

SMG

# Solutions

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Shares the Success  
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How to Equip Your  
Congregation to Share  
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Randy Alcorn asks,

Is There a Difference  
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# President's Note



**Eric Smith** is the president of Smith Media Group, a full service agency for proactive ministries worldwide. Visit [www.smithmediagroup.com](http://www.smithmediagroup.com) to learn more.

Hello, and thank you for reading the Feb/Mar issue of *Solutions* magazine!

2016 is already off to a great start, with much growth and change taking place in the ministries we've come to love. One exciting development this year was this month's announcement of Feed the Children's new president and CEO, J.C. Watts. With his diverse background in athletics, business, ministry and non-profit, I know he will strengthen all that Feed the Children is called by God to do in ministering to the daily needs of the indigent globally.

This edition of *Solutions* is sure to bless you! Bishop Charles Blake, Sr., is our cover story, and I have to say it is truly an honor to share his thoughts. Many years ago, while serving Rev. R.W. Schambach, I had the privilege of working with Bishop Blake, and his ministry left an indelible mark on me. I hope that you enjoy hearing his heart as much as I do in this article.

Other featured authors we are proud to share with you include Dr. Robert Jeffress, Skip Heitzig, Alli Worthington, Lester Sumrall, and Randy Alcorn. Each contributor to *Solutions* has a unique perspective and God-given wisdom to bless your life. Read every article – and share them with your friends by email or social media!

***Inspire someone today.***

Eric Smith, *President of Smith Media Group*

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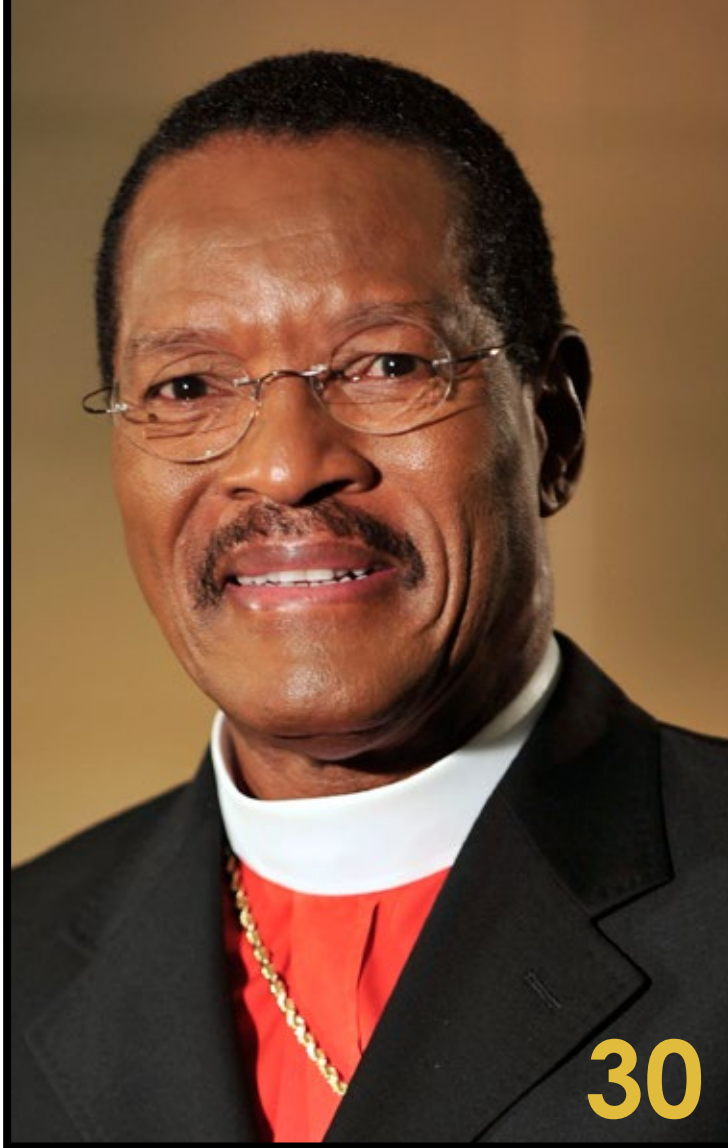
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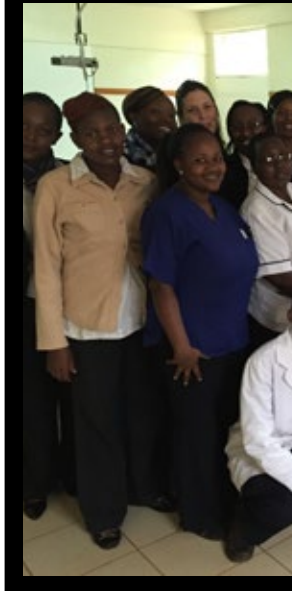
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# That They May Set Their HOPE in God



By J.A. Myhre

The majority of the world's children wake up each day to a life of relative danger: tenuous food supplies, the lurking threat of violence, unregulated pollution, microbe-laden water, distant or inaccessible health care, substandard schools. And a significant portion of those face much worse: recruitment as child soldiers, exploitation by traffickers, physical disabilities, or the lonely vulnerability of being orphaned. Nearly six million children under age 5 won't live through 2016, due primarily to poverty-related causes: lack of medical care and needed vaccinations, or living in an areas where malaria is endemic.

The world, in short, is a dangerous place for many children.

Parents the world over seek to protect their children, as much as possible. We value security for those we love. Though we may be thrown off-balance by threats of terrorism or cancer or unintentional injuries, parents in privileged countries can largely expect that their children will have enough to eat, a school to attend, and protection from many of the dangers of war and disease.

Many parents in North America are left with the dilemma: How do I raise a confident, secure child in a world of uncertainty? How much should my child



know about the evils of this world? Wouldn't it be better to shield them completely?

First, let us put to rest the possibility that complete shielding is possible. Even if you were to raise your children in isolation from the internet, television, literature, neighbors or classmates, or any influence other than your own, we know that they would still encounter evil. Why? Because, as the famous line from Solzhenitsyn reminds us, the line between good and evil runs through every human heart. Our hearts and our children's would still confront the ugliness of jealousy, lies, greed, fear, manipulation,

harshness, and other sins with no input necessary from evils outside the home. And eventually those children would have to cross the threshold where the spectrum of evil broadens. So the real question we are asking becomes, how can we prepare our children for the realities of evil in a way that maximizes resilience and minimizes scars?

The key tool, I believe, has been given to all of us by our Heavenly Father: Story.

God's chosen method of communicating truth to us over the ages has been the spoken and written word. And He tells us to do the

same for our kids.

In Psalm 78, the Psalmist Asaph says:  
"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark saying of old, Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And his strength and His wonderful works that He has done. He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children, That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born That they may set their hope in God."

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Then the Psalm goes on to list a lot of darkness and sorrow. Rebellion, confusion, wind, dust, anger, provocation, wilderness, sword and fire. Hardly the stuff of children's stories. Yet we learn from the Bible several important answers to this parental dilemma, and several principles for the use of story.

**First, evil is the context for the praises of the LORD.** The more we see of the brokenness and desperation of this fallen world, the more we know the greatness of God's rescue. In the foundational giving of the Law in Deuteronomy, parents were specifically enjoined to teach their children about the slavery they suffered in Egypt, the horrific judgment plagues, the marvelous deliverance as the seas parted. The evil of our own hearts, known to God and forgiven by grace, similarly drives us to marvel at God's mercy and love. If we paint a world of tepid, moderate problems, we then minimize the astounding contrast of redemption.

**Second, including evil in the story validates what a child already instinctively senses.** We do not do our children a favor if we pretend that all is well. By giving the honest account of wilderness, wanderings, captivity and exile, children learn that their natural propensity to abhor evil and long for good have a basis in the story of the world. Evil is not presented as titillating or fun, nor is it watered down or excused. Evil is called out for just what it is: frightening and wrong. Note, though, that evil is the backdrop and not the climax of the story. The Bible is certainly not rated G. Babies are slaughtered and thrown into fires. A teenage girl trains to join a harem. A priest's concubine dies from a night of abuse and is then cut in pieces and mailed to the tribes to instigate

war. Bone-chilling evil which is not glossed over forms a thread through much of the narrative. But the story does not glorify this evil. It is part of the story, but not the point of the story.

**Last of all, in the story of Scripture, evil has a limit and an end.** The sweep of the narrative builds from a perfect creation ruined as paradise is lost, to an undercover King come to regain His lands, who walks with agonizing, willful determination right into the hands of evil and death. Just as darkness seems to have won the day, the King conquers death for all time and is resurrected as the beginning of a New Heavens and New Earth. But rather than aggressively stamping out all evil at that moment, He gives His followers the mission to go out to the ends of the earth with the good news so that people everywhere can choose life. In the mystery of the universe, God works in hidden ways, winning humanity back from the clutches of evil and carefully preserving good. And the story closes with a vision of the ultimate end of all evil, the eternal reign of a city of light where tears are no more.

So from Scripture we can conclude that evil forms an important part of the story of God's power and love we are to tell our children, but we also see that within that story evil is temporary and limited. What is the impact on a child, then, of interacting with evil in a story?

Provided the story is appropriate to the child's developmental age, acknowledging the fear-inducing and sad aspects of life can be healthy. Following characters, to whom kids can relate and testing the outcomes of choices can be an empowering way for children to get a grip on a world that might



otherwise seem completely chaotic or unfair. A child is reassured that he or she is not the only one facing the loss of a parent or the humiliation of bullying, or worse.

Presenting evil in the form of a story not only helps young people process their own experiences, but allows them to build empathy for others whose experiences may be different. In 2016, our North American kids may not experience the threat of becoming refugees, but don't we want them to understand something of the experience of thousands and thousands of other children? Won't this equip them, one day, to make decisions based on wisdom and justice for all?

As a parent and a pediatrician raising four children, I wanted my own kids to struggle with the broken evils of this world in stories that put their experiences into perspective and offered

hope. I had no illusions that mine would be oblivious of evil. They grew up on the Uganda-Congo border, in a remote valley marked by both beauty and poverty. They and their friends knew how to take cover from gunfire. They saw sick babies brought to us for treatment. They attended funerals. They had to overcome the stigma of being outsiders. Structural evil, interpersonal evil and biological evil all clouded their childhoods. But stories that had strong African settings and characters for their age group were difficult to find. So one year, I wrote them a short novel for Christmas, in a genre I would call "young adult magical realism." I gave them a character who faced some of the worst evils that could befall a young child: being an orphan, being trafficked, being injured, being lost, being desperate enough to betray a friend. But those tragedies come within the fabric of a story that also includes purpose, hope, and ultimately, redemption.

The result is a book called *A Chameleon, A Boy, and A Quest*, and that started an annual Christmas tradition for the next four years. This year the second book of the series, *A Girl, A Bird, and A Rescue*, will be published as well. I believe that stories like these attempt to strike the right balance of acknowledging evil, but pointing to the deeper truth that all shall be well in the end. Our kids need that--from their stories...and from us.



Purchase your copy of J.A. Myhre's book  
**"A Chameleon, a Boy, and a Quest"**  
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Jennifer Myhre, MD, serves as a doctor with Serge in East Africa where she has worked for over two decades. She is passionate about health care for the poor, training local doctors and nurses, promoting childhood nutrition and development, and being the hands of Jesus in the hardest places.

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# The Matchless Name of Jesus

By Peter Doseck

Peter and John were busy men after the resurrection of Jesus, yet they never failed to take time to pray. One day they went to the temple together at a time the Bible calls "the hour of prayer." It was 3:00 pm, and I am sure lots of people were focused on business as usual in the city, but Peter and John were focused on being about the Father's business.

When they arrived at the gate of the temple, a gate that was called "Beautiful," they were about to pass a crippled man who lay there every day, begging for whatever passersby might give him. The man noticed Peter and John, and he called out to them as he did to everyone who came near. I expect he said something like, "Sirs, can you spare some change?"

Peter immediately looked eyes with the man and

replied, "Look at us." The man looked at them eagerly, expecting to be given something of value. What he got, however, was more than he could have imagined.

Peter said boldly, "I don't have any silver or gold, but what I do have I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" The Bible says Peter grabbed the man by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones were strong.

The man was so shocked he jumped up and stood for a minute, then he walked, and finally he went into the temple with them, all the while leaping and praising God. Guess who saw him? Everybody. Guess what they did? They ran to see this awesome sight, and God was given great glory.

We must never underestimate the power of the name of Jesus!

## **The Right to His Name**

The name of Jesus is not well-accepted in many places today, even in places where you would think it would be welcome. We know the world is trying to get us to exempt ourselves from faith in the name of Jesus, but worse yet are the religious people who are trying to straddle the fence.

Public figures who do not know Jesus personally, but want you to think they do, will pray in "the name of God" or "in the name of Christ", thinking they will be regarded as tolerant and inoffensive. No, the Bible says we are to pray in the name of Jesus.

Mark 16:15 says, "And He said unto them, Go

ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

The name of Jesus has been given to believers, those in a personal relationship with Jesus, and it is a part of our birthright. It's like when you were born you were given a name, but then there was a name that you received as a family inheritance. Your name might be Bob to your friends, but the judge at the probate court is only concerned that you are Mr. Smith, because only Bob Smith can claim the inheritance. Only Bob Smith has the birthright.

