

SPECIAL EDITION

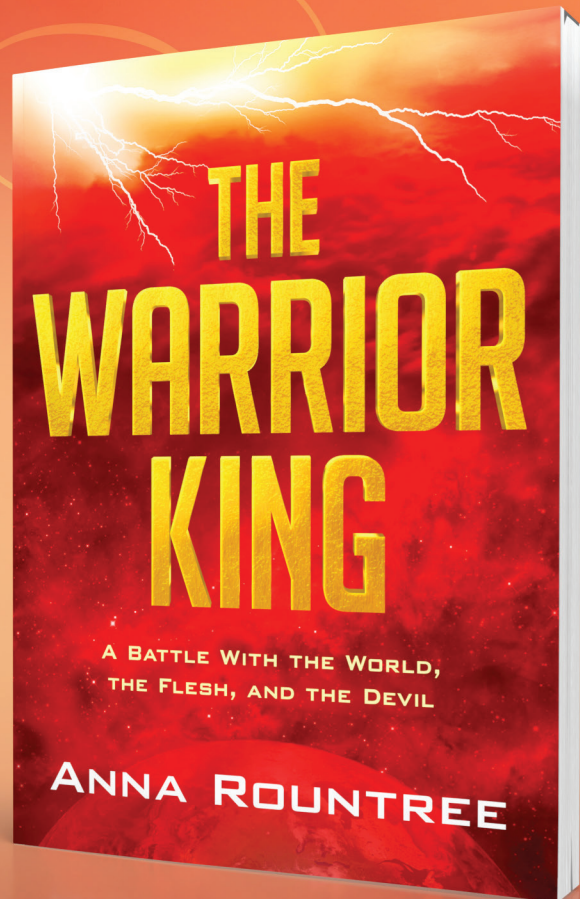
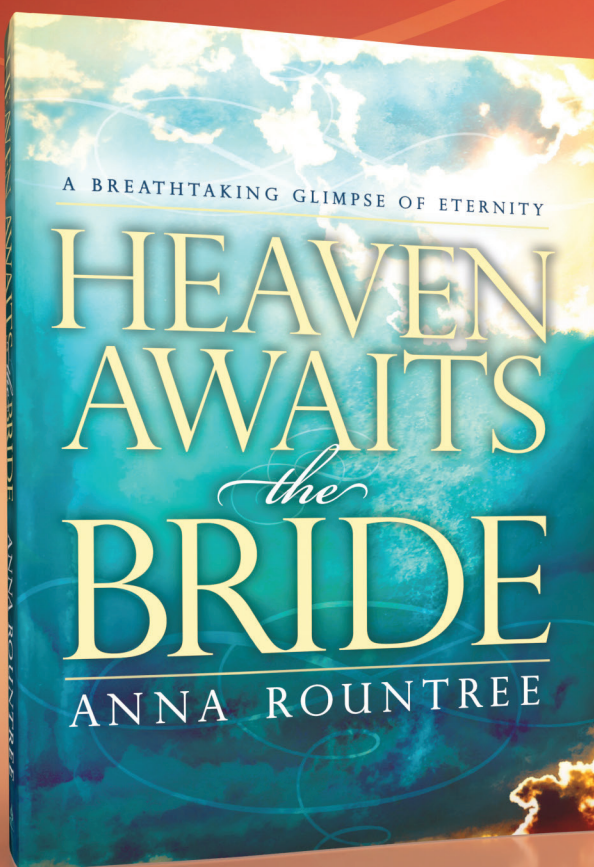
CHARISMA[®]

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SPIRIT-LED LIVING

REVIVAL



THIS YEAR GIVE YOUR VALENTINE HEAVEN



The newly completed trilogy takes us into the wondrous heart of LOVE HIMSELF.

BOOK 1: *The Heavens Opened* reveals a search for our Heavenly Father.

BOOK 2: *The Priestly Bride* shows the romance between our Lord and His bride.

BOOK 3: *The Warrior King* shows us the work of the Holy Spirit as he leads us through test after test to replace our fleshly soul life with Christ.

CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE

INTERPRET THE *Supernatural* ASPECTS OF YOUR *Dreams*

Throughout the Bible, **God often reveals His plans and purposes through dreams.**

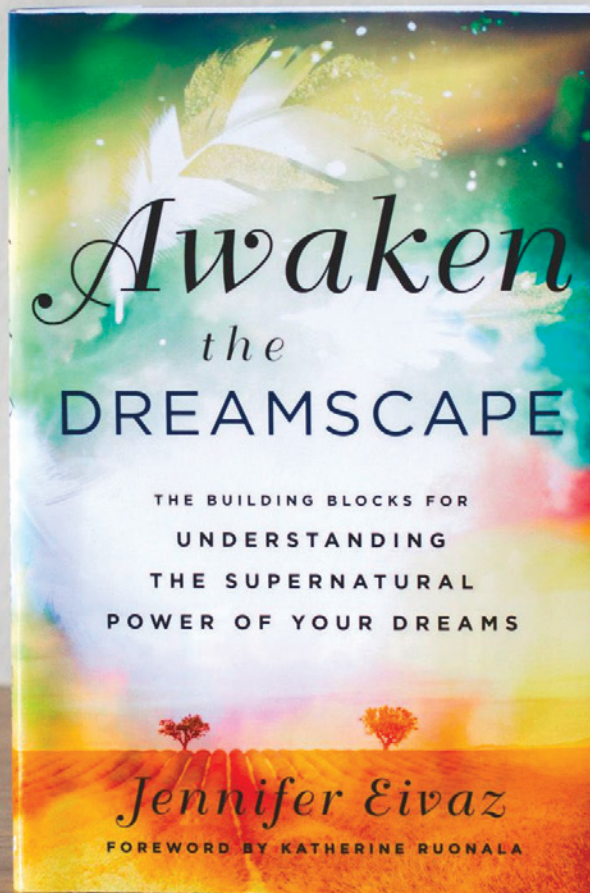
So why do many of us dismiss our dreams?

