organizations in place to address certain issues; mentoring for kids without fathers and 'People Against Racism.'"

Lee University Receives Top Rankings From 3 Research Sites



Lee University, affiliated with the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, was recently ranked in the top 20% of the 2024 Research.com rankings for Best Master of Business Administration Programs. The school also placed in the top rankings from Intelligent.com in three categories and placed in the top 25% in *The Wall Street Journal* ranking for student experience.

The 2024 Research.com Best MBA Programs is part of a broader series of best online education awards and evaluates approximately 2,500 universities

across the U.S. for outstanding achievements in MBA education, basing its rankings on an analysis of data from reliable sources such as Peterson, IPEDS and College Scorecard.

"We are honored to earn this acknowledgement by Research.com of our work here at Lee University," said Dr. Paul Conn, Lee's president. "It is an affirmation of our talented team, investing in the lives of students and the communities they will impact, not only in the MBA program, but in all of the programs through which we serve."



‘Blessed Are the Peacemakers’

In Assemblies of God, faith unites Arab, Jew

Most of the world today has come to expect enmity between people of ethnic Arabic and Jewish heritage. But the world is not the determiner for George A. Rafidi, president of the Arabic Assemblies of God Fellowship, USA, and Michael Calise, president of the National Jewish Fellowship of the Assemblies of God. Not only do the two share their faith in Christ and AG ministry, but they are also friends.

“The same Messiah rules in the hearts of George Rafidi and me,” says Calise, who has led the Jewish Fellowship since 2013. “This picture of unity and love is a spiritual happening between two people who ordinarily wouldn’t be at peace with each other.”

“While Michael and I may have different points of view, the bottom line is both of our people need Jesus,” says Rafidi, who has led the Arabic Fellowship since it began in 2005.

Despite those different points of view, both pastors pray daily for peace in the Middle East. “My biggest concern is for innocent people on both sides, the women and children being killed and going to an eternity without Jesus,” Rafidi says.



George A. Rafidi and Michael Calise’s friendship is sure to inspire future friendships of opposite backgrounds

Country Star Moves Toward God, Away from Trap of ‘Wicked’ Industry

For a season, he worshiped success and fame, John Rich says

Success in the eyes of the world can move us away from kingdom values, and country star John Rich’s story bears out that truth. Although he accepted Christ at a young age and had a father who preached the gospel from age 19 on, Rich says his success in the music industry “became what I worshiped. ... When I got out there and started selling millions of records ... that became my focal point.”



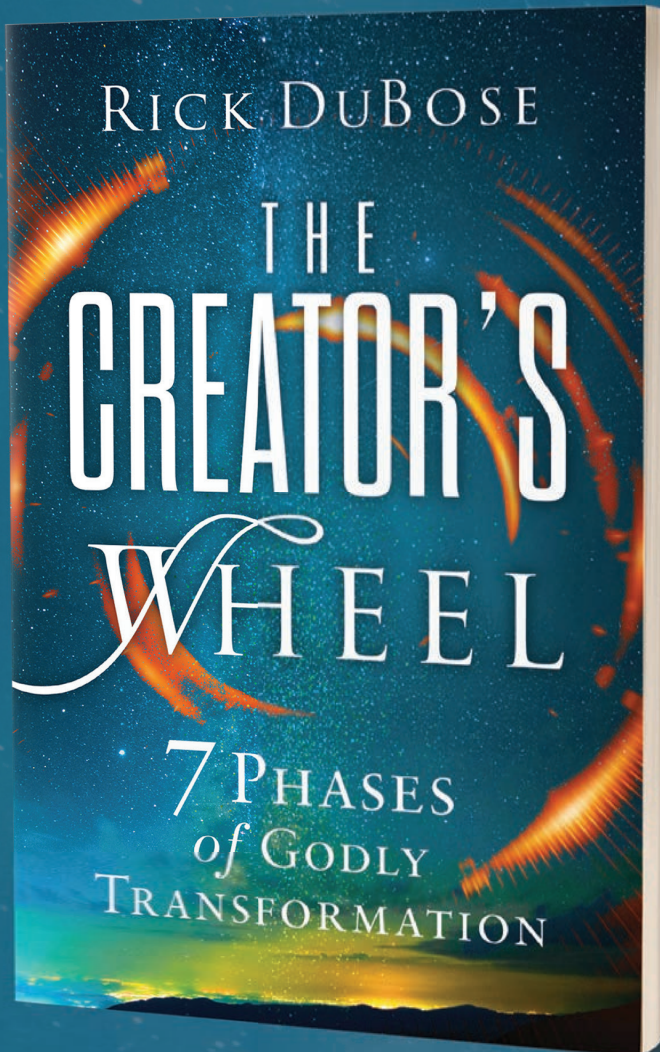
John Rich

But God used marriage and parenting to bring Rich back to Himself. “I started looking at how I was living and what was important to me,” Rich says. “And I thought, ‘Is that how I want my boys to live? Do I want them to wind up like I am right now?’ And I was horrified by that notion.”

The problem with being “subservient to some wicked industry like the entertainment industry” is that it becomes difficult to hear God amid the chaos, Rich says. “You can’t even hear Him, because your ears are full of your own noise.”

Eventually, conviction from the Holy Spirit led him to abandon record and publishing deals and find his own musical path. His recent release, “Revelation,” inspired by the biblical end times, is one he hopes inspires others to “pick their Bibles up and start reading it for themselves.”


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RICK DUBOSE is the assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God and a member of the executive leadership team. The author of *In Jesus’ Name* and *The Church That Works*, DuBose is a respected pastor and has served the Assemblies of God in various local and national leadership positions for more than two decades. He and his wife, Rita, have three adult children and eight grandsons and make their home in Springfield, Missouri.

FLIP THE SCRIPT ON DOUBT

Defeating doubt by grace and growing your character

BY TODD MULLINS

Doubt often arises when someone gives you a reason to question their integrity. Broken promises and betrayed trust can lead to hurt and uncertainty. In such moments, doubting is a natural response—a way to safeguard yourself from further pain. But doubt doesn't have to defeat you. Instead, it can become a catalyst for growth, transforming life's toughest moments into opportunities for personal development.

The Bible tells the story of Joseph, a man who experienced extraordinary highs and devastating lows—all shaped by the actions of others. Betrayed by his own brothers, Joseph's journey in Genesis illustrates how to overcome betrayal, maintain faith and stay connected to others despite disappointment.

As his father's favorite son, Joseph became a target of jealousy. When he shared dreams of ruling over his brothers, they attacked him, threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery in Egypt. Despite this betrayal, Joseph didn't allow bitterness to consume him. Instead, he rose to prominence in Potiphar's house, only to face false accusations that landed him in prison. Even there, Joseph

maintained his resilience, earning trust and responsibility.

Joseph's perseverance paid off when he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, predicting seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. His wisdom elevated him to second-in-command over Egypt, a position he used to save countless lives. But perhaps Joseph's greatest test came when his brothers, unaware of his identity, sought his help during the famine. Confronted by the very people who betrayed him, Joseph chose grace over revenge, embodying forgiveness and showing that "people pain" doesn't have to be permanent.

The Depths of Betrayal

Joseph's story begins with familial betrayal. Favored by his father, Jacob, Joseph's dreams of authority over his family sparked jealousy among his brothers. They resented him so deeply that they plotted to kill him, ultimately deciding to sell him into slavery. Joseph's journey from favored son to a foreign slave could have been the end of his story, but his faith carried him through.

Imagine the emotional toll of such betrayal. The very people Joseph should have been able to trust most became the


source of his greatest pain. This initial act of betrayal set the stage for a series of trials that would test Joseph's character and faith. Despite the heartbreak, Joseph's reliance on God never wavered. His story reminds us that even in the darkest moments, God's presence is constant.

This narrative resonates deeply with anyone who has faced betrayal or heartbreak. Whether it's a broken relationship, a fractured friendship or a loss of trust in someone close, the pain can be overwhelming. Yet Joseph's experience offers a roadmap for navigating these feelings. His unwavering trust in God amidst adversity provides a beacon of hope and a reminder of divine faithfulness.

Resilience in Potiphar's House

After being sold into slavery, Joseph found himself in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Rather than succumbing to despair, Joseph worked diligently, earning Potiphar's trust and being placed in charge of his household. His success in Potiphar's house demonstrates the power of perseverance and faith.

However, Joseph's troubles were far from over. Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of assault, leading to his imprisonment. Once again, Joseph faced a

An illustration of a man in a dark suit, white shirt, and purple tie, swinging a large wooden mallet with a black head. He is positioned on the left, leaning forward with his arms extended. The mallet is about to strike a large, jagged, red rock on the right. The rock is cracked and crumbling, with several smaller red rock fragments scattered on the light blue ground around its base. The background is a solid light blue.

“How might **GOD** be using these challenges to refine your character and **PREPARE** you for something greater?”

situation where he could have given in to bitterness and doubt. Yet, even in prison, Joseph's faith and integrity shone through. He quickly gained favor with the prison warden, who put him in charge of the other prisoners.

Joseph's ability to thrive in adverse circumstances is a testament to his unwavering trust in God. It's a reminder that our response to life's challenges often determines the outcome. By maintaining a positive attitude and keeping our eyes on God, we can overcome even the most difficult situations.