Your name did not come by works; it came as a gift from your parents. You could not earn what they gave you because it was only available as a right of birth.

In the same way, when Jesus gave us His name, He gave us power over all of the things His name is authorized to do. Everything Jesus was enabled to do, we as believers can do in His name.

It's not something we can earn. It only comes by right

of birth, and a birthright is only available through relationship. So in order to use the name of Jesus, you must be born again. You must be blood bought and blood washed. There is no other way.

When you are born again, you have an identity with Jesus Christ and you are marked. The devil knows who you are, and you need to know who you are. God will enforce and stand behind your right to use the name of Jesus, just as a judge for a son who has the right to inherit his father's estate will strike the gavel and say, "Case closed!"

### **We Must Believe**

1 John 3:22-23 says, "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."

Notice we are commanded to believe on the name of Jesus Christ. It's not an option, so surely if we believe on the name of Jesus, we will believe in

what the Name can do.

Some will say the day of miracles has passed, but how can that be when miracles were abundant for Jesus, for the people who believed in Him after He was resurrected, and for men and women all around the world today? The name of Jesus has not lost its power!

We do not doubt that wretched souls in the deepest, darkest places in life are saved and set free by just whispering the Name. We don't doubt because His name still brings salvation for anyone who will call upon Him; and if His name still

I have seen **blind** eyes opened in the name of Jesus.

I have seen **deaf** ears unstopped in the name of Jesus.

saves, then His name still brings miracles, signs, and wonders.

The name of Jesus is unexplainable in its majestic structure, power, and glory, and we are to build a sure foundation of faith in that Name. Our faith should never be shaken, nor should it be questioned. We must believe the things that have been said about His name - the things that are timeless accounts from the Word of God, and the things that are relayed to us in testimonies we hear today.

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I have seen blind eyes opened in the name of Jesus. I have seen deaf ears unstopped in the name of Jesus. Mute tongues have been loosed in the name of Jesus. Crippled limbs have been restored in the name of Jesus.

Miracles are not just for special people; they are for people like you who are willing to use the Name. It's the simplicity of the name of Jesus that heals, delivers, and saves.

In Mexico City a few years ago, we lined up over 80 deaf people in a Miracle Service. I have people in my church today who can testify that every single one of them heard when we put faith in the name of Jesus. The people who saw this great miracle do not doubt the power in the Name, and neither should you, my friend.

### **What the Name Can Do**

The Bible says we can cast out devils in the name of Jesus. In other words, devils are not a problem. They are not even a consideration in our lives. Believers need to stop allowing the image of the devil that Hollywood has invented to intimidate them. That image was created by people who have no faith and no idea what to do when the devil shows up.

Acts 16:16-18 says, "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Paul dealt with this demon, a rooted and established devil that had been accepted by this girl as normal, but it wasn't normal at all. Paul broke years of deception, corruption, manipulation, and control in one moment of time by the mention of the Name.

We have allowed the world and unbelieving believers in the church to strip us of faith in the name of Jesus. We cannot doubt the Name has power. We cannot doubt that it will do today what it has always done. We cannot doubt that what God upheld through the name of Jesus for Paul and others back in the day, will be withheld in the name of Jesus today.

I have been in over 20 nations, and I have found some places that are filled with witchcraft, demonic manifestations, occult activity, and darkness, and yet the name of Jesus has never failed.

One of the first times I visited Africa I encountered a woman who had been pregnant for over 18 months. You may think this is impossible, but there she was, and people around her testified that it was the truth.

This poor woman was carrying a dead baby in her womb, and her body would not let the child go. She had been cursed by a witch doctor, and no medical doctor in the region would touch her. Can you imagine carrying a dead child in a womb for over nine months?

We prayed for this woman in the name of Jesus, and the very next day someone came to tell me she had given birth to a living child. Hallelujah! You cannot convince me the name of Jesus has lost its power!

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faith in the name of Jesus. They sometimes ask people in the crowd to pray for one another just to prove that it has nothing to do with a man, but everything to do with the Name above every name. Guess what happens? They get the same results ... miracles!

### **You Can Do It!**

You can use the name of Jesus. It's easy, and it should be a way of life, because it's your nature to mention the Name. The devil knows you have the right and the power, but do you?

You can be free to use the name of Jesus as much as you want. You can see Him demonstrate Himself and uphold the validity of who He is, His work, His redemption, and His resurrection. You can show the world that Jesus is alive.

John 16:23-24 says: "And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

"In that day" refers to the day of the New Covenant, when men and women are born into the family of God. That day is today.

Think of it this way: Jesus has never heard "No" from the Father. He knows that if you pray in His name, God won't tell you "No" either. He will

hear, and He will answer.

Jesus was successful in every prayer He ever prayed, and He kept the disciples in His name. In John 16:23-24, as Jesus was preparing the disciples for His departure, He assured them the use of His name would be just as successful for them.

When we use the name of Jesus, the same power of prayer, the same release and receiving of that power, the same attention, and the same moving of the Father that Jesus experienced in His life we can experience, too. Don't ever doubt that God has heard you. Whatever you can envision God doing for Jesus, He will do it for you.

Hebrews 4:16 says: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

There is a place for us at the throne of grace, and when we mention the name of Jesus, it is no longer us visiting alone, but it is as if Jesus is standing there with us. In this place of grace and mercy God moves as surely and quickly for us and He would for Him.

You are a child of God who has been infused with the right to use the name of inheritance, the name of Jesus. The Bible tells us God will respond to the name of Jesus, and we know He cannot lie. God is faithful, and He upholds His

Word, watching over it and bringing it to pass.

The name of Jesus is marvelous in its power, glory, and majesty. It is the name that has authority over every other name in the world. Be bold and confident today, and as you use the name of Jesus, be prepared to receive whatever you ask in that matchless name.

\* \* \*

*Peter Doseck is a noted author whose books have impacted countless lives. He is also founder and senior pastor of Only Believe Ministries Christian Center in Botkins, Ohio. As an itinerant minister, his dynamic Miracle Crusades have resulted in over 2.1 million salvations and thousands of miraculous healings. More than 45,000 pastors from around the world have been transformed during his impartation meetings and over 2,500 new pastors have been launched into the ministry. To learn more, visit [peterdoseck.com](http://peterdoseck.com).*

# LEGACY:

## GOD'S MULTI-GENERATIONAL STORY

By Lester Sumrall

Long ago, in a galaxy far, far away..

The Creator of the universe decided that He wanted to create a man in His image and likeness. From that man, the Creator took a rib and created women as a help meet for him.

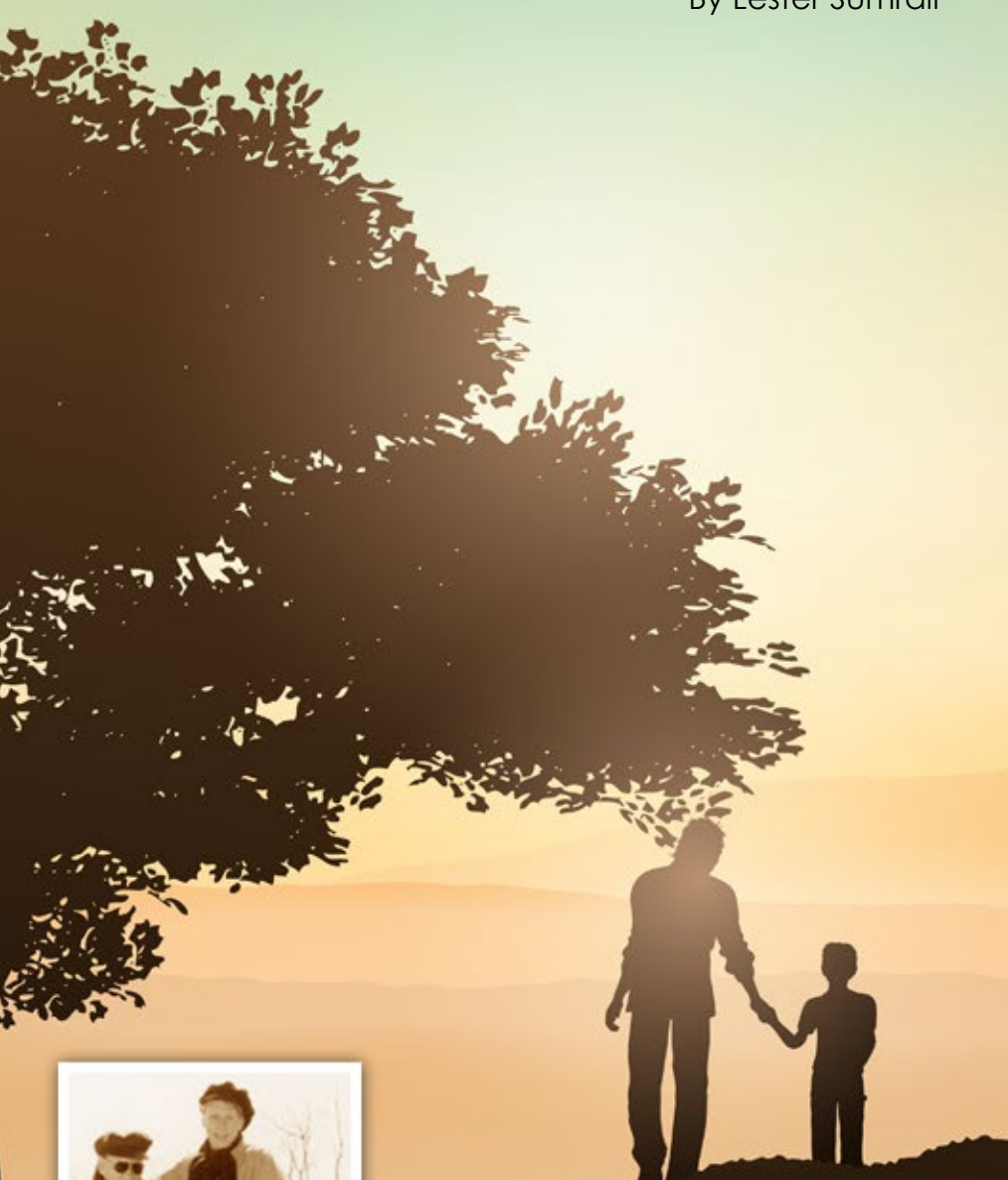
It was in the Garden of Eden that we see God's original plan, before the fall, to fellowship with man, to partner with man to fulfill His purposes on the earth.

Throughout Scripture we see how the Lord chose people and their families to accomplish His purposes. There are so many of them that we couldn't possibly cover them all in this article.

Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John The Baptizer, Jesus himself... All of them with a specific message, a specific mission. Many times, most times in fact, the mission laid out by God was something they could not do on their own. Each of them faced impossible odds.

Think about it.

Noah, building a boat and there's no rain. People didn't even know what rain was then. Abraham, on a journey of faith into a land of promise that was beyond his scope...and the promise of a son, an heir, when he was physically beyond the age of producing a child. Gideon's 300 against an enemy of 100,000...Really,



God? David, the shepherd boy, against Goliath, the dreaded champion of Gath.

Whether it was the actual circumstances facing these heroes of faith, or prophetic promises of what was to come, it all seemed outside their reach. But God seems to like it that way, so that He gets all the glory and praise. Not only were all of their accomplishments beyond their abilities, but some portions of the promises they received were not to be rendered in their lifetimes, but were a part of "God's Family Plan."

There are so many amazing names that God uses to describe Himself, His character and nature. But He chooses to work through individuals and families so much that this God of the universe decided to also be known as "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

When God wanted to touch the earth, he raised up a man named Abraham and gave him a son. There is so much teaching that we could go into about the importance of knowing your identity in the family of God.

But there isn't time for all that here. My main reason for noting this is that the Creator of the universe set forth a model, a prototype of the family of God in

heaven, now on earth. Only if Isaac could understand the concept of the Father's love could he pass on the legacy to his sons and continue the process of this legacy into future generations.

"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations" (Matthew 1:17 NKJV).

We all leave a legacy, but the real question is this: "Is it a legacy that brings blessing to future generations?"

It has been a privilege to be raised in the Sumrall Family. Our family comes from several generations of ministers. As a matter of fact, I have ministers in both sides of my family for four generations. I didn't stand much of a chance running from all those prayers and God's call on my life.

I've been privileged to minister in 40 countries over the last twenty-plus years. I've served in many capacities in the local church and shared on a daily TV program on one of America's largest Christian broadcasting networks.

So I was raised in and around the ministry my

entire life. Growing up in and around ministry you have the privilege of serving God's people, but sometimes you see the good, the bad and the ugly.

Serving people, doing authentic community work can be a bit messy, because you're dealing with real life people.

Oral Roberts was a close friend of my grandfather. Once I had the privilege of hearing him share. One thing he said really stuck out to me: "The spiritual is practical and the practical is spiritual."

When it comes to the concept of Legacy and partnering with God's multi-generational calling on your family, relationship is the key.

Many ministers get so caught up in their anointings, giftings and abilities that they can be blinded to the practical.

First and foremost I believe the Lord wants us to know our identity as sons: to know His love, His validation, His acceptance, His correction, and His blessing over our lives.