Diving deep into the supernatural side of your dreams, pastor and bestselling author Jennifer Eivaz offers a thorough, **practical guide to navigating your vital, God-given dreamscape.**

Laying out a biblical framework, she empowers you to

- reawaken your spirit to God's voice at night
- discern the source and meaning of your dreams
- discover the plans God reveals as you sleep
- access supernatural weapons for any battle you face
- overcome sleep disorders and night terrors
- protect your sleep with night watch prayer

God's supernatural provision and communication never cease. Here is everything you need to live victoriously all day—and all night—long.



JENNIFER EIVAZ



amazon



FEATURES

SPECIAL EDITION

6 COVER STORY

Can Demons Possess Christians?

You are a spirit who has a soul that lives in a body. God lives on the inside of you, but can demons dwell in your soul?

By David Diga Hernandez

SPECIAL EDITION

10

Turning Up the Heat

Many people are praying and believing for transforming revival. Former *Charisma* Editor Lee Grady shares nine ways to prepare your heart.

By J. Lee Grady

16

Holy Spirit, Is That You?

Unfortunately, many of the claims to the presence of the Dove among us are nothing but pigeon religion.

By R.T. Kendall

22

Lies You Hear in the Wilderness

Even at your weakest, you can still fight the devil's accusations against your mind—and against God.

By Katherine Ruonala

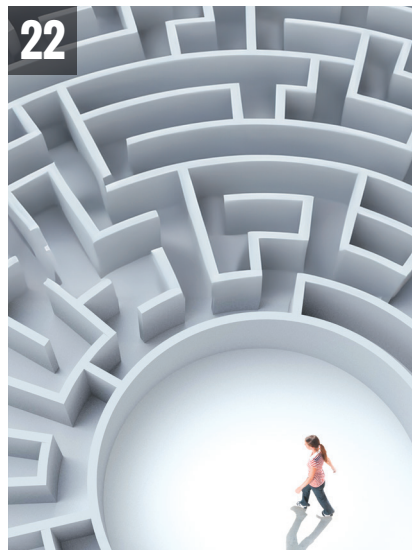
28

Satan's 3-Pronged Attack Against America

More Americans than ever are counting themselves among the "nones." The key question is: Why?

By Billy Hallowell

22



SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: 24 digital issues for \$19.99; If you want to renew online or need additional subscription information, go to mycharisma.com/subscribe/.

Contact customer service by email at customerservice@charismamedia.com or write to *Charisma*, PO Box 954027, Lake Mary, FL 32795,

USA subscribers can call 1-800-837-0378. All foreign subscribers can call 407-333-7163. Leave a voice mail.

INSURING MORE

EXPERIENCES

LIKE THIS



**BROTHERHOOD
MUTUAL®**

You're not just another ministry. We're not just another insurance company.

[Click to see how we're different.](#)

Insuring America's churches and related ministries® | 800.333.3735

Property & Liability Insurance | Auto Insurance | Workers' Compensation | Mission Protection | Payroll & HR Solutions

Copyright 2023 Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. All rights reserved. Brotherhood Mutual is licensed in most states.
6400 Brotherhood Way, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825





CAN DEMONS POSSESS CHRISTIANS?

Settling the long-running debate

BY DAVID DIGA HERNANDEZ

The devil would like nothing more than for us to believe what we see in the natural world is all there is. He'd love for us to think the supernatural exists only in popular novels and TV shows. That is deception of the darkest and most dangerous sort.

The devil is real, and he is obsessed with your destruction. He leads an army of ancient, menacing beings who exist upon the plains of an unseen world and stalk about with malicious intent.

They seek bodies to inhabit. We see this in Jesus' words to His disciples: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through dry places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation" (Matt. 12:43-45).

Demons grow tired outside of a body. Whatever their specific tasks may be, the activity becomes more strenuous for the demon when it is outside a human vessel. By contrast, when they are in a body, demons can possess great strength, as the following story attests: "When He had come out of the boat, immediately a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met Him. He lived among the tombs. And no one could constrain him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. But he had pulled the chains apart and broken the shackles to pieces. And no one could subdue him" (Mark 5:2-4).

So it seems that demons are more effective when carrying out their purposes through a human vessel. The firmer their grasp upon the physical world, the more effective they can be. This is why they seek to possess people. But there are some people demons cannot possess.

Demons Want to Dominate Mankind

Any discussion of the demonic starts with understanding there are only two kingdoms: the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of darkness. We know God the Father is the ultimate ruler of all and Christ is seated at His right hand because the Bible tells us so: "If you then were raised with Christ, desire those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).

But the kingdom of darkness is also in operation. And though it is ultimately defeated, anyone who is not part of God's kingdom is under its control, as these verses



“If one’s spirit and body are dwelling places of the Holy Spirit, how could any demonic force have any level of comfort possessing the soul of the same?”

attest: “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin’ (John 8:34) and ‘We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness’ (1 John 5:19).

From their attempts to possess mankind and keep us enslaved to sin, it is obvious, once considered, that demonic beings desire to dominate mankind to build their kingdom. Ever since Satan took man’s dominion in the Garden of Eden, there has been an ongoing war between mankind and the forces of hell (Satan, fallen angels and demons) for influence in the earth. We read of this in the book of Acts: “To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18).

This battle is also referenced in Ephesians: “You formerly walked according to the age of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

Satan wants to build his kingdom by tempting us to disobey God, just as he did Adam and Eve. Through disobedience, people become slaves. So Satan and his demonic forces have systematized their efforts to focus on one thing: causing man to disobey. Such systematized attacks are carried out in a very organized manner. Demonic beings work to ensure that many stay blind and, therefore, prone to reject Christ.

But those who have been redeemed by Christ are no longer enslaved to the kingdom of darkness: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

Many people avoid fully committing their lives to Christ because they believe the Christian life is limiting and oppressive. However, the truth is just the opposite. Without Christ, people are slaves to sin and subject to degrading and destructive lifestyles. Whether they realize it or not, those who live in sin are bound, not free. They are subjects of the kingdom of darkness.