The example Joseph sets is particularly relevant in today's world, where setbacks can easily lead to discouragement. His story challenges us to view hardships as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. It's about shifting perspective,

choosing to see the hand of God even in situations that seem unfair or unjust.

The Power of Dreams

While in prison, Joseph's gift for interpreting dreams became evident. He interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, accurately predicting their futures. Joseph's only request was for the cupbearer to remember him

upon his release. Unfortunately, the cupbearer forgot Joseph, leaving him in prison for two more years.

This period of waiting could have

been a time of despair for Joseph, but instead, it became a time of preparation. When Pharaoh had troubling dreams that no one could interpret, the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph. Brought before Pharaoh, Joseph interpreted the dreams as a warning of seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh to prepare during the years of plenty to survive the years of scarcity.

Impressed by Joseph's wisdom, Pharaoh appointed him as second-in-command over Egypt. This promotion marked the culmination of years of hardship and perseverance. Joseph's journey demonstrates that God's timing is perfect, even when it feels delayed.

Joseph's patience and preparation underscore an important truth: waiting on God is never wasted time. In our own lives, we might face seasons of waiting where progress feels impossible. However, just as Joseph's

“Let DOUBT and disappointment develop your character, preparing you to win at what matters most—becoming more LIKE CHRIST.”

time in prison refined his character, our seasons of waiting are opportunities for God to shape us for His purposes.

Moreover, Joseph's story teaches us to trust God's plan even when we cannot see the bigger picture. Each setback, delay, or closed door is part of a grander narrative. Reflecting on Joseph's resilience inspires us to embrace the waiting with hope and anticipation for what God will do next.

Grace and Forgiveness

Joseph's greatest test came when his brothers traveled to Egypt seeking food during the famine. Unaware of Joseph's identity, they bowed before him, fulfilling the dreams he had shared with them years earlier. Joseph had the power to exact revenge, but instead, he chose forgiveness.

Joseph's decision to forgive his brothers was not an easy one. It required him to confront the pain they had caused and extend grace despite their actions. This act of forgiveness not only restored his relationship with his family but also revealed the transformative power of God's grace.

Forgiveness is a central theme in Joseph's story. It teaches us that letting go of resentment and extending grace can lead to healing and reconciliation. By choosing forgiveness, we free ourselves from the burden of anger and allow God to work in our lives.

Joseph's forgiveness also reflects God's forgiveness toward us.

Just as Joseph welcomed his brothers despite their betrayal, God welcomes us with open arms when we turn to Him. This divine grace is a gift we are called to extend to others, even when it feels undeserved.

In practical terms, forgiveness is a process that often involves confronting our emotions, seeking God's guidance, and choosing to let go of the offense repeatedly. Joseph's example challenges us to embody forgiveness not as a one-time event but as a lifestyle that honors God and reflects His love.

Lessons in Character Development

Joseph's journey is a masterclass in character development. Each trial he faced shaped him into the man God intended him to be. His time in the pit, Potiphar's house and prison

taught him perseverance, humility and dependence on God. These qualities prepared him for his role as a leader and a reconciler.

One of the most significant lessons from Joseph's story is that character matters more than talent. While abilities are gifts from God, character is forged through life's challenges. It's what sustains us and allows us to fulfill God's purpose for our lives.

James 1:2–4 reminds us to “consider it pure joy” when we face trials because they produce perseverance, maturity and completeness. Joseph's life exemplifies this truth. His trials were not meaningless; they were tools God used to refine his character and prepare him for his destiny.

Character development is an ongoing process. It's about embracing the lessons embedded in every challenge and allowing God to mold us into His image. By focusing on who we are becoming rather than what we are achieving, we align ourselves with God's priorities and prepare for His greater purposes.

God's Refining Process

Just as gold is refined by fire, our character is refined through life's challenges. Trials reveal our true nature and provide an opportunity for growth. They strip away impurities like pride, selfishness and fear, allowing us to become more like Christ.

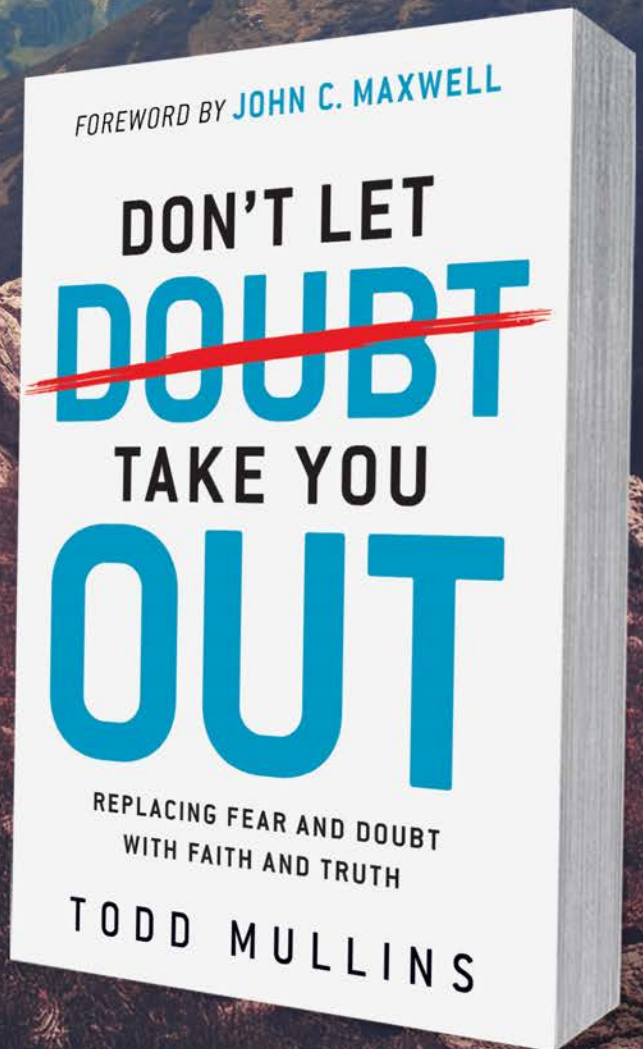
Joseph's story shows that God uses difficulties to shape us into the people He wants us to be. Each setback Joseph faced was a step toward his ultimate purpose. His experiences in the pit, Potiphar's house and prison prepared him for the palace. Without these trials, Joseph wouldn't have developed the wisdom and humility needed to lead effectively.

In a world that often values talent over character, it's important to remember that God's priorities are different. He cares more about who we are becoming than what we are accomplishing. Our character is the only thing we take with us into eternity, and it's the one thing God is continually working to refine.

Silence the Voice of Doubt and Embrace Your True Potential!



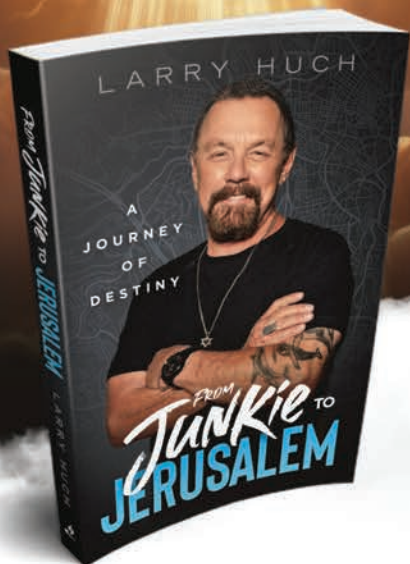
Do you ever find yourself questioning your purpose, second-guessing your decisions, or feeling unsure about your future? You're not alone. Doubt has the power to paralyze even the most confident among us—holding us back from all that God has called us to be. But it doesn't have to be that way. In *Don't Let Doubt Take You Out*, Pastor Todd Mullins reveals how doubt can actually become a catalyst for deeper faith, stronger relationships, and a more fulfilling life. In this road map for a doubt-free life, you'll gain tools for transforming anxiety into faith-based action and daily declarations to reinforce your true identity in Jesus.



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From a drug addict to a prominent pastor and ardent advocate for Israel and the Jewish people, Pastor Larry Huch's testimony is all about hope and overcoming. Delving into Huch's tumultuous past, *From Junkie to Jerusalem* details his abusive background, explains his struggles with anger and addiction, and highlights the profound spiritual awakening that led him to leave behind his former life and embrace Christianity. However, this is not just one man's story—This is a story of what God can do with the least of us. As you embark on this spiritual journey, you will receive a lasting hope to help you regardless of your current condition.

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The refining process is not just about enduring hardships; it's about allowing those hardships to transform us. This transformation often requires surrender—letting go of our own plans and trusting God's greater purpose. Like Joseph, we must be willing to embrace the process, knowing that God's plans for us are always good.

Winning at What Matters Most

Perseverance, integrity, patience and grace are all part of the character development process. God prioritizes these qualities over our achievements because they hold eternal significance. While talents and abilities are gifts from God, they are tools to fulfill His purposes. Without a solid foundation of godly character, even the most remarkable talents can become stumbling blocks.

Think of King David. Anointed as a young shepherd, David developed his skills as a warrior and leader. Yet, it was his heart for God, not his talents, that qualified him to be king. 1 Samuel 16:7 reminds us that "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." David's character, shaped by his time in the fields with God, made him a man after God's own heart.

Similarly, Joseph's rise to power was not due to his talents alone but to the character forged in him through years of trials. His story is a powerful reminder that God values who we are becoming over what we achieve. When we focus on cultivating godly character, we position ourselves to fulfill God's purposes in our lives.