When you are filled up with all that He is--your true identity as a child of God, an heir in His kingdom--you realize your gifting is a bonus, an endowment on

the solid foundation of your identity in Him. Then as a son, life flows through you to be a better husband, father, friend, minister, etc.

I was raised in a Pentecostal/Charismatic environment. Growing up in that environment, I experienced the power of knowing God's Word. Through knowing His Word I experienced the power of Spirit-led prayer & prophecy, the laying on of hands, etc.

While I fully believe in those realities, I've personally witnessed internationally renowned ministers, who wanted to pass on a blessing to their children. They laid hands on them. They prophesied over them, deeply and sincerely desiring to pass on the anointing they had experienced and walked in. Sadly there was a deep disconnect....their relationship. They were so anointed that they couldn't take their son to a sporting event, or go fishing with him. They never took the time to build a relationship, to build a family. They got so busy in the work of the Lord that they thought everything else wasn't spiritual enough.

Either they had dysfunctional relationships with their fathers, or other experiences with a 'spirit of rejection,' and this unfortunately contributed to a serious issue in connecting with the next generation. Some leaders are like Saul: insecure about helping to raise up the next generation of leaders. This type of succession plan is not a succession plan at all. Leaders must not merely choose their children or they can fall into the same trap that Eli and even Samuel did. Let the Spirit lead you to the one who will be your successor. It's important to start the process so that you can actually walk with them and mentor them to avoid the mistakes you made. That way, the wisdom you've gleaned can be

passed on. Bless them, lead them, but don't micromanage them.

Here are some practical questions for your family and your ministry: Do you have a written will? Do you have a succession plan? It is so sad to see ministries that took fifty years to build crumble because there is no order in the house, there is no plan.

I could share more, but I think what I've shared is significant. Be authentic, be relational, get a succession plan and let God's multi-generational plan shine through your life. You have an important role to play, but it doesn't end with you. Leave a legacy. Future generations will appreciate it and learn from your example.

\* \* \*

*Lester Sumrall is a third generation minister and visionary. For almost 20 years, he has shared a message of destiny, purpose and hope in 40 countries of the world – fulfilling the purpose of God's Kingdom by changing hearts and lives.*

*In the early 1990's, Lester gave up a college basketball scholarship to obey God's call on his life, a journey which took him to Scandinavia where he attended Word of Life Theological School in Uppsala, Sweden. Upon graduation, Lester travelled alongside his grandfather, Dr. Lester Sumrall, doing ministry and relief work around the world. Soon after, he earned a degree from Oral Roberts University's School of Business.*

*In 1997, he founded Lester Sumrall International, and has since continued in the legacy passed to him of missions, ministry and media. Lester Sumrall is currently based near Chicago where he lives with his wife and 4 children.*



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# Spiritual Toxin: LACK OF PROMOTION

I am one of those gals who do all their shopping online. I research, compare, read reviews and then make my final purchase choices. I will never forget the day, years ago as a new online shopper, when I noticed the tiny text field at checkout preceded by the phrase enter promo code. I quickly Googled it to see what it was and discovered a whole new world of price cuts and discounts. With little effort, too. You just Google the name of the online retailer, and you will find promotional codes, if they exist. It is as easy as copy, paste and save. For someone like me, that amounts to huge annual savings. Retailers do this because they know they can reach customers like me and stimulate sales through these types of promotions.



by Laura Harris Smith

Would not it be wonderful if promotion in life worked the same way? Just enter a code and promotion comes your way? Well, what would you say if I told you that is how it works? Let's look first at what the word promotion means. The term promo is a 1960s abbreviation of promotion. But the word

promotion itself is a combination of late Middle English words: In Latin *promot* means "moved forward"; *promovere* comes from *pro* meaning "forward, onward" and *movere*, which means "to move."

So we see that the word promotion actually means "to move forward." Sort of the way a promotional code prompts you to move forward with an online sale. Except in real life, the forward motion affects whatever is at stake: your job, relationships, health, etc.

So have you ever felt as if your life is more anti-motion than promotion? Is there something you can do to get more substantial pro-motion? Let's see what God's Word says about it.

**1.** Lest you be tempted to think that promotion comes from a boss, know that promotion actually comes only from God: "For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another" (Psalm 75:6-7 TLB).

**2.** Promotion comes when

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the favor of God comes: "May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands" (Psalm 90:17 NIV).

**3.** We are to work unto God and not just for promotion by man: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

**4.** Promotion comes after we humble ourselves: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you" (James 4:10).

**5.** Promotion comes in God's timing: "But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:14-15 NASB).

**6.** Wisdom will get you promoted: "The wise are promoted to honor, but fools are promoted to shame!" (Proverbs 3:35 TLB).

**7.** A lack of obedience can lift promotion from your life: "So when Ahijah heard her at the door, he called out, 'Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else?' Then he told her, 'I have sad news for you. Give your husband this message from the Lord God of Israel: "I promoted you from the ranks of the common people and made you king of Israel. I ripped the kingdom away from the family of David and gave it to you, but you have not obeyed my commandments as my servant David did. His heart's desire was always to obey me and to do whatever I wanted him to""' (1 Kings 14:6-8 TLB).

**8.** Good things come with true promotion: "Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over

the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:48 NASB).

**9.** The promotion of good people means everybody benefits: "When good people are promoted, everything is great, but when the bad are in charge, watch out!" (Proverbs 28:12 MESSAGE).

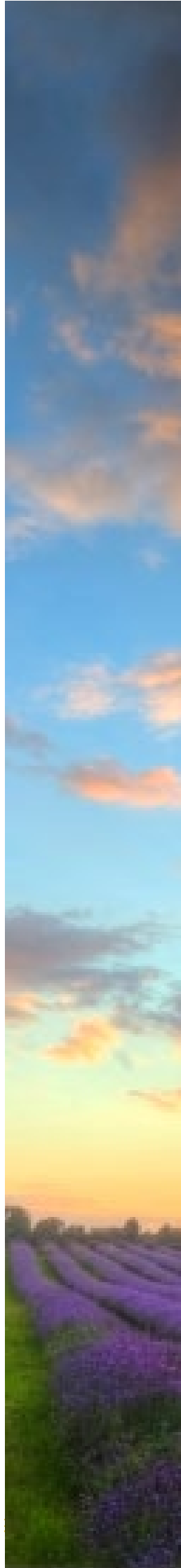
**10.** When the godly are promoted, God is promoted: "Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.' Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon" (Daniel 3:28-30 NIV).


So to receive and understand promotion fully, we have to receive and understand those ten truths. I guess you could say that if there were a promo code for promotion, it would be this: PROMO10.

I leave you with this blessing from Psalm 20:4: "May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans!"

\* \* \*

*Laura Harris Smith is a certified nutritional counselor and the founding co-pastor of Eastgate Creative Christian Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee with her husband, Chris. Visit [lauraharrissmith.com](http://lauraharrissmith.com) to learn more.*





# OH NO!

# NOT ANOTHER

by Kyle Searcy

“Selfie” is one of the most recognized terms of our time. According to Wikipedia: “By 2013, the word ‘selfie’ had become commonplace enough to be monitored for inclusion in the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary. In November 2013, the word “selfie” was announced as being the ‘word of the year’ by the Oxford English Dictionary, which gave the word itself an Australian origin.”

I was recently ministering at a church in Brazil where there was a significant language barrier. Everyone there spoke Portuguese and our team understood almost nothing. We exchanged many friendly gestures with the wonderful people there, but we could not carry on conversations with them. However, we quickly found common linguistic ground when one of the ladies on our team

pulled out her camera and pulled one of the Brazilian ladies close to her. She kept the camera in her hand at arm’s length and took a joint photo. The Brazilian woman looked at her with a beautiful smile and said, “Selfie!” They both smiled and took another picture together. Amazingly, in a country where they could not even understand, “May I have some water please?” they understood “selfie.”

Selfies are fun and socially acceptable; no one is offended that the person taking the picture is the “star” of the photo. I have no problem with the idea in and of itself, but I wonder if the prevalence of what the selfie represents manifests a deeper sign of our times. Paul the apostle warns “... that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (2 Timothy 2:1-2a).

# SELFIE!



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It is not that the peril directly results when men love themselves. The peril comes as a consequence of behaviors that accompany the love of self. Paul continues in 2 Timothy 2:2b-5 about these issues; "... covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Whew! What a list! Note that none of these behaviors would have been possible unless too much self

was involved.

I fear that our society has embraced narcissism without even knowing it. Standard nursery school behavior has become society's norm. We see the signs over and over from an entitlement mentality to lack of personal responsibility. We are self-absorbed. Love of self, like the love of money, is a root of many evils. Let us consider a few.

**Lucifer fell due to love of self.** Read Isaiah 14:12-17 and examine the language of Lucifer and his desire to ascend and become like God. You will see again and again the phrase, "I will."

Delve further into the fall of

Adam and Eve you will find **the motive behind eating the fruit of the tree was, you guessed it self-gratification.** "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6).

Furthermore, the Old Testament law was given to reveal the inadequacy of self in fulfilling God's just demands. Perhaps this is the reason **a true embrace of the Gospel requires selfless sacrifice.** Jesus made it clear by saying, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take



up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Matthew 16:23,24). It makes sense that if selfishness produces destruction, selflessness is required for salvation. To fully embrace the Kingdom of God we must learn to embrace the Jesus model: Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with

God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:3-8).

Self denial is not asceticism; we cannot use the flesh to deny the flesh. It is simply placing God and others before yourself. Here are three ways we can practice it:

**1. Check Your Motives.** Why do you do what you do? Nothing should be done for selfish personal ambition or from pride. Ask the Lord to show you all that emanates from this motive and repent of it. Change your mind to seek after a motive to serve.

**2. Estimate all Others Higher that You Estimate Yourself.** We must literally estimate the worth and value of all others as higher than our worth and value. This is only possible through the lens of grace. If grace is our measuring rod then the beggar on the street can receive esteem from us because we realize "but for the grace of God, go I."

**3. Regularly Spend Time Serving Others.** This should include not only those you

must serve but those you choose to serve. Remember the Good Samaritan story? Our new true neighbor is anyone in need. We must find needs and meet them as Jesus did.

These are simple things but they take effort to practice regularly. Instead of being "selfie" oriented let us be "othersie" focused. Hey, maybe this will be the most popular word in the next few years. Well, perhaps you should not hold your breath. But for you, me, and other followers of Jesus, let us make this our modus operandi.

\* \* \*

*Kyle Searcy is a recognized and highly respected leader, bishop, prayer warrior, teacher, and author. He serves as Senior Pastor of the thriving, multi-racial, multi-generational, international ministry, Fresh Anointing House of Worship, located in Montgomery, AL and Norcross, GA. Kyle also serves as the Overseer of Fresh Oil Fellowship of Churches International and nine other Fresh Anointing House of Worship churches in the United States. He is the Overseer for more than 230 international churches on the continent of Africa. To learn more, visit [kylesearcy.com](http://kylesearcy.com).*





# **BISHOP CHARLES E. BLAKE, Sr.**

---

Leading the Church of  
God in Christ by the Horn

When Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint the next king of Israel, the one whom God had chosen to lead His people, seven sons were presented before they finally remembered David. Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; we will not sit down until he arrives" (1 Samuel 16:11 NIV). When David arrived,

Bishop and Chief Apostle of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the Most Reverend Charles Edward Blake, Sr. The power and presence of God is evident in Bishop Blake's life, through the tremendous leadership that he has provided to COGIC, to Christendom and beyond.

married to the lovely Mrs. Mae Lawrence Blake, affectionately known as Lady Mae. Together they have three children, along with their spouses and eight grandchildren.

To demonstrate how the Spirit of the Lord has come upon Bishop Blake in power, let's take a brief look at some of his life's journey:



- Graduated from ITC in Atlanta, Georgia with a master's degree; returned to San Diego, California to assist his father in ministry, the late Bishop J.A. Blake.

- Appointed pastor of West Angeles Church in 1969 with 50 active members experiencing tremendous growth during the 70s, 80s and into the 90s, moving to the beautiful \$60 million, 5,000 seat West Angeles Cathedral on April 28, 2001. Today, there are more than 24,000 members and more than 80 ministries for psychological, social and economic enhancement of the Los Angeles community.

- Led California Southern First Jurisdiction, COGIC's largest jurisdiction, for 25 years, which grew to more than 250 churches under his leadership. Annually, this jurisdiction led the way in financial support of the national work of the church.

- Founded Save Africa's Children (SAC) in 2001. During its existence, SAC was the largest African-American founded organization providing direct

the oil finally poured and he was anointed. One of my favorite verses comes right after this in 1 Samuel 16:13: "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power..." This verse is the epitome of the life and work of the Presiding

Bishop Blake was licensed to the gospel ministry in 1959 and ordained as an elder in the Church of God In Christ in 1962. He graduated from California Western University with his bachelor's degree, and continued his education at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta in 1965. He is



support to AIDS orphans, helped nearly a quarter million children in over 400 orphan care programs in 23 nations on the continent of Africa, and was supported by a network of more than 61,000 church groups and faith-based organizations.

- Served faithfully as the First Assistant Presiding Bishop of COGIC from 2000 until the passing of former Presiding Bishop G.E. Patterson in 2007. Blake was appointed to fill the remaining term through 2008 and was subsequently elected (with more than 80% of the votes) to complete two full terms.