Satan Has Authority— With Limitations

The kingdom of darkness is rooted in rebellion. It is made up of all that resists the will of God. Because he was the first to rebel, Satan is the leader of the dark kingdom. Not even Jesus denies Satan’s rule over the sinful.

When tempting Jesus in the wilderness, Satan offered Him the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him. Given that Christ is all-knowing, why would Satan offer Jesus all the nations of the world if they weren’t his to give? It’s very difficult to tempt someone with something they know you cannot give. Rather than deny that Satan could give Him the world, Christ instead chose to resist his temptation. Jesus knows Satan has influence in the earth through the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus also acknowledges the demons are subject to the rule and authority of Satan. The religious people of Jesus’ day watched Him cast demons out of people, and after seeing those exorcisms, the religious rulers accused Him of doing so under the authority of Satan. Jesus, of course, corrected the accusation while revealing Satan as the king of demons. “And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub, and by the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.’ So He called them to Him and said to them in parables, ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand’” (Mark 3:22-24).

So Satan does, indeed, have some level of authority upon the earth because he was able to usurp it from man back in the Garden of Eden. Now those who live in sin are subject to that dominion. They become puppets through their disobedience, and they live out the will of Satan in the earth, thus giving him influence. However, though their authority is powerful, both Satan and his demons have limitations.

So Can Demons Possess a Christian?

Mankind is tripartite, meaning we are made up of three parts: body, soul and spirit. You are a spirit who has a soul that lives in a body. The apostle Paul wrote of this in his letter to the Thessalonians: “May the very God of peace sanctify you completely. And I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

Before he is saved, a man’s spirit is dead. But when we accept Christ, our spirits come alive in Him. This is why Jesus said in John 3:5 that a man must be born again of the Spirit. Our spirit is what communicates with God, who is Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-12). The spirit is where we experience inner fellowship with God. Demons cannot dwell there because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17b).

But something else happens when you are saved. Your body becomes the dwelling place for the

Holy Spirit: “What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19).

You interact with the earth through your body. This is why some theologians call the body your “earth suit.” But if your body is God’s temple, it can’t be a dwelling place for demons. The Holy Spirit certainly doesn’t want a demon as a roommate, and He wouldn’t allow one to stay.

So we see that demonic beings cannot dwell in your spirit, and they cannot dwell in your body. This leaves your soul, which is your mind, will and emotions. These are the components that make up your distinct personality. So can a Christian’s soul be demon possessed?

Scripture seems to indicate that demons seek bodies to inhabit, and the Bible doesn’t talk about “soul possession,” which leads me to believe that demons do not possess souls. If they did, demons would gain authority over a person’s will, something that God doesn’t even allow Himself to take from us. Furthermore, if demons were looking for souls to inhabit, how could the demonic legion have possessed the pigs in Matthew 8? Pigs do not have souls.

Also, if one’s spirit and body are dwelling places of the Holy Spirit, how could any demonic force have any level of comfort possessing the soul of the same? Demons could not even approach Jesus without being tormented. I, therefore, must say I see no biblical or logical reason to believe demons can possess a believer.

Possession, Oppression and the Redeemed

However, that doesn’t mean demons are powerless to influence the believer. They cannot possess the soul or the body, but they can attack the soul and the body. Yes, sadly, demonic beings can carry out successful assaults against Christians. They can assault us with fear, doubt and worry, for instance, and they can affect us through sins we refuse to let go of. But just to be clear, I would not call such demonic success “possession,” nor would I call it “oppression.”

Some believers use the term demonically “oppressed” to describe a lower level of demonic influence on Christians. They’ll say something such as, “Christians cannot be possessed, but they can be oppressed.” This has become a common but incorrect view. Oppression, as it is most commonly understood, is still a form of demonic

the demonic being like the man in Mark 5 who cried, “Legion, for we are many.” They growl, hiss, contort, shake and rage.

It is one thing for a believer to appear weighed down, confused or otherwise discomforted by demonic assault. It’s something else entirely for a believer to display signs of full-on

“The reason some believe that Christians can be possessed is because some Christians seem to be under demonic possession. They scream and yell when the Word of God is being preached. They writhe on the floor in agony.”

dominance, so I don’t believe a Christian can even be oppressed.

This is, to some extent, a matter of semantics. Demons can most certainly affect believers. Otherwise, what meaning do we find in the biblical commands to be aware of our demonic foes? I usually avoid the term “oppression” because it is often associated with a kind of less powerful “possession.” So instead of oppression, I prefer to use the word “attack.” For the believer, demonic attack may cause depression, loss of peace, confusion and even feelings of condemnation. However, this is not the result of demonic ownership but demonic assault. Demons can—and certainly will—be against believers, but they cannot be in us.

On the issue of possession now, the reason some believe Christians can be possessed is because some Christians seem to be under demonic possession. They scream and yell when the Word of God is being preached. They writhe on the floor in agony. They speak for

demonic possession. That’s an important distinction. Any believer can be affected by demonic assault and display the results of that assault. But no believer, biblically speaking, can be possessed.

Yet some act out the mannerism of a demoniac, one who is possessed by a demon. Yes, some who claim to be Spirit-filled sometimes demonstrate these extreme signs of demonic possession. And many have difficulty explaining that. If Christians cannot be demon possessed, why do believers sometimes act as though they are? There really can be only one of two explanations: Either they aren’t really saved or they aren’t really demon possessed.

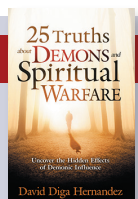
In the end, demon possession has to do with ownership. How can we belong to any other if we belong to Christ? As the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:23, “And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Because the Bible is clear, the matter should be settled: Demons cannot possess believers. Christians can be emotional. Christians can even be convinced that they are demon possessed. But Christians cannot actually be demon possessed. The unbeliever, on the other hand, is a potential vessel for demonic beings. Actually, the unbeliever is already a slave in the kingdom of darkness. ◀

DAVID DIGA HERNANDEZ is an evangelist, healing minister, author and host of Encounter TV.

FOR MORE STUDY...