The Eternal Significance of Character

God's refining process is often uncomfortable, but it's essential for our growth. Challenges and disappointments reveal our true character and provide an opportunity for God to work in our lives. By embracing this process, we can develop qualities that will carry us through this life and into eternity.

As the world values success and achievement, it's easy to lose sight of what truly matters. But Joseph's

story reminds us that character is what endures. It's what allows us to fulfill God's purpose and make a lasting impact.

So, stay in the refining process. Embrace the challenges. Practice forgiveness. Let doubt and disappointment develop your character, preparing you to win at what matters most—becoming more like Christ.

Walking in Faith Through the Valleys

Joseph's story encourages us to hold onto faith even in life's darkest valleys. Whether we're in the pit of despair, the prison of uncertainty, or standing on the threshold of opportunity, God is with us. He is working behind the scenes to bring His plans to fruition.

In our own journeys, we will face setbacks, heartbreaks and moments of doubt. These are not signs of God's absence but opportunities for His presence to shine through. Joseph's life assures us that no matter how bleak the circumstances, God is faithful. He uses every situation to shape us for His glory.

As you reflect on Joseph's journey, consider your own story. What trials are you facing? How might God be using these challenges to refine your character and prepare you for something greater? Embrace the process with faith, knowing that the God who was with Joseph is the same God who is with you.

Each of us can draw strength from Joseph's example. His story inspires us to trust God's plan, forgive those who have wronged us and embrace the refining process with courage and humility. Let Joseph's journey remind you that with faith, perseverance and trust in God, you can overcome life's challenges and emerge stronger, wiser and closer to Him. ♦

TODD MULLINS is the senior pastor of *Christ Fellowship Church*, one of the top 10 largest churches in America. Under the leadership of Mullins and his wife, Julie, *Christ Fellowship* has grown into a multisite congregation that gathers on 16 campus locations across South Florida. His new book, *Don't Let Doubt Take You Out*, debuts Feb. 11, and is available now at amazon.com.

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How Now Do We Church?



8 megatrends challenging the Evangelical church today

BY LAWRENCE TATE

How is your church doing? Are there any—many?—in your area that are for sale, having shrunk out of existence and are now likely to become another new restaurant or apartment building? God's church has faced the resistance of the world since its birth. Today the challenges are as varied as they are deep and seemingly insurmountable. But believers know we serve a faithful and powerful Father in heaven who generously pours out His wisdom and grace as soon as we ask. As we're now a full 25% of the way into the 21st century, here are eight of the powerful patterns our churches are facing, and what we can do to carry

faithfully the message of Jesus to our neighbor across the street and the far corners of the world.

1) Declining Religious Affiliations. Studies from the Barna Group and Pew Research reveal a troubling decline in religious affiliation, particularly among millennials and Gen Z. Churches face significant challenges in retaining younger members who often struggle with doubts, disillusionment and disengagement.

To address this, churches are investing in innovative re-engagement strategies. Apologetics ministries address intellectual and spiritual doubts, while outreach efforts include hosting community events and partnering

with schools or civic organizations. Creative approaches are essential to reignite interest and commitment among younger generations who value authentic relationships and mentorship. Programs that pair younger members with mature believers spark discipleship and accountability. Additionally, incorporating contemporary worship styles, social media and addressing relevant cultural topics bridge generational differences. Ultimately, a combination of relational and programmatic efforts is necessary to counteract declining affiliation.

2) Mental Wellness and Wholeness. Mental wellness is a critical area of focus within the evangelical church

that has been hiding in plain view for several years but has become more visible and important in the recent past, not least due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic. Recognizing the prevalence of anxiety, depression and trauma, and their many origins in contrast to their relatively few solutions, many churches have launched counseling ministries, support groups and partnerships with licensed therapists. Sermons now frequently address mental health topics, integrating biblical wisdom with psychological insights. Additionally, there is growing awareness of pastoral burnout, prompting initiatives to care for leaders' mental well-being. By prioritizing mental health, churches not only support individual wholeness but also strengthen their overall communities.

Addressing mental health also involves fostering environments where vulnerability is welcomed and stigmas are dismantled. Small groups, peer support networks and pastoral training on mental health awareness can create safe spaces for congregants to seek help. Furthermore, partnerships with mental health professionals can ensure that churches offer informed and effective care, bridging the gap between spiritual and clinical support.

3) Resurgence in Charismatic and Pentecostal Expressions. Pentecostal and charismatic expressions of faith are experiencing a notable resurgence. Interest has been rising in spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, deliverance and a strong presence and valuing of operating in the prophetic. This is seen particularly among the younger age groups seeking deeper connections with God's will and purpose for their lives through their faith. The Pentecostal and charismatic segments are some of the fastest-growing areas in the global body of Christ, offering vibrant Spirit-filled worship that resonates with contemporary seekers. But beyond mere "vibrant" worship, the Pentecostal and charismatic churches frequently are places where believers go far deeper in the Lord than many more traditional worship traditions through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It remains true today

as it has been the past few decades that many mainline denominations gravitate toward Pentecostal-type living of faith and being transformed from the inside out by God's power given in the blood of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

The resurgence shows the timeless and universal appeal of worship that engages both believers and seekers through music, prayer and expressions that create a profound sense of connection to God and others. However, this trend also raises theological and practical questions about discernment,

"While challenges abound, they also present opportunities for innovation, growth and effectively carrying out the Great Commission with the light of Jesus."

accountability and the balance between emotional experiences and Scriptural grounding which are fertile territory for pastors and ministry leaders to press in and guide their congregations and communities.

4) Cultural Polarization, Political Realignment. Cultural polarization presents a formidable challenge for evangelical churches. Internal divisions often arise over contentious issues such as LGBTQ inclusion, abortion and political alignment. Congregational splits have become more common as members grapple with differing views on these critical matters. Many leaders call for a return to a nonpartisan,

gospel-centered approach. Younger evangelical leaders are especially vocal about distancing the church from partisan identities while retaining a prophetic voice in public discourse. This realignment demands careful navigation to foster unity while maintaining theological integrity.

Global interconnectedness of cultural and political trends amplifies these challenges, driving churches to engage with issues of racial justice, economic inequality and environmental stewardship, recognizing that younger generations often expect faith communities to address such concerns. The church's ability to remain not merely relevant but a driving force in the culture for the cause of Christ depends on its capacity to engage these conversations thoughtfully and compassionately.

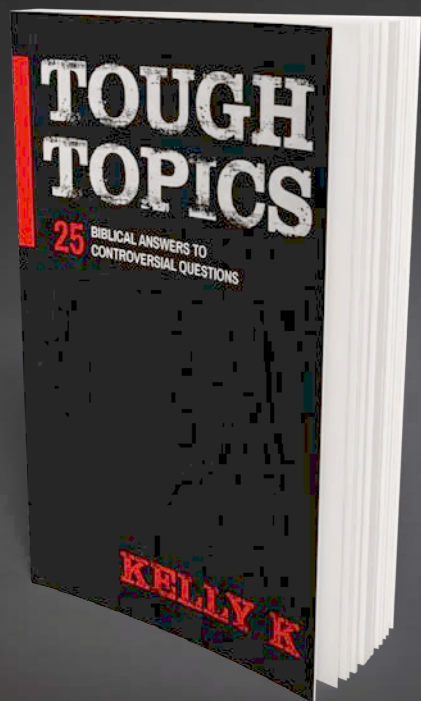
5) Theological Shifts and Deconstruction. Theological deconstruction is a recent trend affecting the church. In short, many believers across different age groups are reevaluating traditional doctrines and practices. This process often involves questioning long-held beliefs and exploring progressive theologies.

Churches have responded in varied ways. Some embrace the opportunity for honest dialogue and growth, while others resist what they perceive as threats to orthodoxy. Shifts in views on gender roles, LGBTQ inclusion and various political topics are particularly contentious but also reflect broader cultural dynamics influencing the church.

The rise of this deconstruction phase also shows the value of creating space for further intellectual and spiritual discovery. Churches that pursue open discussions without fear of judgment can fortify both trust and engagement. At the same time, leaders can articulate and model robust and compelling vision of faith that can balance scrutiny and cultural shifts without compromising Scriptural convictions.

6) Living Missionally. The evangelical church is experiencing a renewed emphasis on mission, both locally and globally. Everyday mission encourages believers to integrate their faith into

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daily life, impacting workplaces, neighborhoods and social circles. Community outreach remains a cornerstone of missional efforts, with programs addressing tangible needs such as food insecurity, education and addiction recovery. On a global scale, churches are adopting holistic mission strategies that encompass spiritual, social, and material dimensions, embodying the comprehensive nature of the gospel.

Missional engagement also involves listening and learning from those being served, "Are we being the hands and feet of Jesus?" Effective missions prioritize partnership and empowerment by working collaboratively with communities enabling churches to address issues while reflecting Christ's love. Additionally, training members to see their vocations and daily interactions as platforms for mission broadens the church's impact beyond organized programs.

7) Ongoing Digital Revolution. The digital revolution is a few decades old now since the earliest days of the internet and social media, and it continues to reshape how churches operate, engage and minister. Post-pandemic, many congregations have embraced hybrid models, blending in-person and virtual experiences to maintain both local and global outreach. High-quality livestreams and robust online platforms have become essential for maintaining connectivity with congregants. Many churches have pioneered digital discipleship to reach millions worldwide. On-demand sermon libraries and custom apps enable churches to extend their reach far beyond physical walls.