The biographical sketch on the COGIC website states that Bishop Blake is a humble humanitarian and communitarian. This is evident from the moment that you begin a conversation with him.

**DAVID:** What has brought you the greatest joy in your time as Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle of the Church of God in Christ?

**BISHOP BLAKE:** First, it is an absolute honor and privilege to serve this great church as the seventh leader in succession. To follow in the footsteps of Bishops Mason, Jones, J.O. Patterson, Ford, Owens, and G.E. Patterson is something that I thank God for each and every day. There have been many joys that I have felt since becoming presiding bishop, witnessing our Church grow, develop and thrive over

these years. The efforts of many individual leaders have made a tremendous impact. I am most pleased with the level of unity and love, the working together and creativity of so many since the beginning of my administration.

One of the accomplishments I would like to highlight is that [prior to my inception] we had annually ended our year in a deficit, and would have to borrow money to complete our financial obligations. When I came into office, there was a \$1.3 million dollar deficit. In the first

## The **SUCCESS** of the Church is winning souls for Jesus Christ.

year, not only did we pay off the debt, but we ended the year in the black. We have operated in the black every year since and have not had to borrow to meet current year obligations, which is indicative of the cooperation and teamwork that has characterized the life of our work together.

**DAVID:** How do you plan to build upon those accomplishments as you continue to lead?

**BISHOP BLAKE:** We must not let all of the

accomplishments of the past 8 years be lost or forgotten; we must build on them. The success of the Church is winning souls for Jesus Christ. We must work in partnership in the U.S. and across the globe. I recently shared at a Church Growth conference about the principles of church growth and management. We have plans to go across the nation in the next four years, sharing with our churches.

We must also strengthen our global ministries. I have been blessed to minister in Japan, Africa, Brazil and Haiti in recent years. It is a

privilege to see the work in the foreign field. Also, our work in Haiti with our medical center, orphanage and schools brings me great joy. There have been 50,000 people in Haiti who have participated in the services of our medical clinic. I am pleased to report that we have had a presence in every area that has suffered from a natural disaster in recent years. Finally, I would like to see every jurisdiction involved in the programs of the Urban Initiatives.

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**DAVID:** You have to be one of the busiest men in Christendom. How do you manage all of your tremendous responsibilities with such ease and vigor?

**BISHOP BLAKE:** First and foremost, Lady Mae is a tremendous help. She is so supporting and understanding of my travel schedule. I believe it's because she's a PK (preacher's kid); her involvement is key in my success. Without her support and encouragement, I could not do all of the things that I do. She makes it peaceful and easy when I am at home.

God has blessed me with an incredible staff of employees and volunteers who are dedicated and loyal, with special recognition to the 1st and 2nd Assistant Presiding Bishops and General Board who accept assignments and assist with this important work.

**DAVID:** You are described as a generous and humble humanitarian. What inspires you to give so freely of your blessings?

**BISHOP BLAKE:** God has always led me to be a leader in every aspect. If you come to West Angeles, you'll see me in worship from the beginning of the service because God told me that if I wanted a worshiping



church, I needed to be a worshiping pastor. As it relates to giving, if I want to be blessed, I must be a blessing.

Through C.E. Blake Ministries, I presented a \$100,000 donation for the renovation of the Leila Mason Building on our World Headquarters campus, and a \$100,000 donation for the renovation of the Lee Building. The saints have been so generous to me and have been very supportive of my ministry. I was also blessed to defer accepting and receiving the Presiding Bishop's Honorarium during our difficult years. I have tried to set an example of generosity for the Church. I do not consider this a responsibility, but a joy and privilege to continue to support the positive work that we have begun.

**DAVID:** What other plans do you have for the church, in general, as you move forward?

**BISHOP BLAKE:** We must continue to be great stewards of the resources with which God blesses the Church of God In Christ daily. We will continue to have our books and financial statements audited annually. Furthermore, every department will be implementing safeguards and procedures to ensure that we are operating at the highest level of efficiency.

Finally, we will once again emphasize the importance of prayer and fasting in the believer's life. There is no situation that we can face in this life that cannot be combated positively by earnest, effectual and fervent prayer.

**DAVID:** It is apparent to all who observe your life that the oil of anointing to serve as a great leader has certainly run from the horn, and continues to flow. We diligently pray for your continued strength and health.

\* \* \*

*David-George Newsome is a resident of San Diego, California and a member of St. Stephen's Cathedral (Bishop George Dallas McKinney).*

# Prevailing Prayer

A woman fell over with a heart attack in church. Pastor Freni turned to me and said, "Go pray for her." *The prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available — dynamic in it's working* (James 5:16 AMP). Although I did not know this scripture at the time, the Lord taught me how to pray that day and get results!

When Brother Freni asked me to pray, I heard in my head these thoughts: "What will you do when you pray and nothing happens?"

As soon as I heard those words, I heard, "Ask the devil what's he gonna do when you pray and she gets healed." I knew that second voice was the Lord's. I went back and prayed for her. Her husband was trying to put little pills under her tongue. I rebuked the spirit of death and she instantly came to and sat down.

I went back to preach for Brother Freni some months later and that little Italian man came up and kissed me on my cheeks. He was so happy. Brother Freni walked up and said, "Have you heard? God gave his wife a new heart. The X-Rays of this heart

are completely different than the old ones."

## The Hour of Prayer

In the days of the Early Church a regular hour of prayer was established. Acts 3:1 tells us that, "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." Perhaps this went back to the instruction of Jesus when He told the disciples, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40).

There should be a set time each day in which we fellowship with the Lord in prayer. Although you do not have to limit it to one hour, we should seek to pray at least one hour.

## The Ministry of Prayer

We know that the Bible teaches us that the Spirit will show us how to pray. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

We need to yield to the Holy Spirit when we pray. Certainly,



By Ted Shuttlesworth

we can pray in the Holy Ghost. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" (Ephesians 6:18).

### **MOSES Prevailed in Prayer**

The Children of Israel had sinned by worshipping the Golden Calf. God told Moses to get out of the way as He would destroy the people. Moses began to pray for God to spare the people. "Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people" (Exodus 32:12).

Moses knew Israel's sin, but he did not want the nation to perish. He spent forty days and nights fasting and praying. God heard Moses' prayer and promised to spare Israel and that His presence would go with them. This is the power of intercession. We need people to learn to pray for others and not just themselves. We need God to change America before it is too late.

### **DANIEL Prevailed in Prayer**

The story of Daniel gives us a lesson on the art of prayer. Daniel lived in a time when nations were falling and new kingdoms were rising. The Lord used Daniel's prayer so that Nebuchadnezzar was converted to God. The real power that controlled this nation was not natural men, but it was a demon

spirit that the Bible calls "the Prince of Persia" (Daniel 10:13).

When Daniel prayed, God sent an angel on the first day that he began to pray. However, there was a hindrance and the angel was unable to come to Daniel for three weeks! There was a hindrance to Daniel's prayer, but he did not give up. Daniel fasted and prayed for three weeks. Then, on the twenty-first day, Daniel saw a breakthrough and prevailed in prayer.

"Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words" (Daniel 10:12).

### **Prayer That Stands in the Gap**

The Church lacked pentecostal power at the turn of the century. There were men and women who stood in the gap for God to move again. The Power of God fell from Topeka, Kansas to Los Angeles. God moved from Toronto, Ontario to Dallas, Texas. When God's people pray, the windows of Heaven are opened.

Today God is calling His people to stand in the gap. The nations are lining up for the prophetic end-time destruction. I believe that if we will stand in the gap that God can give us one more minute on His

timeclock. If one day is as one thousand years, then one minute would give us approximately forty years or one more generation and Jesus could come today!

### **Prayer Secrets**

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Revelation knowledge comes from prayer. I have had the Lord show me things that would happen before they happened.

Gordon Lindsey was a great man of God. He prophesied before he died these words, *You shall pray and a double portion of power shall come to you. This power shall continue: it shall spread even as waves spread upon the waters. You shall know that I am the Lord, that I am the same yesterday, today and forever. Warn others to humble themselves with fasting and prayer that the love of Christ would flow out to others go forth this day and arm yourselves in faith with the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil.*

\* \* \*

*Evangelist Ted Shuttlesworth has spent more than 35 years sharing the healing power of Jesus Christ throughout the US and several foreign nations in church settings, auditoriums and tent crusades with millions in attendance. To learn more, visit [tedshuttlesworth.com](http://tedshuttlesworth.com).*

# Is There a Difference Between *Happiness* and *Joy*?

by Randy Alcorn



An ungrounded, dangerous separation of joy from happiness has infiltrated the Christian community. The following is typical of the artificial distinctions made by modern Christians:

Joy is something entirely different from happiness. Joy, in the Biblical context, is not an emotion. . . .

There is a big difference between joy and happiness.

**Happiness is an emotion and temporary; joy is an attitude of the heart.[1]**

Judging from such articles (and there are hundreds more out there), you'd think the distinction between joy and happiness is biblical. It's not. John Piper writes, "If you have nice little categories for 'joy is what Christians have' and 'happiness is what the world has,' you can scrap those when you go to the Bible, because the Bible is indiscriminate in its uses of the language of happiness and joy and contentment and satisfaction." [2]

Here's a sampling of the more than one hundred Bible verses in various translations that use joy and happiness together:

·For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. (Esther 8:16, NIV)

·I will turn their mourning into joy. . . and bring happiness out of grief. (Jeremiah 31:13, HCSB)

·Give your father and mother joy! May she who gave you birth be happy. (Proverbs 23:25, NLT)


The relationship between joy and happiness in these

passages refutes two common claims: (1) that the Bible doesn't talk about happiness, and (2) that joy and happiness have contrasting meanings. In fact, the Bible overflows with accounts of God's people being happy in him. Depicting joy in contrast to happiness has obscured the true meaning of both words. Joyful people are typically glad and cheerful—they smile and laugh a lot. To put it plainly, they're happy! Opposition to the word happiness is a recent development in the church.

There's a long rich, history of equating joy with happiness in Christ. For example, Jonathan Edwards cited John 15:11 ("that [Jesus'] joy might remain in you," KJV) to prove this point: "The happiness Christ gives to his people, is a participation of his own happiness." Charles Spurgeon said, "May you so come, and then may your Christian life be fraught with happiness, and overflowing with joy." [3] Spurgeon's views of happiness and joy, evident in hundreds of his sermons, are completely contrary to the artificial wall the contemporary church has erected between the two.

An **ungrounded, dangerous** separation of joy from happiness has **infiltrated** the Christian community.





In stark contrast to believers prior to the twentieth century, many modern Christians have portrayed happiness as, at best, inferior to joy and, at worst, evil. Oswald Chambers (1874–1917), whom I greatly respect, is one of the earliest Bible teachers to have spoken against happiness. Chambers wrote, “Happiness is no standard for men and women because happiness depends on my being determinedly ignorant of God and His demands.”[4] After extensive research, I’m convinced that no biblical or historical basis exists to define happiness as inherently sinful. Unfortunately, because Bible teachers such as Chambers saw people trying to find happiness in sin, they concluded that pursuing happiness was sinful.

Chambers, a truly great Bible teacher and Christ-follower, claimed that “there is no mention in the Bible of happiness for a Christian.” Likewise, it’s common to hear people make claims like this: “Joy is in 155 verses in the KJV Bible, happiness isn’t in the Bible.”[5]

The problem with these statements is that they simply aren’t true. Happy is found in the King James Version, which Chambers used, a total of twenty-nine times. For example, Jesus told his disciples, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). The apostle Paul wrote these words to Christians: “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth” (Romans 14:22). Just as holy speaks of holiness and joyful speaks of joy and glad speaks of gladness, obviously happy speaks of happiness!

**Is it true that joy is not an emotion?**

The idea that “joy is not an emotion” (a statement that appears online more than 17,000 times) promotes an unbiblical myth. A hundred years ago, every Christian knew the meaning of joy. Today, if you ask a group of Christians, “What does joy mean?” most will grope for words, with only one emphatic opinion: that joy is different from happiness. This is like saying that rain isn’t wet or ice isn’t cold. Scripture, dictionaries, and common language don’t support this separation.

Some claim that joy is a fruit of the Spirit, not an emotion. But in Galatians 5:22, love and peace surround the word joy. If you love someone, don’t you feel something? What is peace if not something you feel?

I googled “define joy,” and the first result was this dictionary definition: “a feeling of great pleasure and happiness.” This definition harmonizes with other dictionaries and ordinary conversations, yet it contradicts countless Christian books and sermons.

God created not only our minds but also our hearts. It’s ill advised to pit happiness and joy against each other rather than embracing the emotional satisfaction of knowing, loving, and following Jesus.