In his book *25 Truths About Demons and Spiritual Warfare: Uncover the Hidden Effects of Demonic Influence* (Charisma House), David Diga Hernandez uncovers demonic influence in areas others might overlook. Embrace your newfound freedom and win your spiritual battle. Find this at amazon.com, christianbook.com or anywhere books are sold.







TURNING UP THE HEAT

9 strategic ways to prepare your heart for personal revival

BY J. LEE GRADY

I lived in Central Florida for more than 24 years. It is a land of flip-flops, swimsuits and water parks that stay open 365 days a year. The average temperature in Orlando in January is 71. In the summer, a humid 95 degrees is fine with me.

But I have friends in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Rochester, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who endured the record-breaking polar vortex of 2014. Cold temperatures such as it produced had not been seen in more than two decades. It was minus 40 degrees in Minnesota in early January. The mercury hit minus 13 in Milwaukee. It was so cold in Chicago (minus 16) that the polar bear at the Lincoln Park Zoo was moved indoors!

When this deep freeze hit, I was reading the book of Romans, and verse 11 of chapter 12 jumped off the page. The apostle Paul told his followers that in order to please God, they needed to be “fervent in spirit.” The Greek word for fervent (*zeó*) means “to boil with heat.” The message is clear. As Christians, we have a responsibility to stay hot for God no matter how cold our spiritual environment is.

But how do you stay on fire for the Lord? How can you raise your spiritual temperature at a time when many people’s faith today has gone from lukewarm to freezing? Do you want God to set your heart on fire? Would you like to have a life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit?

It is possible to have that kind of spiritual revival. But it doesn’t just happen. There are some steps you must take to warm your heart, prepare it for a holy visitation and increase your spiritual hunger.

1) Get Back in the Word

Spiritual zeal is kindled in your heart when you hear God

speak through the pages of the Bible. I’m not talking about casually reading daily devotionals with your eyes halfway open or halfheartedly skimming Bible verses on your phone. When you desperately dig into the Scriptures to find truth, you will say, as did the disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was ... explaining the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

The Word will set your heart ablaze. In fact, you cannot expect a life-changing encounter with God unless you open your Bible and seek Him in its pages. God invested a lot of time and energy to give us His Word, and many people gave their lives so that you could have a copy of the Bible today. God has watched over His Word for centuries to preserve its message. It is His love letter to you. Please do not ignore it!

2) Stoke the Furnace of Private Prayer

Fires don’t last long if you don’t regularly pile wood on the flames. You should guard your quiet time with God as if your life depended on it. You cannot survive spiritually without regular communion with the Lord. Oswald Chambers put it bluntly: “Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian, not the thing that makes him alive, but the evidence that he is alive.”

Maybe you have been away from God for some time. Maybe you have been in a spiritual desert because of failure or pain. Maybe you have not had personal communion with God for a while. Wherever you are in your walk with God, you can begin afresh right now by approaching Him and starting over. Just make an appointment with Him and keep it.

3) Praise God With Reckless Abandon

Sometimes the chill of discouragement, fear and anxiety can form icicles in our souls. The only way to melt the ice



“You cannot expect a life-changing encounter with God unless you open your Bible and seek Him in its pages.”

is to rejoice in the Lord. Are you going through an extended period of heaviness or disappointment? Psalm 47:1 says: “O clap your hands, all peoples; shout to God with the voice of joy.”

When you praise God with exuberance, new strength will arise. Make a decision that this year you will praise God in a more vocal, uninhibited way than ever before. Read through the book of Psalms and note how often this ancient hymnbook commands us to praise God with all our hearts. If you need help praising God, play a recording by one of your favorite Christian artists and sing along.

4) Break Free From Bad Habits

Paul told the Thessalonians, “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). Are you doing anything that is extinguishing the Holy Spirit’s flames in your life? Many Christians remain perpetually immature, unable to grow spiritually because they won’t let go of lustful habits or addictions. If you choose to live in bondage by allowing habitual sin to take residence in your soul, then your heart will never be hot for God. Make a decision to repent and turn 180 degrees away from whatever is dampening your spiritual passion. You do not have to remain a slave to an unhealthy habit.

5) Get Rid of Your Resentments

Jesus said in the last days “most people’s love will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12). Don’t be a part of that cooling trend. Nothing puts out the flame of God’s love faster than bitterness. Don’t allow unforgiveness to freeze your soul. Guard your heart and deal with offenses quickly. You cannot know or enjoy God’s forgiveness if you haven’t forgiven the people who hurt you.

6) Run With Those Who Burn

Fires go out when the embers are far apart. But when you pull the coals close together, the flames return. This is why we should never live the Christian life in seclusion. God called us to be in community with one another (John 17:20-21; Acts 2:42). Many Christians today have developed the mistaken notion that church is optional, so they have no serious Christian friends, no mentors, no pastors and no supportive relationships. They have created a do-it-yourself version of Christianity that is not biblical.

You will never grow hot for God apart from other believers. God has called us to encourage one another, pray for one another and bear one another’s burdens. If you are not in a Bible-believing church, find one. If you were hurt by a previous church and don’t trust Christians, be willing to take a risk and open your heart again to God’s people.

God has a church for you. But make sure you are in a church that is on fire for God—because a dead church could put out what is left of your flame! If your church compromises God’s Word or ignores the Great Commission, you should find a new church home.

7) Start Using Your Spiritual Gifts

Real spiritual passion is ignited when you serve others. Every Christian has a spiritual gift—and you are no exception. You must face your fears and stretch your faith as you begin to step out, but soon you will find there is no greater joy than being an instrument of the Holy Spirit to bless people. And when the oil of His anointing flows through you, your spiritual temperature will go up.

8) Pursue a Fiery Mentor

I love to hang around zealous, passionate Christians because their heat directly affects mine. I sometimes ask these firebrands to lay hands on me and pray. Sometimes I make appointments with them so I can glean from their wisdom and experience. You can be sure that when Elisha saw Elijah go to heaven in a fiery chariot, he was affected by the heat. Get as close as possible to those who are burning for God and you will be ignited.