Challenges remain, however, and retaining meaningful engagement in online formats while building genuine community and combating "screen fatigue" are persistent obstacles. Churches must innovate continually to balance digital accessibility with authentic relationships.

In addition, the rise of AI is both a strong opportunity as well as a stark potential risk factor. While AI-driven tools can help churches personalize discipleship, analyze engagement trends and even create content, there remain

a wide unknown area of ethical considerations about privacy and reliance on technology. For many, digital platforms are a supplement rather than a substitute for in-person fellowship, making it crucial to strike the right balance.

8) Decentralization & Church Planting. The shift toward decentralized church models combines the idea toward micro-churches and smaller gatherings that prioritize discipleship and close-knit community with solutions for churches to be more flexible and locally relevant. Church planting plays a valuable role in sowing new congregations by providing resources, training and support for emerging leaders. At the same time, mega-churches are increasingly spinning off multisite campuses into independent entities to adapt and maintain relevance in diverse and rapidly changing cultural landscapes in more local community settings.

Decentralization also reflects a broader cultural shift toward grassroots and community-driven initiatives. Smaller church models often foster deeper relationships and more active participation among members. However, this approach requires robust leadership development pipelines to ensure sustainability. Additionally, decentralized churches face challenges in maintaining doctrinal unity and consistent vision across diverse groups.

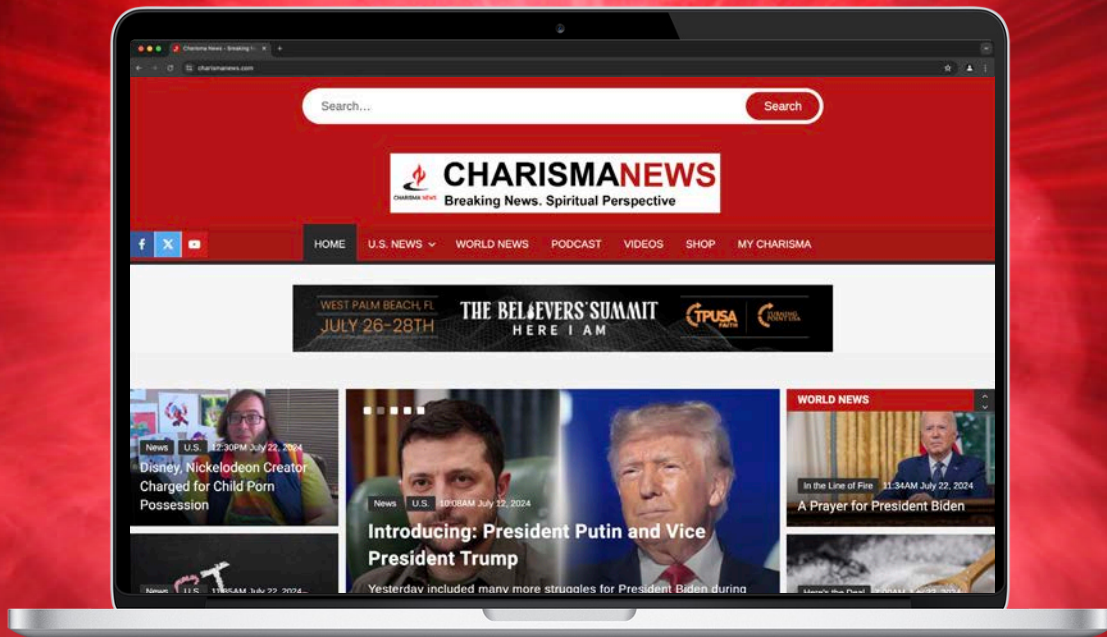
The Days Ahead

While challenges abound, they also present opportunities for innovation, growth and effectively carrying out the Great Commission with the light of Jesus in every dark corner of our shrinking world. Engaging these trends with wisdom and courage prepares our churches to fulfill their holy purposes in a rapidly changing world.

The way forward requires humility, adaptability and an ever-deeper pressing in to the cause of Christ. As we navigate these trends, the church not only can survive but thrive serving as a beacon of hope, love and transformation for generations to come. ♦

LAWRENCE TATE is a contributor to *Charisma Magazine Online*.

WHERE DO YOU GO FOR SPIRIT-FILLED NEWS YOU CAN'T FIND IN THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA?

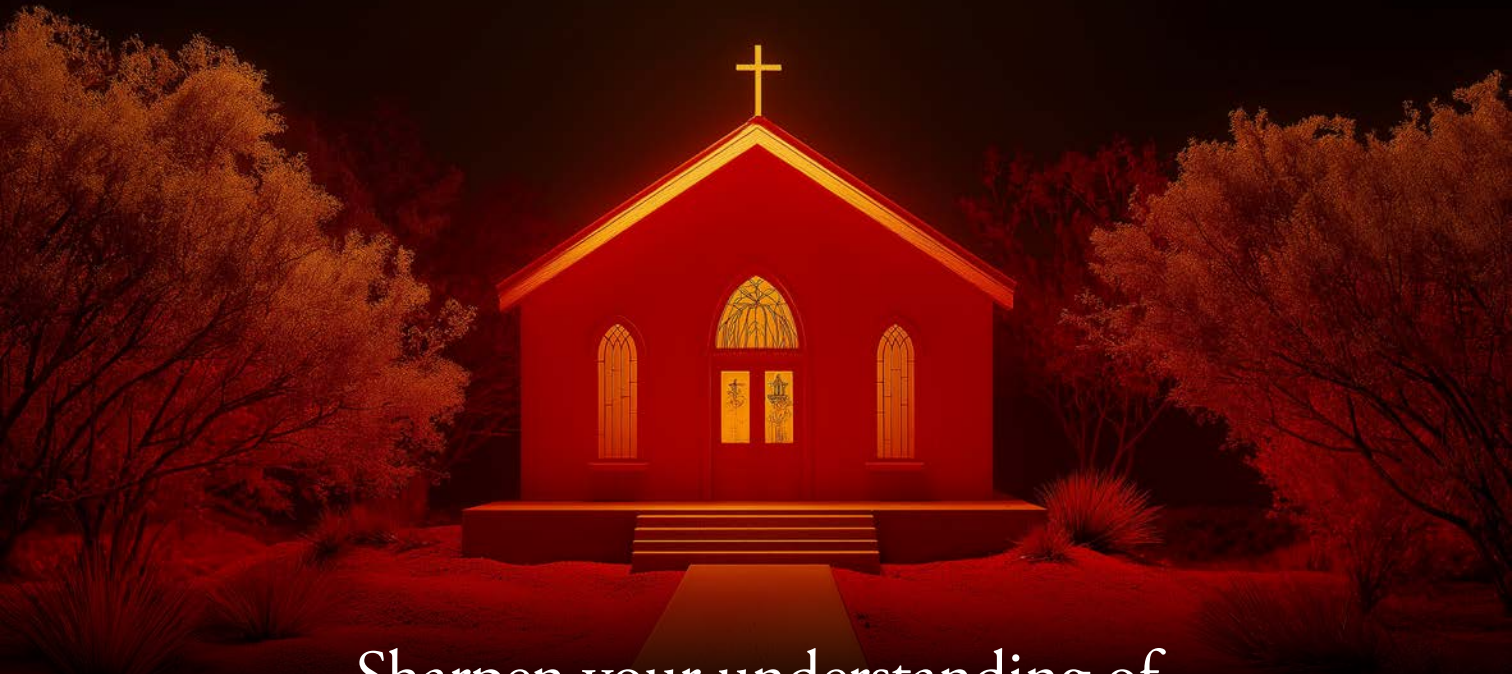


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Serve God's Kingdom With Power in the Last Days



Sharpen your understanding of
God's grace to move in the prophetic

BY MIKE THOMPSON

The Holy Spirit oversees the communication system of heaven. He is the One who reveals and transmits all truth to us, including future truth. Scripture says, “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all

truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13). That means everyone can hear the voice of God calling them to salvation, because the Holy Spirit brings it to them.

The Spirit doesn't suddenly stop speaking when a person gets saved. Once He's inside you, you are His temple and He speaks even more. Why would the Holy Spirit be inside us and not speak? That would not make sense!

Spirit Operations Procedure

The Spirit manages the power flow from heaven. Everyone who receives the Holy Spirit has the supernatural power of God available to them. Scripture says this plainly: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). This is the prophetic nature of the church. It involves all the ways in which the Spirit communicates to us, plus all the ways the Spirit releases spiritual power into and through us. Although it's for everyone who has been born again, the majority of born-again people don't realize that. Therefore, they don't develop or walk in this power.

To me the prophetic lifestyle makes perfect sense. It's simply flowing with the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to energize us any way He chooses. In previous chapters I detailed the spiritual gifts and gave examples of how they manifest. Knowing these details is important, but it is more important to know the Holy Spirit personally and develop a primary dependence on His indwelling presence. We don't need to consciously think about which combination of energies, gifts, anointings, and supernatural manifestations is in operation in a given moment. We can just enjoy the flow of the Spirit.