**Happiness is a synonym for joy.**

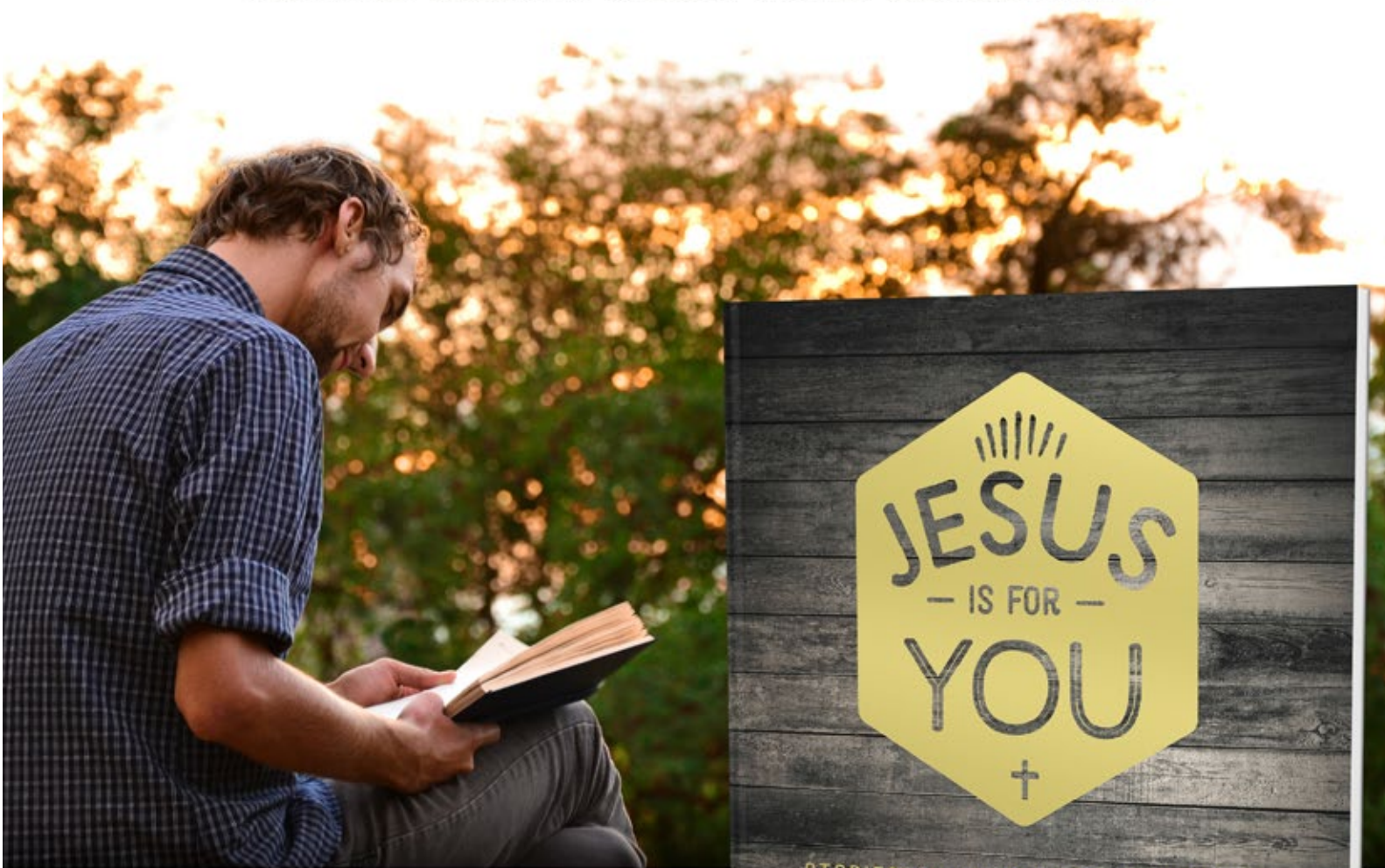
Consult English dictionaries and you’ll see how contrived this supposed contrast between joy and happiness is. The first definition of joy in Merriam-Webster’s dictionary is “a feeling of great happiness.”[6] The American Heritage Dictionary defines joy as “intense and especially ecstatic or exultant happiness.”[7]



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What about Christian dictionaries? The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology defines joy as “happiness over an unanticipated or present good.” [8] The Dictionary of Bible Themes defines happiness as “a state of pleasure or joy experienced both by people and by God.” [9] Happiness is joy. Joy is happiness. Virtually all dictionaries, whether secular or Christian, recognize this.

Consider our common expressions:

- “He jumped for joy.”
- “He is our pride and joy.”
- “I wept for joy.”

According to the vast majority of the usages of these two words in (1) English history, (2) English literature, (3) Bible translations, and (4) English dictionaries, the words have far more in common with each other than not.

Modern distinctions between happiness and joy are completely counterintuitive.

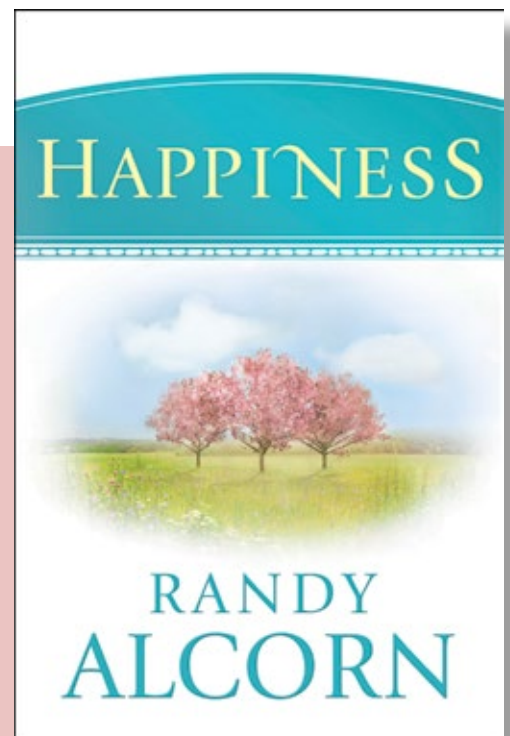
For too long we’ve distanced the gospel from what God created us to desire—and what he desires for us—happiness. We need to reverse the trend. Let’s redeem the word happiness in light of both Scripture and church history. Our message shouldn’t be “Don’t seek happiness,” but “You’ll find in Jesus the happiness and joy you’ve always longed for.”

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FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Brian Cromer, “Difference between Joy and Happiness,” *Briancromer.com* (blog), April 28, 2008, <http://briancromer.com/2008/04/28/difference-between-joy-and-happiness/>.
- [2] John Piper, “Let Your Passion Be Single,” *Desiring God*, November 12, 1999, <http://www.desiringgod.org/conference-messages/let-your-passion-be-single>.
- [3] Spurgeon, “A Happy Christian” (Sermon #736).
- [4] Oswald Chambers, *Biblical Ethics* (Great Britain: Oswald Chambers Publications, 1947), 14.
- [5] “In Your Opinion, What’s the Difference between Joy and Happiness?” *Yahoo! Answers*, <https://answers.yahoo.com/questionindex?qid=20070926074249AAEJsKt>.
- [6] Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (Britannica Digital Learning, 2014), s.v. “joy,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/joy>.
- [7] American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed., s.v. “joy.”
- [8] Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), s.v. “joy.”
- [9] Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), s.v. “happiness.”

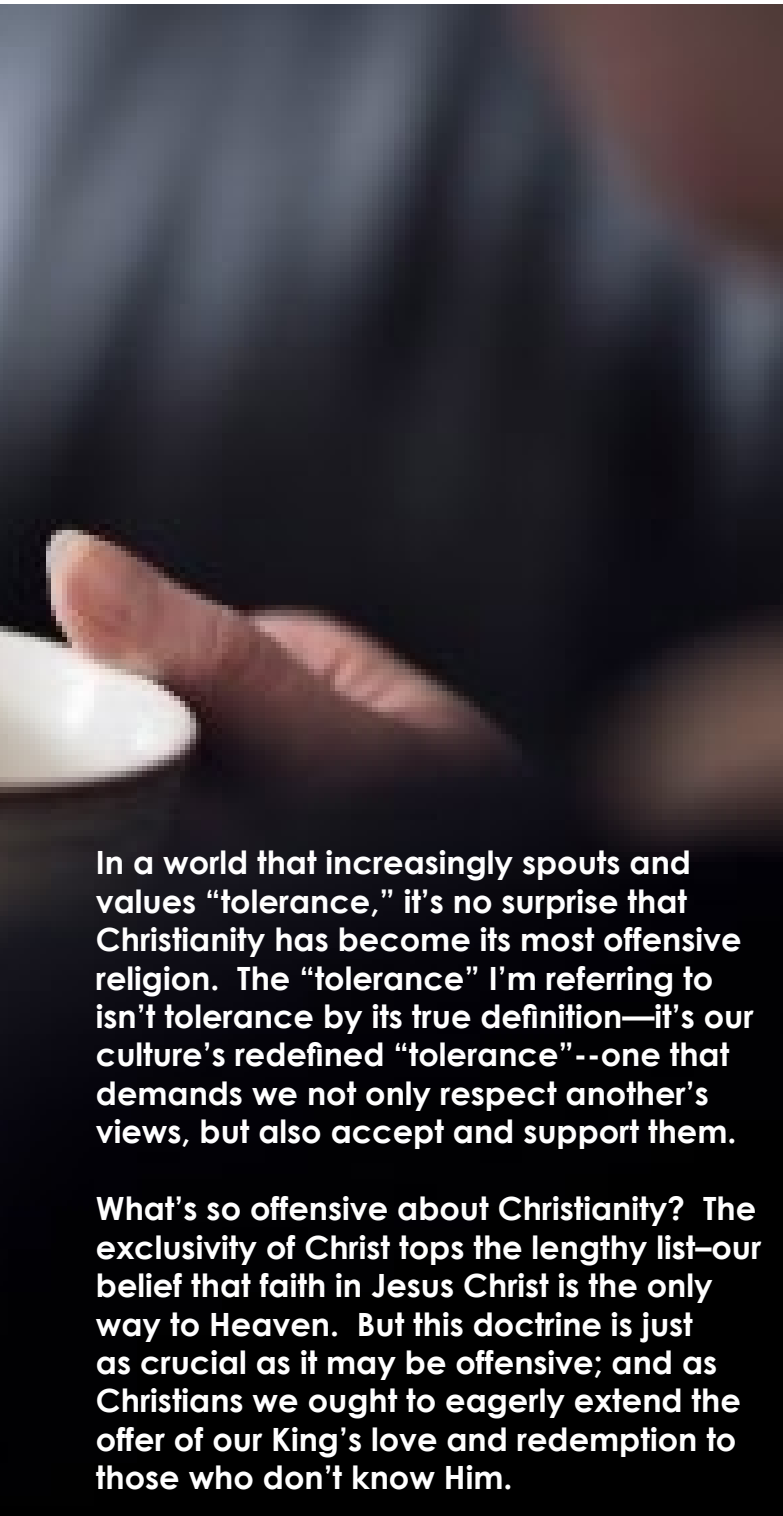
**A New York Times bestselling author, Randy Alcorn has written nearly fifty books, including *Happiness*, *Heaven*, *The Treasure Principle*, and the Gold Medallion winner *Safely Home*. His books have been translated into over sixty languages and have sold over nine million copies. Randy is active daily on Facebook and Twitter, and has been a guest on more than 700 radio, television and online programs including Focus on the Family, FamilyLife Today, Revive Our Hearts, The Bible Answer Man, and The Resurgence. To purchase your copy of *Happiness*, visit: [www.tyndale.com/Happiness/9781414389349](http://www.tyndale.com/Happiness/9781414389349)**





# How to Equip Your Congregation to Share About the ***Exclusivity*** of Christ

by Dr. Robert Jeffress



**In a world that increasingly spouts and values “tolerance,” it’s no surprise that Christianity has become its most offensive religion. The “tolerance” I’m referring to isn’t tolerance by its true definition—it’s our culture’s redefined “tolerance” --one that demands we not only respect another’s views, but also accept and support them.**

**What’s so offensive about Christianity? The exclusivity of Christ tops the lengthy list—our belief that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven. But this doctrine is just as crucial as it may be offensive; and as Christians we ought to eagerly extend the offer of our King’s love and redemption to those who don’t know Him.**

Our current culture often misconstrues this offer of love and redemption as a message of hate and condemnation, and I have found the exclusivity of Christ to be the single greatest stumbling block for nonbelievers coming to faith.

If we are going to successfully defend this crucial doctrine of the exclusivity of Christ, it is not enough for us to be willing to fight; we also need to be equipped to fight. That means we need to be armed not only with the truth of God’s Word, but like the apostle

Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17), we need to be equipped with sound logical arguments and easy-to-understand illustrations that will transform Satan’s intentional false characterization of the gospel as a “message of hate” to a “message of hope.”

Is your congregation equipped? Here are a few things you can do to get them prepared:


Equip yourself to answer their questions: In my months of writing, researching and preaching about the subject, I have found seven core objections related to the exclusivity of Christ that Christians must be able to answer clearly and biblically—many questions they may be asking themselves.

In my book, *Not All Roads Lead to Heaven*, I provide biblical support for the doctrine of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ for salvation, and examine these seven objections in depth and provide easily digestible answers—answers I didn’t fully grasp or clearly articulate myself until after months of study.

These objections include:

- You are being intolerant.
- Exclusivity encourages hatred toward people of other faiths.
- All religions teach essentially the same thing.
- What about those who have never heard of Jesus Christ?
- What happens to children who die before they are capable of believing in Christ?
- How could so many people be wrong in their religious beliefs?
- How could a loving God send people to hell just for not believing the right things about Jesus?