9) Boldly Share Your Faith

There is nothing more exciting than leading a person to faith in Christ. Yet according to one poll, 95 percent of Christians have never led one soul to salvation. I guarantee that if you step out of your timidity and share the gospel with a neighbor, a co-worker, a server at a restaurant or a stranger on the subway, your spiritual temperature will instantly rise 30 degrees—and you will want to share with someone else.

Jesus told us not to hide our faith. He said in Matthew 5:14-15: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”

I encourage you to take your flame out from under the basket and let it blaze before men. This cold, dark world needs the light of Christ. And that light comes from fervent Christians who have reached the boiling point of spiritual passion.



“Make a decision that this year you will praise God in a more vocal, uninhibited way than ever before.”

Don't Block the Spirit's Flow

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

In 1999, my church sponsored a conference on the Holy Spirit. At the close of one service, I was lying on the floor near the altar asking God for another touch of His power. Several people were kneeling at the communion rail and praying quietly for one another.

Suddenly I began to have a vision. In my mind, I could see a large pipeline, at least 8 feet in diameter. I was looking at it from the inside, and I could see a shallow stream of golden liquid flowing at the bottom. The oil in the giant pipe was only a few inches deep.

I began a conversation with the Lord. “What are You showing me?” I asked. “This is the flow of the Holy Spirit in your life,” He answered.

It was not an encouraging picture; it was pitiful! The capacity of the pipeline was huge—enough to convey a gushing river of oil. Yet only a trickle was evident. Then I noticed something else. Several large valves lined the sides of the pipe, and each was shut.

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

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

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

I had told God I didn’t want to be in front of crowds because I wasn’t a good speaker. I had told Him that if I couldn’t preach like a famous TV minister, then I didn’t want to speak at all. I had told Him I didn’t want to address certain issues or go certain places. I had placed so many cumbersome conditions on my obedience.

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

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

Three years later, I stood at a pulpit inside a sports arena in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. As I addressed a crowd of 7,000 pastors who had assembled there for a training conference, I remembered seeing their faces in that vision. And I realized God had opened a new valve in my life as I lay on the floor that day in 1999—because I had said yes, He had increased the flow of His oil so it could reach thousands.

Many of us have a habit of asking for more of God’s power and anointing. But what do we use it for? He doesn’t send it just to make us feel good.

We love to go to the altar for a touch from God. We love the goose bumps, the shaking, the emotion of the moment. We love to fall on the floor and experience one filling after another. But I am afraid some of us are soaking up the anointing and not giving it away. The focus of our charismatic experience has become inward and selfish. We get up from the floor and live as we want to.

Pentecost is not a party. If we truly want to be empowered, then we must offer God an unqualified yes. We must crucify every no. We must become a conduit to reach others, not a reservoir without an outlet.

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

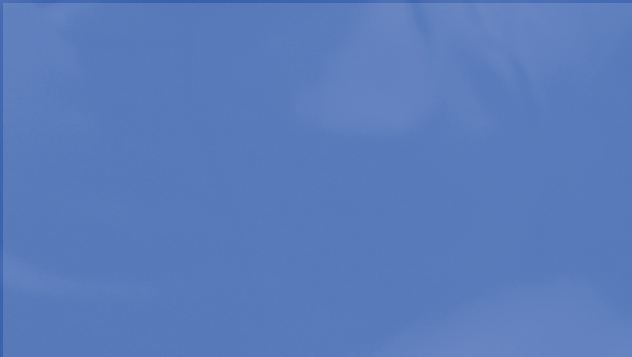
J. LEE GRADY was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years. He now serves as senior contributing editor while devoting more time to ministry. You can find him on Twitter (@leegrady) or online (themordecaiproject.org).

MORE INFORMATION

J. Lee Grady reveals the key to an intimate relationship with the Lord in *Set My Heart on Fire: Ignite Your Confidence, Boldness and Passion for God* (Charisma House). Learn how to break sinful habits and generational tendencies. Find this at amazon.com, christianbook.com or anywhere books are sold.



FIRE UP REVIVAL IN 2024...



Charisma Magazine

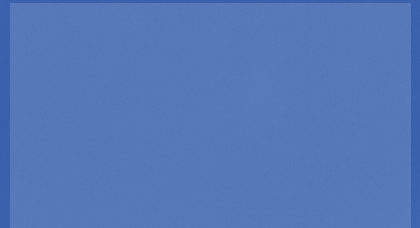
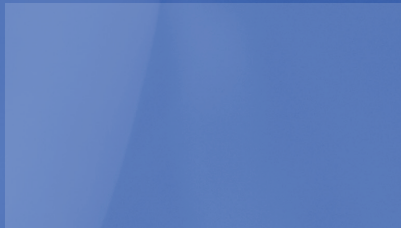
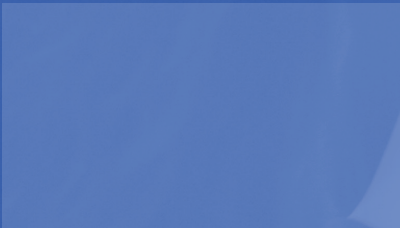


Charisma News



Strang Report

...on
**CHARISMA
YOUTUBE!**



**Get all your latest Charisma videos
'Subscribe' now to receive daily inspiration in your feed!**

CLICK HERE AND



Holy Spirit, Is That You?



**Unfortunately, many
of the claims to the
presence of the dove
among us are nothing
but pigeon religion**

BY R.T. KENDALL

Many people claim to speak for God these days, but how many of them really do speak for God? A lot of people claim to have a prophetic gift and give out words introduced by “the Lord told me.” The question is, how many of these words are truly from the Lord? Should it bother us that so many words do not come to pass which were prefaced by “the Lord told me”? And what do you suppose God in heaven thinks of all this?

Why is this important? When a word does not come to pass that was introduced by “the Lord told me,” obviously something has gone wrong. It dishonors the name of the Lord. It brings discredit upon the gift of prophecy generally, giving cessationists ammunition for their unbiblical hypothesis. Moreover, if the prophecy is not fulfilled after being told “the Lord told me,” it is bearing false witness.