Since the night my wife and I were baptized in the Holy Spirit, we have grown enough to flow with the Spirit without having to analyze or think about it too much. The supernatural life has become our normal life together. When we first started out, we used to think about it. Now our focus is on the fullness of our relationships with the Spirit. It's similar to our marriage. We know each other so well that we flow through life harmoniously. There's an ease about being together and having the same goals, as well as deferring to one another's wisdom and abilities. For those who desire a supernatural life, staying close to the Holy Spirit builds their skill levels and credibility.

A Prophet's Perspective of Grace

Here is how to look at the subject of grace from the perspective of a prophet. As a prophet I can write from this point of view. What I'm teaching has come from decades of studying God's Word and watching it play out through the numerous spiritual experiences I've had.

To become skilled in the ways of the Spirit, we must first learn an important principle: Grace is the assurance of our prophetic lives because grace is what makes prophetic revelation sure. In other words, to really put faith in what the Spirit is revealing, something must guarantee it. According to Paul, the assurance and guarantee of revelation is grace.

Remember my working definition of *grace*? It is the unmerited favor and empowering presence of God enabling us to (1) be who He created us to be, and (2) do what He has called us to do. Grace is like an umbrella covering our redemption and lives in Jesus. As we learned earlier, however, grace also enables and

empowers our unique spiritual giftings, along with everything the Spirit shows and tells us prophetically.

Prophetic grace is the atmosphere, and it becomes the assurance that what is revealed will come to pass. Grace is what makes every promise from God sure, *stable*, *valid*, and *guaranteed*.

"But don't we have to obey?" you may ask.

Of course! That's what faith is about. Yet faith can believe and trust only in what grace has already given as a sure offer—a stable, valid, guaranteed offer. Our faith then is the assurance of receiving the manifestation, because grace is already the assurance that God has given us His promise. You enter into

"Grace is the assurance of our prophetic lives because grace is what makes prophetic revelation sure."

grace by your faith, and your faith is a response to grace. The promise is prophetic truth, which contains an atmosphere of grace. Nothing can forcibly remove us from God's grace. The devil can't do it. Our friends can't do it. Neither our families nor our enemies can do it. Not even our circumstances can remove us from God's grace.

However, confusion, ignorance, shame, condemnation, doubt and unbelief can affect our faith and cause us to lose sight of grace. The good news is that God's grace never leaves us. Spurgeon said it well: "The rain of his grace is always dropping; the river of his bounty is ever-flowing, and the well-spring of his love is constantly overflowing." You can get right back on your faith and pick up where you left off. This applies to all revelations that are given to you throughout your life—everything from your salvation to the Holy Spirit personally leading you in the flow of spiritual gifts.

Remember the encounter I described in the previous chapter about when Jesus showed me the revelation building? When I went into the first room, the salvation room, there were walls,

a floor, and a ceiling, meaning the revelation had defined parameters. There was also an atmosphere within the room and a door that provided access. The walls, floor, and ceiling represent revelation.

Jesus, and from the Holy Spirit are forms of spiritual truth. The following illustration helps us get a clearer picture.

God's written Word and personal word are boundaries of spiritual revela-

fulfillment. The atmosphere of grace empowers you to walk out the revelation, and your faith gives you access.

Four Spiritual Equations for Understanding Grace and Truth

Understanding the workings of grace and truth is essential. The following spiritual equations can help us grasp larger truths where grace, truth and their effects are concerned.

1) **Grace + Truth = Faith**

Without grace you cannot have faith, and without truth you cannot have faith. It is the combination of grace and truth that triggers spiritual faith. God's revelation creates the room, and the Spirit's grace fills the atmosphere, allowing your faith to get you through the door.

2) **Grace + Truth + Time = Success**

Even though time is in our natural realm, God relates to us here. There is a divine timing involved with the fulfillment of His promises. Unless we realize this, we will become discouraged when the promise seems delayed and faith wanes. By faith and patience we inherit His promises (Heb. 6:12).

3) **Grace – Truth = Confusion, Subjectivity, and Presumption**

How can you have grace where there is no promise based in truth? If you don't really believe (or you believe only part of) a promise that's given, you become wishy-washy, confused, and presumptuous. But presumption is not faith. Neither is the need to see how things work out before you believe. Grace does not fill what-ifs and maybes. It fills truth.

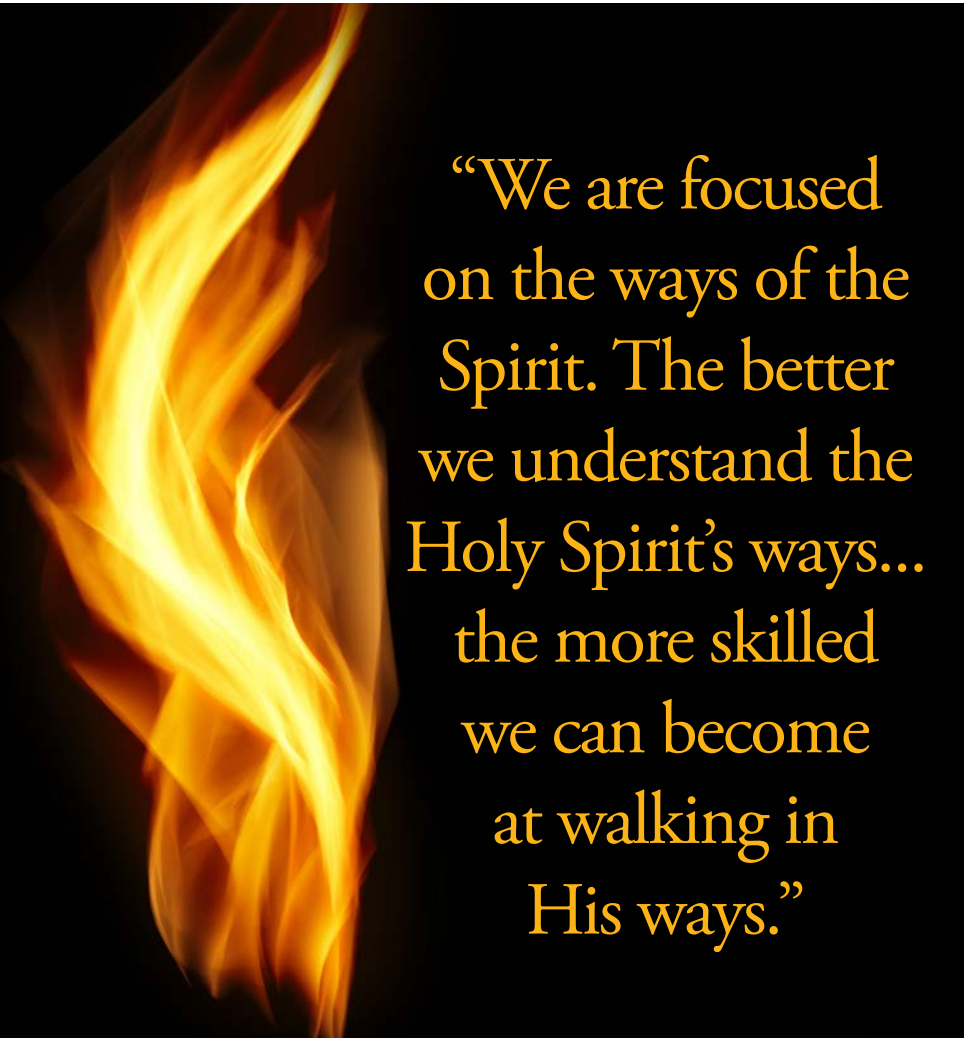
4) **Truth – Grace = Legalism and Lifeless Works**

Technically, this equation refers to assumed truth. With grace missing, assumed truth can produce only legalistic performances and lifeless works driven by a sense of obligation rather than true inspiration.

Misconceptions About Grace

Among Christians there are many misconceptions about grace. Let's address some of them, and then I'll point out what God's Word says is true.

Misconception 1: Grace kicks in when you don't have enough faith to get the job done.



“We are focused on the ways of the Spirit. The better we understand the Holy Spirit's ways... the more skilled we can become at walking in His ways.”

The atmosphere of the room represents the Spirit of grace, and the door represents faith, by which we gain access to the room.

Grace and truth are companions. The Bible is absolute truth. We know that. But let's frame it a little differently so we can grasp the prophetic aspect of truth. When God spoke to Abraham by revelation, Abraham didn't have scriptures for it. But God's promise matched what would eventually become Scripture. More than four hundred years later Moses wrote the Pentateuch, which became part of God's written Word and covered Abraham's experience. All revelations that come from the Father, from

tion, as represented by the circle in the illustration. The Bible, the written Word of God, is the *logos* of God, and every word spoken to us by the Spirit is the *rhema* of God. Both contain the promises of God. The revelation sets the spiritual boundaries of what we can believe or expect from God.

In the illustration grace and the Spirit within the circle compose the atmosphere of a revelation. Grace is always given with the promise to make the revelation sure so our faith can then access it. God would never reveal something to you apart from His accompanying grace. If He did, your intellect and flesh would have to (or would try to) produce the revelation's

Have you ever thought that? Or do you know someone who has? They may have said something such as, “I’m having trouble believing for that, so I’m just going to throw myself on the grace of God.” They confused grace with mercy. Grace is God’s attitude toward the undeserving; mercy is His attitude toward those who err. You can throw yourself on God’s mercy when you ask for forgiveness of sin, but it is faith (and not its lack) that keeps you in His grace.

Truth: Faith is a response to grace. You can’t have faith without it (Rom. 4:13; Eph. 2:8).