Preach about the exclusivity of the Gospel: Christians are waffling, wavering, and in the process of ceding the bedrock belief of historic Christianity: Salvation is only available through faith in Jesus Christ. You may think I am exaggerating. Are Christians truly abandoning this essential belief? Consider the evidence before



you discount the warning. A recent Pew Study revealed that 70 percent of Americans with a religious affiliation say that many religions—not just their own—can lead to eternal life. “That’s easily explained,” someone might argue. “Almost everyone in America has some religious affiliation, whether they are genuine Christians or not. But surely the statistic among evangelical Christians, who are known for their belief in the Bible, is different.” Not by much. A 2008 poll of 35,000 Americans revealed that 57 percent of evangelical church attenders believe that many religions can lead to eternal life.

What your congregation believes about the exclusivity of the gospel of Christ determines whether they will spend eternity in heaven or hell. In an inclusive culture, it’s important to stress the exclusivity of the gospel—even if you feel like you’re preaching to the choir, your congregation needs to be reminded of this doctrinal truth and the urgency to come to its defense.

Encourage dialogue  
Our only motivation for trying to convince people to trust in Christ for salvation is a genuine concern for their eternal safety. The only reason for insisting that Christ offers the only way to escape eternal death is that all other paths to God are spiritual dead-ends.

Encourage your congregation to equip themselves by learning the biblical arguments and practicing their answers in small group settings. The only way they will feel prepared to answer unbeliever’s objections is if they have practiced their responses and feel comfortable with the answers themselves. The more they practice, the more equipped they will become to

defend their faith.

Remind them that souls are at stake. They are not out to win an argument; rather, the goal is to do the most loving thing we can for any person—to win him or her to saving faith in God’s only way to eternal life: through Christ alone.

It is time for those of us who have been called to be “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20)—not just pastors and missionaries, but every true follower of Christ—to refuse to allow our King’s offer of love and redemption to be intentionally, and falsely, portrayed as a message of hate and condemnation.

It’s time for us to courageously share the true message of the gospel with others, recognizing that the most loving thing we can do for anyone is to point him or her toward Christ as the only means of eternal salvation. If you and I give in to the current cultural pressure to be “tolerant” and refuse to push back against the enemy’s intentional perversion of the gospel, then we are essentially waving the white flag of surrender. And while we remain silent, thousands of people will perish.

\* \* \*

*Dr. Robert Jeffress is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, and the author of Not All Roads Lead to Heaven (Baker Books, February 2016). To purchase this book, visit: <http://ptv.org/shop/not-all-roads-pre/>*



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# I Blame *Pinterest*

Traditions and rituals (and I'm not just talking about Christmas ones) are best when they add to our lives, not become a source of extra work, busyness, and headaches.

After many missteps and mistakes in finding my groove in a world of expectations, I have learned to chill out about things. I have kids in all ages and stages of preadult lives, so when it comes to raising children, I've learned to take life at the pace it comes. In other words, I'm chill. That is . . . Until . . . I get on Pinterest.

And then I am overcome with the need to create, recycle, upcycle, do, glue, paint, design, decorate, make and bake, all for the sake of "making memories" with my children. And when I'm done with all of that, I'm supposed to dream, surprise, inspire, delight, protect, teach, nurture, discipline, and feed them!

I tell you, I thought I had it all together until I got on Pinterest. As it turns out, I am a slug for a mom. I don't know how to cook organic food from scratch. I'll never have buns or abs of steel. I can't braid my hair in a fishtail-bun-upswept-messy-updo. Can't paint the map from *The Hobbit* on my fingernails. Will never decorate with mason jars. And I don't know how to make a single thing from an old wooden pallet.

Is it too crazy to announce that Pinterest has ruined birthday parties forever and ever? It has. Before Pinterest, you could have a flat birthday cake with candles and maybe even some characters on top. Now birthday cakes have to be tiered with lava flowing from them or Elsa and Anna shooting icicles or they won't be Instagrammable. Yeah, I said it. (But, for the record, I do Instagram our sheet cakes. Fight the power, ladies.)

In fact, have you noticed how



by Alli Worthington



the whole birthday party game has been upped in the last few years? We used to invite kids over and go to a fast-food play land or meet at a park to celebrate a kid's birthday. Not anymore. Now we have ponies, themed occasions, and Cirque de Soleil. Okay, maybe not Cirque, yet. But you know it's coming!

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying big elaborate parties are a bad thing, if that is what you love to do. I enjoy going to parties where they've rented a petting zoo, made the Roman Colosseum out of marshmallows, and have massive goodie bags with toys and candy. I support anyone who wants to throw an epic party. What keeps me from finding my own groove is when I start believing that I also need to throw an epic party or I won't measure up.

Birthday parties in our family are low-key. I explain to the kids that we have a birthday budget and that budget can be spent on a party or gifts. So far we have one boy out of five who some years wants a party instead of gifts. I know, I know, I've been lucky. And if a party had to happen at our house, you better believe there's no Cirque budget, and any expectation or hopes of big goodie bags will be dashed quickly.

Wouldn't it be great if we could say freely, "You do your thing. Make that life-sized Olaf out of

marshmallows and hire princesses to come over. That's awesome. But I'm cool not to do those things."

After my visit to the Today Show and the conversations I've had with hundreds of women since, I think we really are cool with not doing those things. Meaning, we are okay not to live out and continue (or pick up) traditions that don't mean anything to us. But we are still afraid to find our own groove and live in it because we are worried someone might judge us and find us lacking.

I say, "Bake your cake, buy your cake, don't have a cake at all!" We are all adults and none of us have the time to care or judge how anyone else is doing it. That's the world I want to live in. (But if you do have cake, please invite me over. I love cake.)

When I asked my friends what expectations they felt they had to live up to, the answers were both telling and hilarious:

- "I must plan awesome family vacations that we will talk about for generations to come."
- "I have to have lovely, professional family photos taken every year."
- "I can only feed my baby organic, locally sourced food or I'm not being a good mother."
- "Even though I have a

family of three, I have to drive a car that seats at least seven people just in case I need to haul a sports team somewhere or drive for a school or church trip."

- "I must dress like a model every day. Those 'outfit of the day' #OOTD photos all over Pinterest and Instagram are crazy. Who can keep up?"

I get exhausted just looking at the list. The thing about any of these "must-do's" is they are all fine things if you're doing them because you love them and are called to do them. But if not, you're in danger of living someone else's life, instead of experiencing the uniquely wonderful, beautifully crafted life Jesus planned for you.

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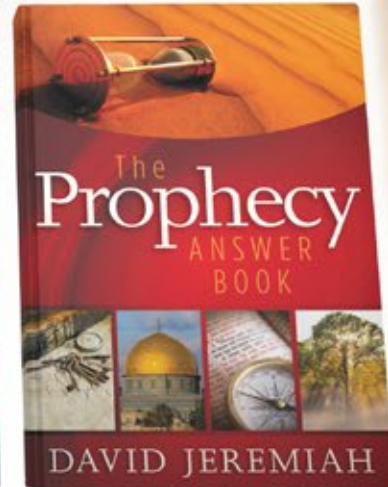
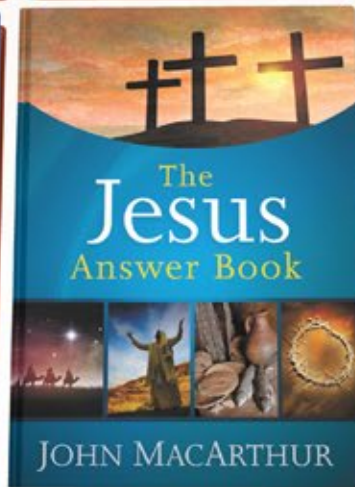
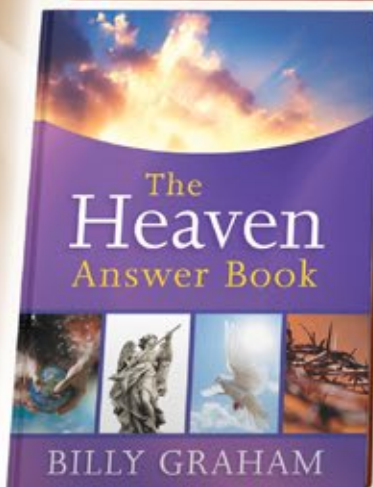
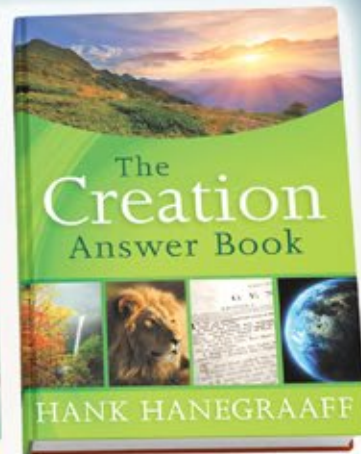
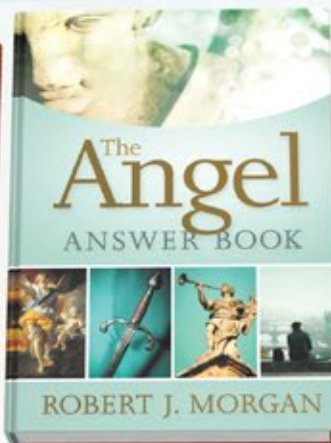
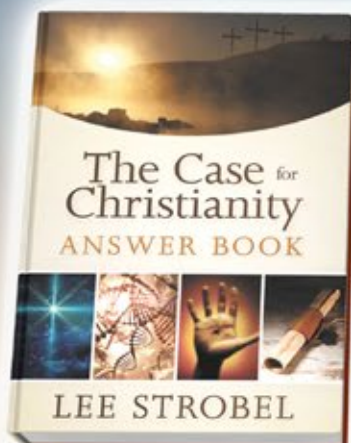
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# 2016: A TIME FOR REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

By Mark Casto

It was in March of 2015, standing in front of 5,000 young people, that the Lord told me, "The same revolutionary spirit that was upon our founding fathers in 1776 was upon this generation." They cannot accept status-quo Christianity, they will not accept anything unBiblical, and they are casting off the tyranny of the glamorous "celebrity" version of following Jesus. This generation will not settle for popularity; it's too low of a goal. They will not settle for material gain, because to forsake all is the call. They are delivered from the idea of good church and are pressing into Apostolic (Biblical) Christianity once again.

Revolutionaries are turning off the lights and smoke, and once again putting the cross of Christ at the forefront of our "stages." This is a generation that

will lay down their lives for the cause of Christ instead of laying down their souls for ministry success. The laughter of society only fuels their compassion for the lost, and the persecution of lukewarm believers only fans the flame of their red-hot devotion even brighter. The revolutionaries are here, so what are we going to do about it?

Revolutionaries are here to pioneer a new path of Christianity in America, and it's time for those sitting on the sidelines to take their place. Like-minded leaders and believers must unite together in this hour, if we hope to see a Third Great Awakening and this generation reached. We must be authentic and genuine, breaking off from the political gifts-and-talents-based religion. We must embrace true discipleship, Biblical community, and radical

evangelism. Apostles and Prophets must once again become the foundation of the church, while pastors, teachers, and evangelists must align themselves appropriately.

We must work together in unity to see cultural transformation. The saints must take their place in devotion and quit treating sermons as entertainment. The word of the Lord coming forth from your leaders is marching orders, equipment for a cultural battle of ideas and false idols. The Great Commission will not be the Great Omission of this generation. Now is the time: revolutionary change is the cry of Christ's true disciples in this hour.

Revolutions are always started by a group of misfits-people who will not accept things for the way they are because they know there is a better way. We need

people who want to do more than rock the boat; we need revolutionaries who will step out if it. We have had enough of people claiming to be visionaries who are comfortable in the box. We want to break the box, and live in the freedom and the glorious liberty of the sons of God. We need a people who don't just go down the stream but those who will go against the grain.

### **They Are Clearing The Stage**

It is obvious that our celebrity version of Christianity is not working. (Only a few men and women have been able to do this effectively. I honor them for it.) It has produced more scandal than fruit. It has made a mockery of true ministry and has tainted most of the world's view of a Holy God. It has caused us to look weak in faith, rather than rich in faith. We preach the love of God, but can't tell those who want to follow Christ that to love Him is to obey His commandments. We have paraded around gifted and talented people who can draw crowds, yet when these leaders are asked about important cultural issues, they have no back bone to speak the truth. We have traded truth for popularity and wanting everyone to like us.

They are clearing that stage. Revolutionaries refuse this weak version of Christianity that uses grace and love for excuses in worldliness and to disguise their pursuit of

fame and fortune. What are we replacing it with? Voices crying in the wilderness. Men and women who will speak the truth, along with the powerful testimony of God's amazing grace that has empowered them to live above the bondage of this world. They want leaders who will preach the holiness and majesty of God, the glory of taking up your cross to follow Jesus, and to be unashamed of the power of the Holy Ghost! They want leaders that will speak the truth, no matter the cost.

### **There is a Leadershift Coming!**

We have a lot of pastors and church leaders, but we have few fathers. The days of just following a man with a vision is over. This fatherless generation is looking for the apostolic/prophetic order of the early church. We are moving from shepherd and sheep back to God's original idea of fathers and sons. The goal of a pastor gathering God's people in Biblical community is not merely to watch over God's people as sheep, but to empower God's people as His sons and daughters.