Should the people who claim they have a word from the Lord apologize if it does not turn out as they promised? I hate to say it, but few do. Many do not have the humility to admit it when they got it wrong. When people are not gracious enough to admit when they got it wrong, it smacks of a lack of integrity. The matter could be largely resolved if such people would stop saying “the Lord told me” when making a pronouncement.

Why is it that people keep saying “the Lord told me” when they keep getting it wrong?

Nathan prophesied to David that he could build the temple, but he had to come back the next day to admit he jumped the

“When a word does not come to pass that was introduced by ‘the Lord told me,’ obviously something has gone wrong.”

gun and that his word was not from God. He then told a disappointed David—who took it humbly—that Solomon, not David, would build the temple (2 Sam. 7). Samuel was convinced that Eliab would be the next king, but he climbed down before Jesse and all his sons and anointed David with oil (1 Sam. 16:6-12). We need more Nathans and Samuels today.

But does not God sometimes truly speak to us? Certainly. Then should we not attribute such a word to Him? Is there a right time for saying “the Lord told me” when one has a word they feel is truly from God? Is it not an encouragement when a prophetic person who has a solid reputation says, “The Lord told me”?

Saying that “the Lord told me” is a habit that prophetic people find hard to break. Some feel it is almost impossible to break that habit. I pleaded with one of them to stop it. He tried. He couldn’t. But he kept getting it wrong too.

I will come clean. Although I don’t claim to have a prophetic gift, I have still made the same mistake thousands of times, whether it be to a person—“The Lord gave me a word for you”—or when preaching, “The Lord gave me this sermon” or “The Lord gave me this insight.” When I do this, I am claiming that God is behind all I say and that the people had better take it—or else. It must make the angels blush.

6 Levels of Prophecy

Prophecy—if it is a true prophecy—is a word directly from God unfiltered by human embellishment, whether it refers to the past, present or future. That said, there are levels of prophecy. Not all prophecy is of the same caliber or type.

Picture a pyramid, starting at the bottom:

1) General exhortation or encouragement to an individual or congregation. This is the “lowest” level of prophecy. The possibility of prophesying like this is offered to all Christians. When Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to value the gift of prophecy more than speaking in tongues, he was



“When Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to value the gift of prophecy more than speaking in tongues, he was not challenging them to be an Isaiah or Elijah (1 Cor. 14:3).”

not challenging them to be an Isaiah or Elijah (1 Cor. 14:3). God may indeed give a word of encouragement that should be shared with one or many.

2) Specific warnings. This is a higher level of prophecy. Agabus, referred to as a prophet by Luke, foretold that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world, which came to pass (Acts 11:27-28). The same Agabus warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Agabus took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it, and said, “The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this manner the Jews at Jerusalem shall bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles’” (Acts 21:11). Two things should be noted: First, Agabus said, “The Holy Spirit says,” which is tantamount to saying, “The Lord told me.” Second, when you examine what happened to Paul later in the book of Acts, you will find that this is not what happened. The general warning that Paul would be in trouble with the Jews came to

pass, yes, but Paul actually thwarted the Jews’ plans—which, in any case, were certainly not handing him over to Gentiles. Moreover, Paul went to Rome because he himself demanded to be tried by Caesar (Acts 25:12). This meant that Agabus got one out of two prophecies right, but the one where he got the details totally wrong was when he said, “The Holy Spirit says.” This is not exactly a good precedent for us to say, “The Lord told me.”

3) When called before the authorities for the sake of Christ. Jesus said, “You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought of how or what you will speak. For it will be given you at that time what you will speak. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you” (Matt. 10:18-20). This is yet a higher level of prophecy than the previous two levels. We have a promise of genuine



“You can expect false prophets. How do we know the false from the true? The Bible.”

prophetic utterances should we be called to stand before the authorities for what we believe.

4) Preaching in the Spirit. This is the way I would describe Peter’s word that, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). This is surely an encouragement to those of us who are responsible for preaching the Word of God. We are actually encouraged to preach as if God were speaking through us. When I read these words, I say, “If only!” I have been preaching for over 60 years. I think, just maybe, I have fulfilled 1 Peter 4:11 twice.

In any case, we as ministers are encouraged to believe that we should speak as though it were the Holy Spirit speaking through us. It would seem, therefore, that expository preaching should do that—that is, if our unfolding of Scripture is absolutely what God would dictate and not our private views. In a perfect world, all preaching would be uttering the very oracles of God, but I fear we ministers

all sadly come short of this.

5) The noncanonical biblical prophets. This level of prophecy would include prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Nathan and Gad. “Noncanonical” means these prophets do not have a book with their name on it, like Isaiah, Daniel or Samuel. This is a very high level of prophetic utterances indeed. But even they were not perfect. Possibly the greatest anointing of the Spirit ever was on Elijah when he confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel: “How long will you stay between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). Elijah and the true God were openly vindicated before all those present when the fire of God fell before their very eyes (1 Kings 18:38). And yet in all this, there was a frail, self-centered Elijah who made a claim that was utterly false: “I alone remain a prophet of the Lord” (1 Kings 18:22). Pigeon religion crept in even under such an extraordinary anointing. What Elijah said was patently false. Only days before, Elijah ran into Obadiah, who had hidden 100 prophets in a cave to protect them from the wicked King Ahab (1 Kings 18:4-7). Elijah was not the only prophet left. He took himself too seriously.

The relevant question is: Could there be noncanonical prophets like Elijah or Elisha today? I suspect there have been a few—very few—who have uttered words that are virtually as astonishing as some of those spoken by noncanonical prophets of the Old Testament. Though some of these men (some alive, some deceased) have uttered phenomenal words and have seen miracles as well, they are frail men of dust. This is partly why James said that Elijah was “a man subject to natural passions as we are” (James 5:17).