Misconception 2: We access grace only after we have done everything we can by our own abilities.

Grace authorizes and empowers everything we do in God’s kingdom. If our services as believers are lacking grace, then they are nothing more than fleshly works. Here’s the difference: When we are Spirit led and moving in grace, the Spirit empowers all that we do.

Truth: If your efforts are not born of grace, they cannot be credited to you as righteousness (Rom. 4:1–5; Gal. 3:1–3).

Misconception 3: Grace allows us to sin.

My point here is not *if we sin*. We *do* sin. My concern is the erroneous belief that grace makes sin OK. Repentance corrects sin and releases God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9). However, as I mentioned, God’s mercy heals the breaches in our relationships with Him. The attitude that sinning doesn’t matter because God’s grace covers it is in error.

Truth: The power of sin is flesh and legalism. Righteousness is empowered by grace (Rom. 6:11–15).

Misconception 4: Grace means we don’t have to obey God or be responsible for our actions. It’s a get-out-of-jail-free card.

Personal responsibility and obedience are big things with God. To judge your motives, He looks at your heart, not the weakness of your flesh. It’s your individual responsibility to be Spirit led, to walk righteously, and to be accountable to Jesus (Gal. 5:25).

Truth: Grace produces the highest kind of responsibility, because it requires that you direct all the energies and efforts from your heart toward fulfilling God’s will (1 Cor. 15:9–10).

Misconception 5: Grace leads to disorganization and chaos, and anything goes.

Chaos and confusion have nothing to do with grace. Grace is a principle that helps God’s highly organized kingdom run smoothly and effectively. Going back to the revelation building analogy, grace is the atmosphere of a room with well-defined boundaries.

Truth: Grace represents the unshakable order of God’s kingdom (Heb. 12:25–29).

Misconception 6: Grace is weak and passive.

There’s a tendency for us to rationalize bypassing the Spirit and going straight to our own strengths and abilities to get the job done *for* God rather than *with* God. When Abraham and Sarah did that, they created Ishmael, a son of the flesh. Isaac was the son of promise, born of grace. When we attempt to make God’s promises happen by our own means, we birth Ishmaels (Gal. 4:23). I think Paul had this in mind when he said, “I do not set aside and invalidate and frustrate and nullify the grace (unmerited favor) of God” (Gal. 2:21, AMPC).

Truth: In Scripture grace is never confused with passivity or failure. It’s always coupled with truth, confidence, and power (John 1:14; Acts 4:33; Heb. 4:12).

Let’s remember that we are focused on the ways of the Spirit. The better we understand the Holy Spirit’s ways of interacting with us, the more skilled we can become at walking in His ways. ◀

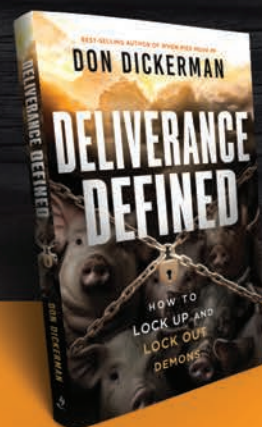
MIKE THOMPSON is a respected prophet and Bible teacher at Word of Life/Mike Thompson Ministries in Las Vegas. He functions as a prophet to the body of Christ. Thompson has been a guest on such programs as Sid Roth’s It’s Supernatural, The Eric Metaxas Show and ElijahStreams With Steve Shultz. His new book, *The Lion’s Army*, is available now at amazon.com.



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CRASH COURSE *in* RED HEIFERS

**ALL YOUR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
ANSWERED ON THEIR PROPHETIC IMPORTANCE**

BY MONDO GONZALEZ

Throughout the last few years of writing, teaching and conducting interviews about the red heifers, I have received many good questions and think it would be helpful to bring them together in one location. Compiled here are the core topics and related questions, to give you a sound foundation of what the red heifers mean in Bible prophecy and the potential timetable for these prophecies to be fulfilled.

Do you think the red heifer ceremony has already been performed in secret?

I have often considered the possibility of a secret red heifer ceremony and wondered whether it was possible. For two specific reasons, I don't think the ceremony has taken place in secret.

The Temple Institute, along with the Boneh Israel organization, spent considerable time and resources searching for a qualified red heifer. Rabbis from the Temple Institute visited Texas to give a preliminary inspection and then spent \$700,000 to purchase and fly the five cows over to Israel. Why would they do this if they were not prepared to officiate the ceremony? Either they were originally quite zealous to perform the ceremony and have since changed their minds, or else we are missing another piece of information.

The second reason why I believe the ceremony could not be done in secret relates to the geography of the precise locations on the Mount of Olives. If you look at that map, you will see that these two locations are within the boundaries of eastern Jerusalem and hardly in a remote location. We must remember that the red heifer ritual ceremony essentially involves a large bonfire that could not be hidden in such a populated area. A fire of this size would produce major amounts of smoke and attract the attention of the fire department and police. In addition, ever since Hamas brought attention to the red cows in January 2024, the Arab people are also aware of these developments.

Some people suggest that the red heifers currently in Shiloh are just decoys. Is this true?

Back in the fall of 2023 I had the opportunity to interview Byron Stinson. He was preparing various logistics for the red heifer ceremony, which was potentially planned for April or June of 2024. Obviously when this window passed, they did not suggest another time frame.

During that interview, I asked Byron about the security situation. These are expensive cows, and I assumed they would be kept in a secure environment that cannot be accessed by the public. Why? Well, remember that any small action can disqualify the cows. They do not have to be killed to be disqualified; they just need to be blemished by a small cut or a brand. Even throwing an object like a blanket or a yoke over a cow could disqualify it.

I had a couple of friends visit the Shiloh visitor center in June 2024. They were so close to the five red cows that the animals were licking my friend's hand. Obviously this is not tight security by any stretch of the imagination. For this reason, I am skeptical that the real qualified cows from Texas are accessible to the public at Shiloh. It seems likely that at least a few of them are decoys. I do not know for sure and this is just my guess, but looking at the situation logically, it makes sense.

How many red heifers are still qualified?

Based on the latest news from December 2024, only two red heifers of the original five flown to Israel in September 2022 remain preliminarily qualified. Remember that any cow that is preliminarily qualified must be



“We always need to do our research and vet information before passing it along.”

examined and requalified immediately prior to the ceremony.

Is there an upper limit on the age of the red heifer?

According to the Temple Institute website, there is no maximum age limit for the red heifer. There are many diverse opinions on this matter among the rabbis, but the following is an official statement from the Temple Institute website.

As for the time the red heifer may be used for this commandment—the Sages state that it is valid when it reaches maturity, i.e. from the beginning of its third year. *From this age and onward the red heifer is valid without age limitations.* Though, ideally, one should not wait till it passes the age of four, lest it grows hairs of colors that deem it invalid.

Does the red heifer need to be born in Israel?

No, it does not.

Can the red heifer be genetically modified?

Opinions among the rabbis vary on this issue, but efforts have been made in the past to import Red Angus cow embryos for the sake of the Israel red heifer breeding program. It also depends on how someone might define “genetically modified” with its various nuances.

What will be done with the disqualified red heifers?

While the five red heifers flown to Israel in 2022 were quite costly, we can be assured that any cow that becomes disqualified will not simply become an expensive steak. Those that are disqualified will be used in the Israeli breeding program, as they still maintain superb genetics to pass on to the next generation.

When is the next window for the red heifers to be used in a ceremony? Is the red heifer ceremony imminent?

The increased interest in the upcoming red heifer ceremony is positive in that it has drawn more people into the understanding that we are living at the end of the age. The negative part is that misinformation seems to be ubiquitous on the internet. I’ve also observed a great amount of carelessness or even intentional misleading by so-called journalists when covering news about the red heifer.

In March 2024, CBS News went to Israel to report on the red heifers that are now in Shiloh. They interviewed a rabbi affiliated with the Temple Institute who owns a piece of property on the Mount of Olives where the ceremony will likely take place. In the interview, CBS News intimated that the efforts of those involved in bringing the red heifers to Israel had caused the Oct. 7, Hamas attack. CBS also stated in the video that “a massive altar already awaits where the heifers are to be burned,” and showed an image of a large white ramp structure surrounded

by an industrial area and green Astroturf.

At least three things are wrong with this report. First, this altar is in the West Bank and not on the Mount of Olives, which is the required ceremony location according to the rabbinic tradition of the Mishnah. Second, the ceremony does not involve an altar. In the third temple system, the only altar that exists is on the Temple Mount. The red heifer is not to be sacrificed, as sacrifices only happen on the Temple Mount; it is to be slaughtered and then burned whole on a pyre with other elements as described in Numbers 19. Third, this altar has since been torn down and is no longer used for rehearsals. Yet the CBS report made it look like this altar is currently being built for the very purpose of the red heifer ceremony.

The red heifers showed up in the news again with exaggerated fanfare. This time it involved a rehearsal ceremony with a picture of a cow next to a rabbi and a priest with several other people. While there was nothing wrong with his report, there were several elements in the picture that I found humorous. One, in the background it showed a paper cutout of a red heifer that was not even fully red! Second, the image included a rabbi who from the Temple Institute organization. Third, this practice rehearsal was taking place in the old city not far from the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. In the picture you could clearly see the Mount of Olives in the background and the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. So, this practice ceremony was clearly not happening at the required location of the Mount of Olives.