This generation will not submit themselves to selfish leaders who operate under a spirit of tyranny, thinking that everyone was born to fulfill their vision! Most important, they will not submit to leaders who do not model their leadership style after the characteristics of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit. They don't care how gifted, talented, inspiring,

or smart you are. They want leaders and fathers with strong marriages and families whose example they can model. We need leaders of integrity, honor, and courage to clear up the muddy waters of Christianity. God did not raise up leaders in churches to be served, but that they would become the servant of all. We are looking for those like Samuel, who will be a "faithful priest who shall do according to what is in God's heart and in God's mind" (1 Samuel 2:35).

Spectator Christianity is over! They are not going to come and just watch the one-man show do all the work for us. They want to jump into the game; they want to get their hands dirty. Don't just do it for them, show them how to walk in the power of God. They aren't interested in building a man's kingdom; they want to build the Kingdom of Almighty God and that can't happen with the one-man show. Jesus gave the church the gifts of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher to equip the saints so that the saints can do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16). Those who are not willing to embrace the five-fold ministry, the team model of church leadership, will find themselves quickly becoming weaker and weaker. The personality-driven days of ministry are over. People want fathers in the faith and the five fold ministry, empowering them to fulfill their purpose in life.

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## Devotional Revolutionaries

The only way to see this revolution take place in the church is for every church leader and believer to take their place with an uncompromising commitment to a devotional life with Jesus Christ. I'm not talking about reading two paragraphs from a self-help book with scriptures sprinkled on top. We need to open the word of God and search for His ways in all that we do. It's not good enough just to read, but from dedicated devotion we make a commitment to obey what we know to be true each and every day.

We need to cry out in prayer! Prayer is the only way we are going to see true change come to the American church. We can preach, teach, and gather all we want, but if we do not approach the throne of grace on behalf of this nation, we cannot expect revolutionary change to take place. Fasting is no longer an option--it is the necessary means to make us truly hungry for God. Fasting focuses our pursuit, unlocks revelation concerning God's word, and causes our flesh to have to submit to our spirit.

If you are not willing to allow devotion to revolutionize your life, don't expect to be a part of this revolution in the American church.

## We Are Here

They are here; the revolutionaries are growing daily. Your once-a-week, Sunday-morning-only version of Christianity is about to be overtaken. The seeker-sensitive movement is going to be abandoned and emptied out by radical devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Our prayer meetings are getting stronger and exposing

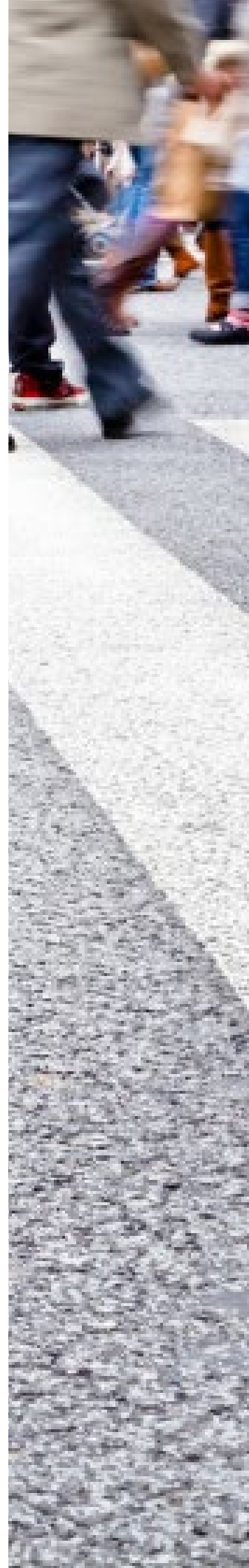
the sin of lack of prayer in dead church attenders. Our praise is getting louder, exposing the low-view of God that many Christians carry. Our worship is getting more intimate, exposing the lack of devotion in "Sunday morning only" church folk. Our preachers are getting bolder, exposing the average pastor's fear of man and pursuit of popularity.

There is nothing you can do to stop the revolutionaries from returning to the original idea for church. They won't wait on churches to organize missions and outreach for them. It's who they are. They are givers, lovers, and evangelists, no matter if it's across the street or across the world. You can either make room for them, or just watch these revolutionaries overtake the world with the power of truth, love, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

If you find yourself burning for what I just wrote, it's because you are a revolutionary! It's time to gather together with like-minded leaders and believers. Let's cast off the things that disgrace the image of Christ and find people ready to build what Jesus said the gates of hell could not prevail against!

\* \* \*

*Mark is recognized as Lead Pastor and Founder of "The Extreme" with OCI ministries in Cleveland, TN. Under the covering of Perry and Pam Stone, Mark is being used to gather a remnant of revivalists and reformers so that they can be equipped to be witnesses in all the earth. He is commissioning world-changers with the desire to reap a harvest unlike anything the world has ever seen! To learn more, visit [markcasto.com](http://markcasto.com).*





# Feed the Children names **J.C. Watts** new president and CEO

*Charitable organization  
feeds hungry children  
worldwide*

On January 21, 2016, Feed the Children, an Oklahoma City-based charitable organization with global reach, today announced that J.C. Watts has been appointed the new president and CEO by its board of directors, and he will begin his duties Feb. 1. Watts will broaden existing programs and develop key initiatives and partnerships.

The board of directors found Watts to be the best candidate with his unique background and overarching knowledge in both politics and business. His experience serving others domestically and abroad, defending human rights, and combatting global poverty position him as the perfect leader for Feed the Children.

“Our vision is to create a world where no child goes to bed hungry, and the board trusts that J.C. will help us fulfill this goal,” said Rick England, Feed the Children board chairman. “With J.C.’s diverse skill set, solid leadership and unwavering compassion, our organization will continue

moving forward in our national and international efforts.”

Watts has seamlessly led both small and large organizations, providing strategic focus, program guidance and business development. Watts’ keen ability connecting and uniting individuals to fulfill one mission will aid in securing support from influential community members, corporations and donors to feed hungry children worldwide.

“I am delighted and honored to join Feed the Children,” said Watts. “We will fight to eliminate hunger and provide resources to make it possible for people to climb out of poverty and become capable of supporting themselves.”

Through Watts’ travels to impoverished countries, he has seen poverty first hand and feels a calling to help those in need. He believes in rebuilding individuals and providing them the tools needed for long-term success, rather than a short-term handout, when possible.





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Prior to his role as Oklahoma congressman, where his peers elected him chairman of the Republican Conference, Watts was Oklahoma Corporation Commission chairman and a youth minister. Watts will maintain his role as chairman of Watts Partners, and management of his other businesses.

Highlights of Feed the Children's work in 2014, include the distribution of \$266 million in food, essentials, educational supplies, and medicine, impacting close to 9 million individuals in the nation. Feed the Children is an advocate of education in impoverished communities and provides support through its U.S. programs and Teacher Stores. Feed the Children provided more than \$5 million worth of school supplies and gave close to 65,000 backpacks and more than 575,000 books to children in 2014.

Internationally, the organization distributed more than \$78 million in food, essentials, educational supplies, and medicine to children worldwide. Feed the Children sponsored more than 11,500 children, addressing the root causes of poverty through child sponsorship, school sponsorship, and other community-based program and project activities.

### **About J.C. Watts**

With a diverse portfolio ranging from athletics to ministry, to business and non-profit, J.C. Watts has guided many teams to victory.

Watts' political background started at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission where he learned invaluable skills as a leader. Watts was elected as Oklahoma Congressman in 1994. He was chosen by his peers to serve as chairman of the Republican Conference, the fourth-ranking leadership position in the majority party in the U.S. House of Representatives, in 1998. He co-authored President Clinton's American Community Renewal and New Markets Act and authored President Bush's faith-based initiative, the Community Solutions Act of 2001. Watts served eight years in congress, before moving on to other business opportunities.

Watts has extensive experience in helping others nationally and internationally. He created the J.C. and Frankie Watts Foundation to support



the advancement of vulnerable Americans in the areas of education, economics and health. He led two congressional trade missions to Africa. He co-founded and co-chaired the Coalition for AIDS Relief in Africa and served on the board of the Corporate Council on Africa. He has also served on the boards of the Boy Scouts of America and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Watts' wide-ranging business experience began at the close of his athletic career. Since, he has built a diverse business portfolio that includes the first African-American owned John Deere dealerships in America. In 2003, Watts started Watts Partners, a government affairs consulting firm where he provides strategic focus and program leadership to the firm's business engagements, alliances and initiatives. Watts

currently serves on the company board of Dillard's Department Stores.

Watts was born on November 18, 1957, in Eufaula, Oklahoma. He graduated from Eufaula High School in 1976 and attended the University of Oklahoma until his graduation in 1981 with a B.A. in journalism. While at the University of Oklahoma, he was quarterback for the Sooners. From 1981 to 1986, he started for Ottawa and Toronto in the Canadian Football League. After completing his football career, Watts returned to Oklahoma to become youth minister at Sunnyslane Baptist Church in Del City.

Watts divides his time between Oklahoma and Washington D.C. with his wife, Frankie. He also is a loving father to six grown children.

### **About Feed the Children**

Feed the Children believes that it can create a world where no child goes to bed hungry. Since 1979, Feed the Children has grown into one of the largest U.S.-based charities. It is accredited by GuideStar Exchange and the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, maintains a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, and is also a member of InterAction. Through its network of agencies, Feed the Children distributed more than \$344 million in food, essentials, educational supplies, and medicine, impacting close to 9 million individuals in the U.S. and more than 4.9 million individuals internationally, for a total of 13.9 million individuals globally in fiscal year 2014. Visit [www.feedthechildren.org](http://www.feedthechildren.org) for more information.

# The Divine Contradiction

The world is full of oxymorons (not just morons). I'm sure you know that an oxymoron is a phrase consisting of words that seem to contradict each other, like: airline food, government organization, jumbo shrimp, or freezer burn.

Allow me to challenge you with another oxymoronic phrase, this one a little closer to home. Here it is: Dare to rest.

It sounds strange, doesn't it? I mean, a dare implies doing something daring — that there is some element of danger or risk involved. But why would you have to dare someone to rest? Here's why. Somebody who is stressed out, a worrier, or an over-committed, workaholic, pedal-to-the-metal manager type is a person in desperate need of a break. Hence the challenge to slow down, pull over, and rest. Likewise, someone who is hearing bad news about the future, going through a painful time, also needs the exhortation to rest.

Why would you rest, though? Why wouldn't you do something about all the problems in your

life, in the world? To a certain extent, it's good to care about your community and what's going on around the world. But I'm not saying to do nothing. I'm saying, dare to rest. Dare to trust that God will keep the world spinning while you take a breather. Because, really, when you rest, you're showing that you have hope. Resting in God's plan demonstrates hope in God's purpose. You're saying to yourself, to the rest of the world, and even to God, I trust that God is in control, that He is good, that He will do what is right.

Daniel the prophet was a man under stress. Having been given divine information about the future and bad news about his people, he had good reason to be consumed with worry from a human standpoint. Worry is commonplace — it's normal; it's the status quo. To defy that normal tendency, to rise above that level to a place of rest, is the Christian calling. Jesus said that when He is in control of your life, you "will find rest for your [soul]" (Matthew 11:29).

Study after study has revealed



By Skip Heitzig

the correlation between resting in hope and managing stress. Spirituality is the best medicine for anxiety. Truly! It has been noted that "people who are more religious or spiritual use their spirituality to cope with life." These are folks who quit trying to control things by themselves. They know where's Someone greater who is enacting a grander plan and purpose. The hope generated by such faith reduces stress and produces and inward calm. It can even decrease the average recover time of hospitalized patients!

We live in a day and age when people are more stressed out than ever before. The average person is filled with anxiety, agitated by economic, social, and moral developments in this world. Some of us struggle just to get by week by week. Then you hear of what's going on in the Middle East and see turmoil, violence, and uncertainty filling our own country. Honestly, it makes you long for relief, for someone to come along and fix it all and make everything right, doesn't it? The very thought that such a thing is possible gives you hope.

And do we ever need it. Not only has there been a recent resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, but there is also a growing hostility toward Christians here in America. While believers are vilified in the media and increasingly marginalized in the marketplace, other

Christians are being persecuted and martyred elsewhere in the world. But this is nothing compared to what is coming. I believe history is heading for a climactic intersection with prophecy. The book of Revelation describes a seven-year period known as the Great Tribulation when God will unleash His wrath on this rebellious planet. It will be an unprecedented time that will turn life as we know it into a hell on earth. During this period, one who is called by many names, but typically known as the "Antichrist," will rise, becoming a world leader. And his regime will force every human alive to worship him. Filled with a seething hatred for Christ, the Antichrist will spill the blood of all those who choose to trust in Jesus for salvation.