But would a prophet speaking at this level not have the right to say, “The Lord told me” or “Thus saith the Lord”? No. First, who is going to claim he or she has this “fifth level” of prophetic anointing? That would be pompous. The problem is, some will claim they have the authority of an Elijah or Elisha! They will make

themselves exceptions to the principles I am suggesting in this chapter and claim the right to say, “Thus says the Lord.” If one needs this prop to bolster his authority, he is not fit to prophesy. Elijah did not use the Mount Carmel platform to say, “The Lord told me to say this.” If he had, he would have brought the Lord down to his fleshly level when he said, “I alone am left.”

Prophets need to be humble. Some of them love the limelight. They want to be seen. They love attention. The dove—the true symbol of the Holy Spirit—does not seek or want attention.

6) Holy Scripture. This is the peak of the pyramid. This is supreme. The Bible is the highest level of prophecy. Moreover, this level is God’s final revelation. There will never be a level of prophecy or an anointing of any prophet that will surpass or even equal the Bible. Like it or not, you and I must believe that. Otherwise, the floodgates will be opened to every Tom, Dick or Harry who falsely claims to be a mouthpiece of God.

You can expect false prophets. How do we know the false from the true? The Bible. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones frequently said, “The Bible was not given to replace the miraculous; it was given to correct abuses.”

The Bible is God’s ultimate and only infallible revelation. Any true prophet will *gladly* submit himself or herself to Holy Scripture. If they will not, reject them!

The entire Bible may justly be called prophecy. “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of the Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation. For no prophecy at any time was produced by the will of man, but holy men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). This refers to every word of the Old Testament. Paul said virtually the same thing: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). “All Scripture” means the Old Testament. What about the New Testament? The same thing is true. Peter affirmed Paul’s writing as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Paul equally claimed the same authority (1 Cor. 7:10, 14:37).

You and I will never outgrow the need for Scripture. The fastest way to become “yesterday’s man or woman” is to fancy that we don’t need to submit to Scripture. Remember, King Saul felt compelled to go against Scripture (1 Sam. 13:12). In that moment, he became yesterday’s man. The same will happen to you and me if we repeat Saul’s folly.

The Bible is God’s final, perfect and infallible revelation of Truth. It will never be replaced or superseded before Jesus’ Second Coming.

Limits of Prophecy

Every anointing has its limit. One of the most humbling things about the anointing is coming to terms with your limitations.

Romans 12:3-6 is an extremely relevant passage. When Paul says “if” a person’s gift is prophecy, that is an important “if.” Paul teaches that one must (1) discover what his or her anointing is, then (2) if it is prophesying, remember these words—“according to the proportion of faith.”

There are two ways of interpreting proportion: extent or analogy. If Paul means the extent of faith—which he certainly does—one must prophesy within that limit of faith. We all have faith in measure. That means there is a limit to our faith. Only Jesus had the Holy Spirit without limit. Only Jesus had a perfect faith. Some people with a true gift of prophecy go beyond the limit they are given—and get into trouble. Sometimes a person will get a true word from God but will then embellish it. If we stay within the limit of our faith, we will be safe.

But if Paul means analogy—which he also certainly does—one must prophesy according to sound theology. The Greek in Romans 12:6 is literally to be translated that we prophesy according to the “analogy of faith.” This means comparing Scripture with Scripture. If we accept that Paul meant *both* “extent” of faith—that is, a limit—and “analogy” of faith—that is, sound teaching—then we have the balanced picture. In a word: prophets



“No prophet knows everything. No theologian knows everything. Paul did not know everything. Satan does not know everything. Only God knows everything.”

must stay within the limits of their faith but be sure they are sound in their teachings. If what they prophesy goes against New Testament teaching, their prophecies are to be rejected.

A true prophet will proclaim what is within the circle of orthodoxy. There are prophetic people at large who say weird things—“off the wall” teaching that is heretical and embarrassing. Fancy this: An angel tells a prophet that there is “no need to talk about Jesus—everybody has heard about Him. You should talk about angels.” This is an extreme example, of course, but it does show how far away some prophetic people are from solid New Testament teaching. I am not saying that a prophet needs to be a learned theologian. But I am saying he should be sound in what he believes about God, man, sin and salvation.

Paul said, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9). Think about that for a moment. How humbling—we know in part. We don’t know everything! No prophet knows everything. No theologian knows everything. Paul did not know

everything. Satan does not know everything. Only God knows everything. And He may choose to reveal some things to some people. But if He withholds information or revelation, there is nothing anybody can do about it. ♦

R. T. KENDALL was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, England, for 25 years. Born in Ashland, Kentucky, he was educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and Oxford University (D.Phil.). Dr. Kendall is the author of more than 55 books, including *Total Forgiveness*, *The Sensitivity of the Spirit*, *Grace and Holy Spirit*, *Is That You?*

FOR MORE STUDY...

R.T. Kendall teaches you to recognize the difference between authentic moves of God and counterfeit religion as well as how to discern spiritual manipulation in *Pigeon Religion: Holy Spirit, Is That You?* (Charisma House). Find this resource at amazon.com, christianbook.com or anywhere Christian books are sold.