I do not fault the sincerity in those involved in this rehearsal, as they were simply practicing with what appeared to be a young priest. However, many people ran to social media and posted that a new red heifer ceremony was taking place right now in Israel! This was a complete lie and pure exaggeration. Nothing of the sort was true. We always need to do our research and vet information before passing it along, recognizing that much of what is being presented these days is completely erroneous.

At the same time, we realize that the delay in performing the ceremony on the Mount of Olives does not mean that those involved in the process are standing

idly by. They continue to practice the ceremony, and it remains prominent in their current thinking. Numerous groups of rabbis are working out the details and trying to gain as much consensus as possible among the various religious orthodox groups.

We are living in exciting times, as we haven't seen even a preliminarily qualified red heifer in 1,900 years! Jesus is coming soon, and He will fix the world and all its mess. The world will be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). God's presence will no longer be in the shadows, and the whole world will give Him the rightful glory He deserves.

Why is the third temple called the "temple of God"?

I often receive an extended version of this question that says, "If God did not want the Jews to build the temple that will be present in the tribulation, then why are these temples referred to as the 'temple of God'?"

There are several ways to think through this question. First, we know that Jesus is the final sacrifice and no other physical temple is needed in this current age. Therefore, in an immediate sense, God does not want the Jews to build a temple. For the Jewish people to return to Moses and the Law instead of receiving Jesus as the Messiah and accepting His completed work would be a step backward. Yet, in order to bring them to ultimate salvation (Rom. 11:26), God will providentially ordain them to build this temple so their trust in the Antichrist will be shattered, which is one reason for the tribulation period (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:7). Bible teachers often label this as a distinction between the *prescriptive* will of God and His *providential* or *permissive* will. God will use this false third temple and their agreement with the Antichrist to break the stubborn will of the Jewish people during the seven-year tribulation as He brings them back to Himself and they ultimately call upon the name of Jesus (Matt. 23:37–39; Hos. 5:15; Deut. 9:6).

A second consideration about the use of "the temple of God" in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 11:1 revolves around the technical use of the Greek noun *theou*, found in the genitive case,

which indicates possession or association. The genitive case is the specific form of nouns in the Greek New Testament. In other words, the temple is not actually "of God," endorsed by God with its false sacrifices, but instead could be translated "the temple *associated with* God," and this certainly fits the context of both passages.

A third consideration is that God said quite clearly in Old Testament texts that the Temple Mount is where He would put His *name* (2 Kings 21:7). Yahweh owns the Temple Mount. It is where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac in Genesis 22. It is the place where David purchased the threshing floor (2 Sam. 24:18). Though the Jews are currently in a state of unbelief, the very possession of the location itself could lend to the idea that any temple there would be considered sanctified in some sense—not in a salvation sense, as we see in 1 Corinthians 7:14 where an unbelieving spouse and child are sanctified (set apart) by the believing spouse. I prefer the second option above, but as you can see, there are various ways to understand the use of "the temple of God" in the New Testament.

After nearly 2,000 years, we certainly seem to be on the cusp of Bible prophecy in the 70th week of Daniel. We are witnessing the preparations being set in place for the purification of the Temple Mount and construction of a third temple, which thereby sets the stage for events in the seven-year tribulation. We live in exciting times—and heartbreaking times; it is exciting to realize we may be the generation to witness the Lord's return, while also heartbreaking to consider the deception, persecution and destruction that are coming on the earth. ◀

MONDO GONZALES *has been studying and teaching Bible prophecy as a pastor for more than 25 years. He has a bachelor's degree in biblical studies, with a concentration in Jewish studies, along with a graduate degree in biblical archaeology, giving him the necessary expertise to explain the mystery of the red heifer ritual. Mondo is the co-host of the Prophecy Watchers television program, podcast and radio program. His newest book, The Mystery of the Red Heifer, comes out in March and is available now at amazon.com.*

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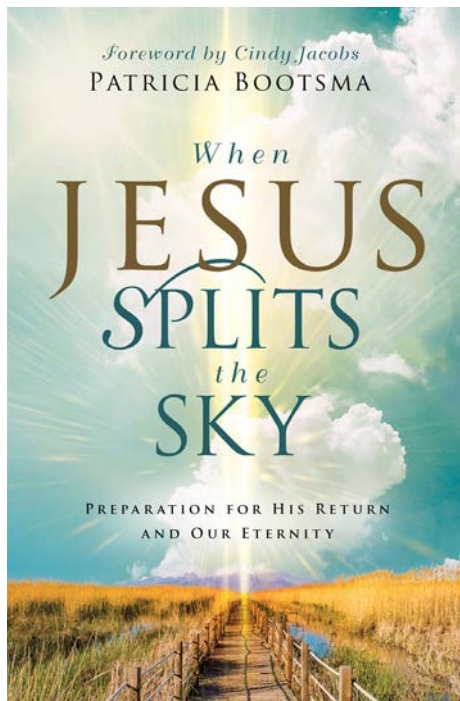
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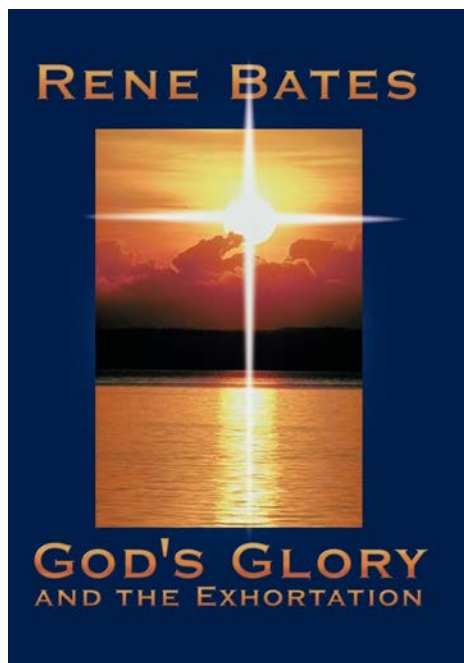
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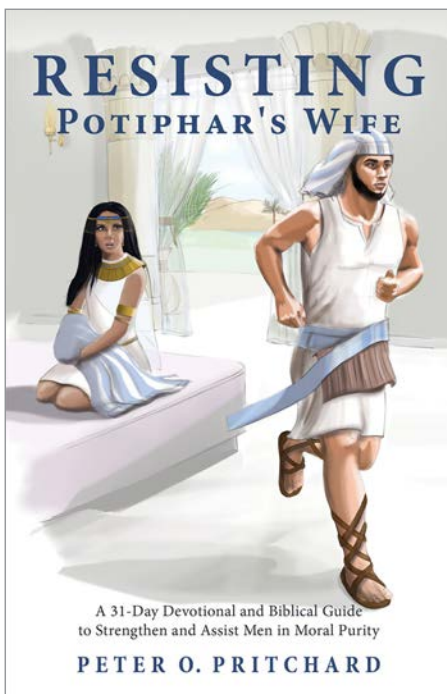
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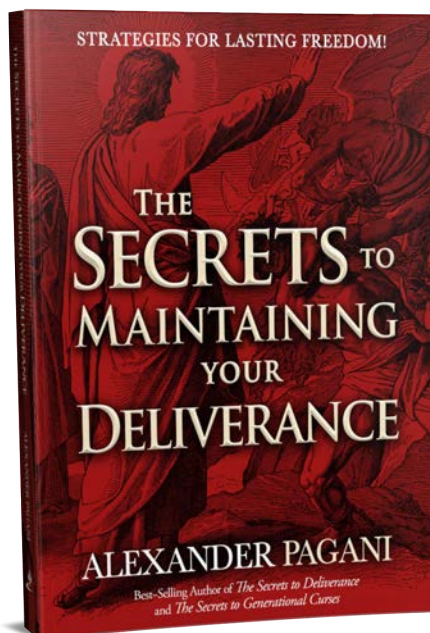
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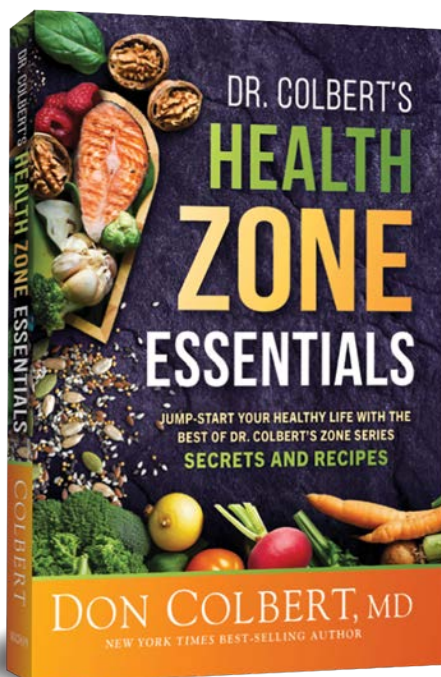
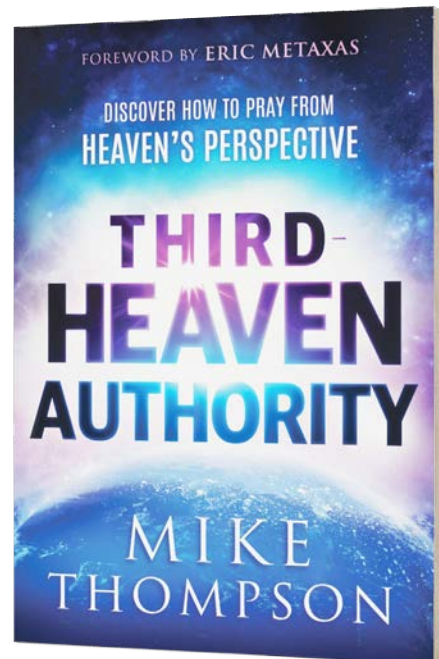
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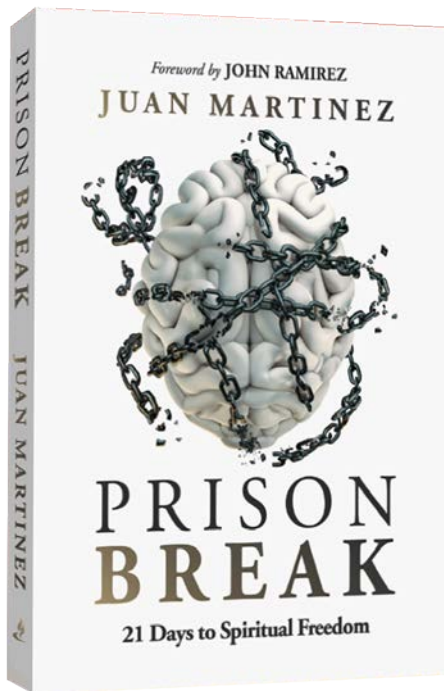