"But wait," you may be asking. "What does this have to do with Daniel?" Simple. There are significant portions of the book of Daniel that are prophecies dealing with the Antichrist, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming of Christ (as well as His first coming). Essentially, the entire second half of the book of Daniel is devoted to these apocalyptic visions. So for Daniel, knowing both about his people's upcoming suffering as well as what takes place at the end of days could have potentially played a huge burden of anxiety on him. IT would be hard to hear and hard to live with that knowledge. But

Daniel was comforted by what radio host Paul Harvey used to call "The Rest of the Story." And the rest of God's story is that He wins in the end — and His people are the winning team. Its as this crowning truth that brought Daniel to unload the burdens consistently to God in prayer, releasing his worry to Him. Only one word can fully describe such a response in the face of such uncertainty: hope. Daniel had hope because God promised that, in spite of all the hardships to come. Daniel had hope because God promised that, in spite of all the hardship to come, things were going to work out.

And it's the same for us today. Remember what Jesus said in the Upper Room and Last Supper, when the confused disciples were distressed about His prediction of impending death? Jesus wanted them to see beyond the immediate prediction and be comforted by the ultimate prediction — His return in glory and the heavenly home awaiting them (John 14:1-3).

\* \* \*

*Called one of the best Bible teachers in the country by Franklin Graham, Skip Heitzig is the founder of Calvary Albuquerque, which today ministers to more than 15,000 people. Purchase Skip's latest book Defying Normal here: <http://defyingnormalbook.com>*

# PRAYERS DON'T CHANGE GOD

(They *Inspire* the Actions of the People Praying)

excerpt from the  
much-anticipated  
first book **ON FIRE**  
By John O'Leary

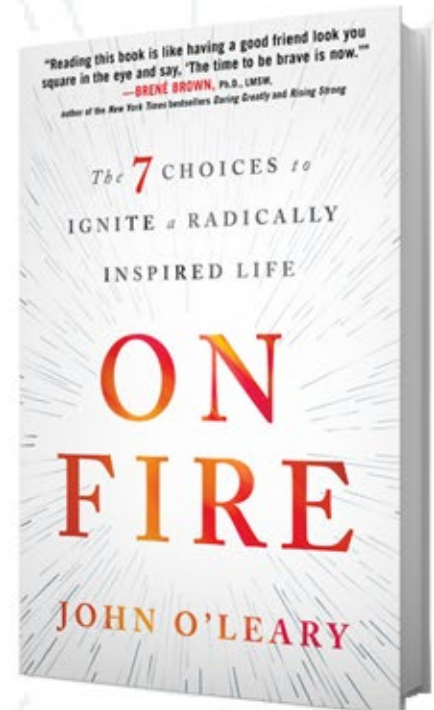
I believe in the power of prayer. And I know thousands of prayers were offered up for me that night, and every day for the next five months I spent in the hospital. But I also believe that prayer is not so much intended to change God, but to inform and inspire the next steps of the individuals offering the prayer. I survived because of the actions and encouragement of remarkable people by my side every step of the way, pushing me to fight, imploring me to believe, and empowering me to take ownership of my life...

*cont. on page 65*



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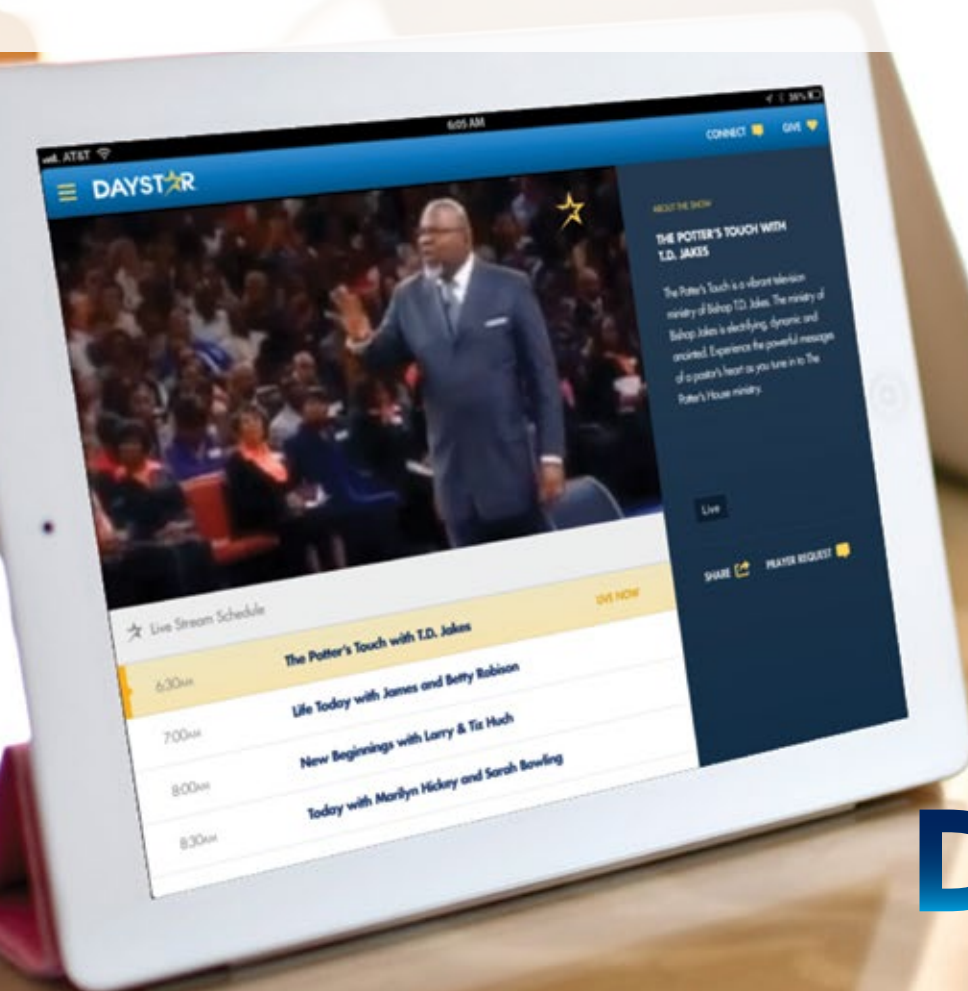
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And the little boy expected to die is now abundantly alive. Today, I've been happily married for eleven years. My wife, Beth, and I have a strong marriage and four healthy, beautiful, and frequently rambunctious kids. Three boys and a girl. We live in an idyllic community, belong to an active church, and enjoy amazing lives.

This incredible life is the outgrowth of a daring question: Do you want to die?

A bold question that reminds us that we hold the power to choose our path forward. We may not control everything that happens to us, but we always control how we respond. Obviously my rash decision to play with fire was a huge inflection point.

I made a simple choice as a child. And in a moment my life, and the life of my family, would never be the same. There was no going back. But that wasn't the only inflection point we faced. Countless others came in its wake. Moments in time that changed everything afterward. The choices we made would lead to a life of hope and possibility or a life of fear and regret.

We all make these choices throughout our lives. I hope to open your eyes, to help you truly see which path you are choosing to go down. And to point you toward the one filled with possibility.


The first choice you must make to ignite a radically inspired life is to own your life. It is to leave entitlement behind and realize that it is up to you to make the changes in your life. Stop making excuses. This is your life.

Do you want to die?  
No? Good.  
Then act like it.

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**When John O'Leary was 9 years old, he suffered burns over 100% of his body and was expected to die. He is now an inspirational speaker and author, teaching more than 50,000 people around the world each year how to live inspired. John is a contributing writer for Parade.com and The Huffington Post. John is a proud husband and father of four and resides in St. Louis, Missouri.**





# DREAMS

*really do come*

# TRUE.



By Lawrence Powell

As a child of God, you can expect to have dreams and visions. I don't care how old you are. God has you here on this planet for a reason, and it's time you start speaking to the greatness inside of you, to the potential that is yet to be released. It's time to begin pulling it out and giving it expression. Remember Joel 2:28? It was prophesied then that God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Peter, by the unction of the Holy Spirit, announced on the Day of Pentecost that we are living in the time of fulfillment of that scripture — he said the Spirit was being poured out, that we would begin having dreams and visions!

Never underestimate the power of dreams and visions. God speaks through them, revealing things to

us that we would otherwise miss. Here are four types of dreams recorded around the time of Jesus' birth that stood out to me:

### **Dreams of Assurance**

Matthew 1:20 says, "But while [Joseph] thought about those things, and Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take unto you Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'" This dream is what I call the Dream of Assurance. Imagine Joseph receiving the news that his bride-to-be is pregnant. Now imagine his emotional state: His world has just been turned upside down. But in the moment of his understandable despair, God gave him a Dream of Assurance. As a result, he went from despair to faith, and he took up the role as the earthly father of Jesus!

God will give us dreams that bring us assurance. He has shared with me on many occasions dreams that helped me identify with what He was doing. And He will do the same with you, and they will bring comfort and help so that you, too, can discover what He is doing in your life. Maybe you're facing some challenges this year. Maybe you're feeling shattered or rejected, due to prevailing circumstance in your life. Well, good news! Be encouraged! Just as God gave Joseph a dream, He will send you a Dream of Assurance to strengthen and encourage you!

### **Dreams of Warning**

In Matthew 2:12-13, we read, "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel



Dr. Cloud is a clinical psychologist, acclaimed leadership expert and best-selling author. He draws on his experience in business and his background as a clinical and consulting psychologist to impart practical and effective advice for improving leadership skills, personal relationships and business performance.

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of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young child and his mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.'"

Sometimes God communicates with us through Dreams of Warning. But you've got to understand that there's a dream language, that things in dreams may be symbolic: colors, persons, and occupations; if you're on a plane or bus, in a car, house or bathtub. These dream images often represent entirely different things in the waking world. If you are going to do a Google search to try to figure out your dream, let me caution you to do a proper search for dream interpretations or symbols: type "Christian" in there, because there is a lot of New Age stuff on the internet, and that will take you somewhere you don't need to go.

The Lord gave me a dream years ago. In it, I was in my parents' home, and as I made my way through the kitchen toward the living room, I noticed a stranger sitting in the living room, as if he were at home in my house. There was eeriness about that character. Immediately I felt that I had to warn my mother and sister. I went back to the kitchen door and saw them coming up the sidewalk, so I warned them about the strange man in our house. When I awoke and shared the dream with my Mom, she told me she had had a similar dream about a stranger in the house. God was warning us, showing us a satanic attack that we had to pray against—and thank God, we got victory over it. Years later, my daughter had a Dream of Warning all her

own. She said, "Daddy, I had a dream I was driving by the church. It was about midnight and the parking lot was packed. They were having a party at the church! I went to look, but, Daddy, it wasn't like a church party; it was like a club party!" God had warned my daughter in a dream and when she shared that dream with me, immediately a passage of scripture came to mind in which the enemy was rejoicing, celebrating, having a party over the people of God... But I couldn't remember the verse. That was on a Monday. By Friday, it dawned on me. It was the passage about David and Ziklag. When the Israelites got to where the enemy was camped, they found them eating, drinking, and celebrating, because the enemy thought they had the victory over the people of God. I explained to my daughter that her dream represented the devil's way of thinking that he's going to get the victory over God's people. It was a warning to us to be on our guard against the wiles of the devil. That is why my daughter saw the ungodly party in the house of God. When God gives you a Dream of Warning, it might be that He is trying to re-route you, so pay attention to the voice of the Holy Spirit, amen?

### **Dreams of Guidance**

There's a powerful dream-example in Matthew 2:19: "Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young child and his mother and get to the land of Israel. For those who sought the young child's life are dead.' And then he rose, took the young child and his mother and went into the land of Israel."

When they got to Israel, they were led by dreams to Nazareth to fulfill the prophecy, "And He shall be called a Nazarene." This kind of dream is a Dream of Guidance. God orders our steps. He will show you dreams and visions that signify where He is leading you. We all need guidance from the Lord, don't we? Don't insist upon doing things your own way. Please save yourself some heartache, some money, and some pain: Trust the Lord. The Bible says, "Acknowledge the Lord in all your ways." He will give you dreams and visions as you face this new year. He will guide you into your destiny and His abundance, if you will let Him!

### **Dreams of the Miraculous**

Another miracle happened around the time of Jesus' birth: the announcement of the pregnancy of Elizabeth, who was barren and old, and the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1). In this story, an angelic visitation leads to the birth of John. These scriptures show us Dreams and Visions of the Miraculous. So many people are in need of miracles today. Are you one of them? God reminds us through the birth of John – and more so the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ – that miracles do happen. Let us not forget that the birth of Jesus was a miraculous gift from God to the entire world. I want you to understand that: Jesus was not just a gift to you or to me; He was a miracle gift to the world. This signifies to us that God has miracles for every one of us, and I personally believe that He has a miracle for you this year! Ask big, expect big, and receive big, in Jesus' name!

The day of miracles is not past, because the God of miracles is still present! Whatever you need, my friend—if it's a Dream of Assurance, Warning, Guidance or Miracle, just keep your eyes on Jesus! He will direct your path.

\* \* \*

*Lawrence Raphael Powell is the Senior Pastor of Agape Family Worship Center, in Rahway, New Jersey. With over 16 years in ministry, Pastor Lawrence is transforming lives with his powerful, prolific and practical presentation of the Gospel. Thousands of families from across the tri-state region flock to Agape every week, to experience warm fellowship, dynamic worship and anointed teaching. Through outreach, evangelism and multimedia broadcasting, Pastor Lawrence is bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to people all over the world. To learn more, visit: [lawrencepowell.net](http://lawrencepowell.net)*



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