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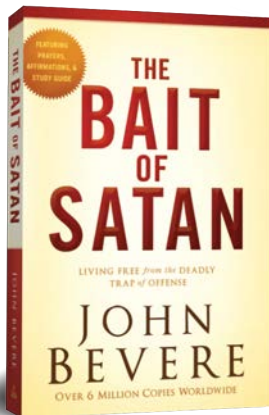
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A life with Christ is about unshackling your chains of bondage to embrace a life of freedom. Juan Martinez's twenty-one-day devotional, *Prison Break*, encourages life change through practical steps such as challenging negative thinking patterns with 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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***THE BAIT OF SATAN* by John Bevere**

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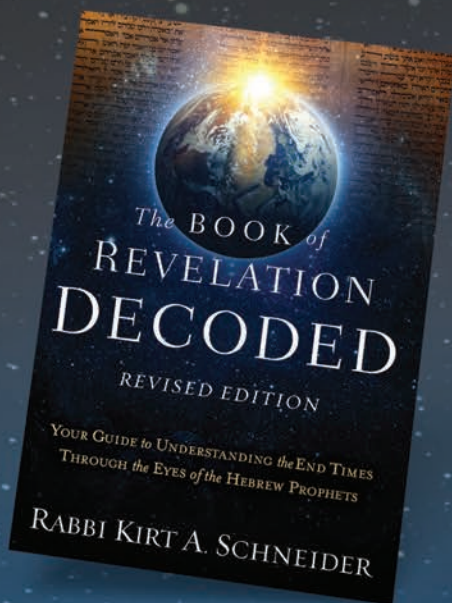
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THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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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/.

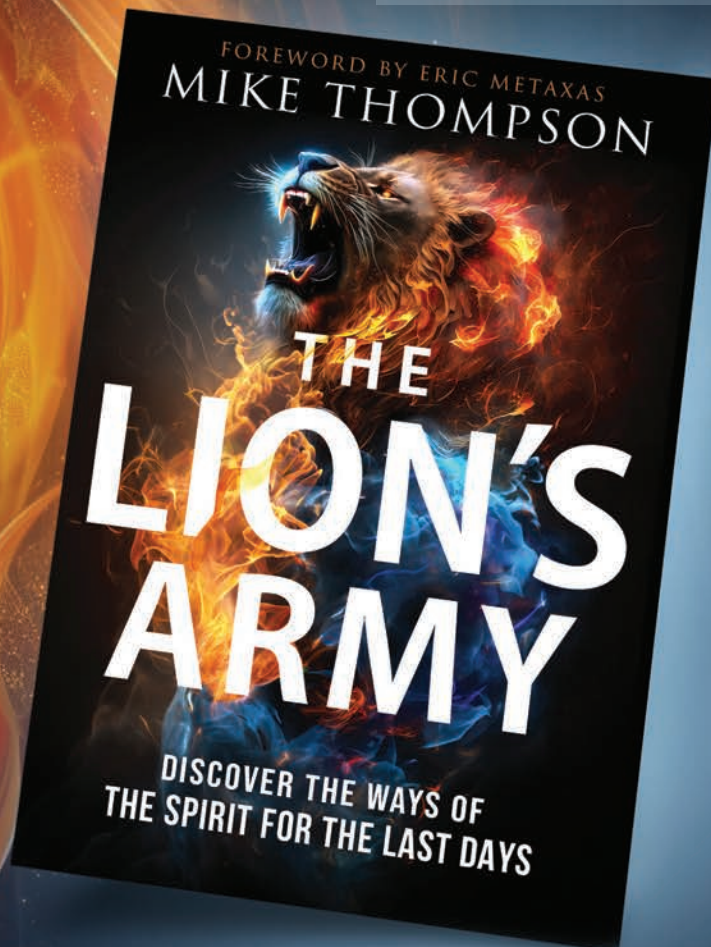
“But my God shall supply your every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”—Philippians 4:19, MEV

FEBRUARY

Feb. 1	Ex. 30-32; Acts 8
Feb. 2	Ex. 33-34; Ps. 16; Acts 9
Feb. 3	Ex. 35-36; Acts 10
Feb. 4	Ex. 37-38; Ps. 19; Acts 11
Feb. 5	Ex. 39-40; Ps. 15; Acts 12
Feb. 6	Lev. 1-3; Acts 13
Feb. 7	Lev. 4-6; Acts 14
Feb. 8	Lev. 7-9; Acts 15
Feb. 9	Lev. 10-12; Acts 16
Feb. 10	Lev. 13-14; Acts 17
Feb. 11	Lev. 15-17; Acts 18
Feb. 12	Lev. 18-19; Ps. 13; Acts 19
Feb. 13	Lev. 20-22; Acts 20
Feb. 14	Lev. 23-24; Ps. 24; Acts 21
Feb. 15	Lev. 25; Ps. 25-26; Acts 22
Feb. 16	Lev. 26-27; Acts 23
Feb. 17	Num. 1-2; Acts 24
Feb. 18	Num. 3-4; Acts 25
Feb. 19	Num. 5-6; Ps. 22; Acts 26
Feb. 20	Num. 7; Ps. 23; Acts 27
Feb. 21	Num. 8-9; Acts 28
Feb. 22	Num. 10-11; Ps. 27; Mark 1
Feb. 23	Num. 12-13; Ps. 90; Mark 2
Feb. 24	Num. 14-16; Mark 3
Feb. 25	Num. 17-18; Ps. 29; Mark 4
Feb. 26	Num. 19-20; Ps. 28; Mark 5
Feb. 27	Num. 21-23; Mark 6
Feb. 28	Num. 24-27; 1 Cor. 13

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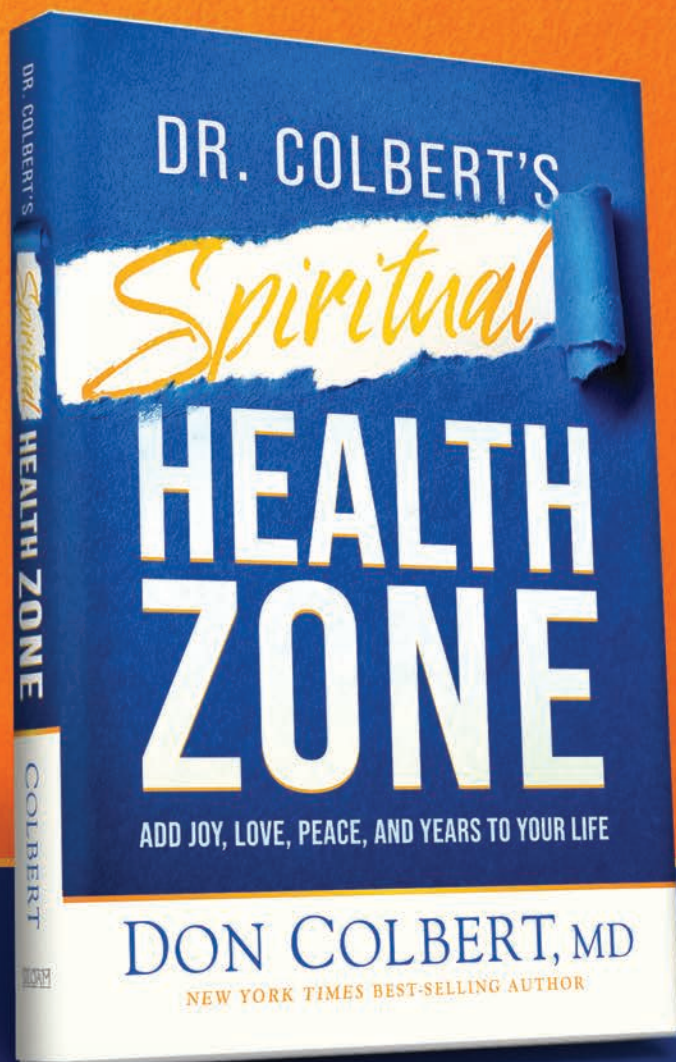


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