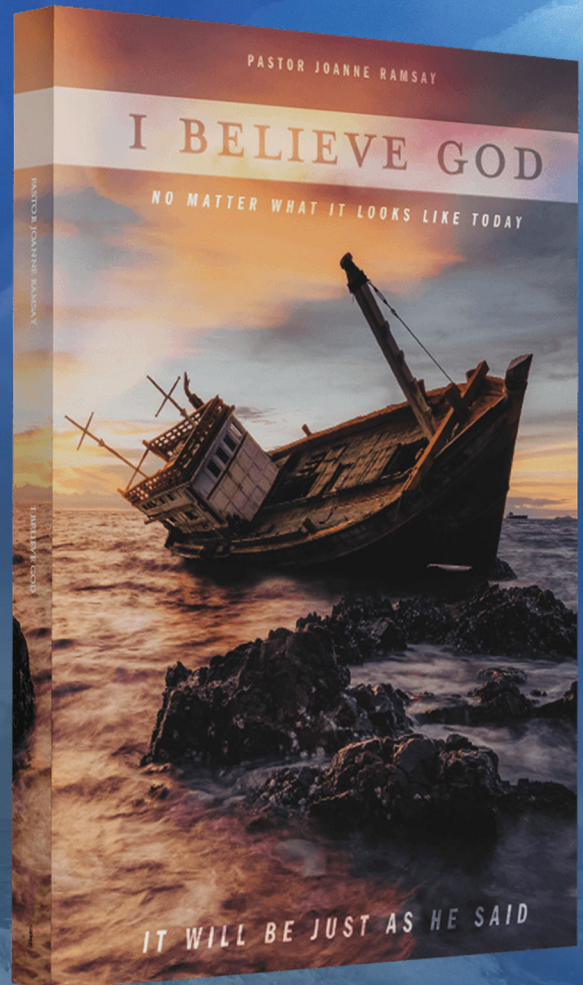


Your *beliefs* shape your *destiny!*

*Choose to believe in God's promises
with a transformative guide to step
into a future of unwavering faith!*

Learn to :

- Align your life with God's plan.
- Navigate battles with strength.
- Harness the power of words.
- Strengthen your mind with faith.
- Embrace God's protection.
- Overcome challenges.




Order today:

pastorjoramsay.com/ibelievegod


Speak the Word
with Pastor JoAnne Ramsay

Lies You Hear in the Wilderness

Even at your weakest, you can still fight the devil's accusations against your mind—and against God



“Suffering does not mean God is not pleased with us, just as blessings don’t necessarily mean He approves of everything we are doing.”

BY KATHERINE RUONALA

Many of the things I dreamed about 20 years ago are now happening, and it’s wonderful. But the joy of satisfied longings is ordinary compared to the joy I receive when I am alone with God.

Some people think, *Lord, one day when I have a wife or husband, I’ll be happy*, or, *Lord, I’ll be really fulfilled when I get an invitation to preach in stadiums*. They are waiting for their experience in order to have their joy.

These are good dreams, and it will be amazing when God fulfills them. But the joy and sense of fulfillment from those desires will not even come close to the fullness of joy God wants to release in your heart moment by moment in the process of getting there. He wants you to be happy now—in Him—even as you’re waiting in the wilderness for the other things He has in store for you. Otherwise, God’s joy would be available only at certain times of life, and we would go through long seasons without any sense of fulfillment.

The heart set on Him, no matter how many other desires it has, can be satisfied at any time. There is a deeper joy than seeing your dreams come to pass, a deeper joy than knowing God’s promises and having them fulfilled. It’s the deep, satisfying joy of knowing Him intimately in any season. Nothing can satisfy as He does.

Knowing and experiencing the truth that only God Himself truly satisfies is essential because as God imparts dreams to us and gives us His promises, and then we seek Him, declare the promises and wait for their fulfillment, we will go through a wilderness. That’s almost always the pattern in Scripture, and it’s still true for anyone who receives His word by faith.

There is often time between promise and fulfillment, and how we respond during that time often determines what we experience. The problem is that the journey can seem so dark at times, so hopeless and discouraging, that it’s easy for us to lose sight of who God wants us to be. Our wanderings are often worrisome experiences. But they don’t have to be.

Lies You May Hear in the Wilderness

People get nervous when talking about blessing and favor, as though we aren’t preparing each other well enough for suffering. Believe me, I have



“It is not up to us to try to work out the why. Our job is to look to what God is going to do. God is more interested in helping us focus on Him as the answer than on the tormenting question of why the difficult circumstance arose in the first place.”

some understanding of suffering, but it was hope in His goodness that helped me get through the hard places.

In those times, we must be careful not to lean on our own understanding in trying to explain why we or anyone else is going through a hardship. God said He was well-pleased with Jesus right before He led him into the desert to be tempted. Job was not being punished when he went through suffering. For all the trials the disciples endured, it was not because they needed to be corrected.

Yet in our ignorance and arrogance, sometimes we can assume we know the purpose of pain in our lives or in the lives of others. Suffering does not mean God is not pleased with us, just as blessings don't necessarily mean He approves of everything we are doing.

In times of intense pain and trial, I have found people I thought would

sympathize with me behaving more like Job's misguided friends, suggesting in the midst of my agony that I must have done something wrong to have such horrible things happen to me or my family.

When I went through a really difficult situation with one of my children, I had people who hardly knew anything about our family suggest that I must have sacrificed my children on the altar of ministry. Adding insult to injury, these people magnified my pain. As it was, I was spending night after night until the wee hours of the morning agonizing with God and desperately trying to think of what I could have or should have done or not done to prevent the circumstances I was facing. The enemy was using these false assumptions to fuel the fire of condemnation.

We can all be judgmental. The

disciples fell into this trap. When they saw a man born blind, they automatically assumed his blindness was the result of someone's sin. They asked Jesus who was at fault—the man's father, mother or the man himself. It was a ridiculous question considering that the man had been born blind! But Jesus stopped all their whys by responding that it was for none of those reasons, and He proceeded to tell them that He was going to heal the man.

It is not up to us to try to work out the why. Our job is to look to what God is going to do. God is more interested in helping us focus on Him as the answer than on the tormenting question of why the difficult circumstance arose in the first place. And trying to judge the why in others' circumstances is rarely helpful, when Jesus just wants to be their answer. We can learn from our mistakes, but in the midst of pain, our best focus is not on the why but on who Christ is to us in the midst of it all.

During this time of pain and sadness, my first reaction was to give up ministry altogether. But as I agonized in prayer, God spoke to me from the book of Matthew. I read the story of how Jesus responded when He heard of His cousin John's death. He went to a deserted place by Himself, probably to grieve. But the crowds followed Him, and Jesus had compassion on them. He healed them, taught them, and fed all 5,000 of them.

God spoke to me not to withdraw but to have compassion on the people and continue ministering. I praise God now that I did because the trial lasted five years. I could have spent five years in depression, doing nothing but mourning. Instead, those five years became part of the most fruitful season I had ever had. Then God began to gloriously redeem the time and circumstances to make the situation better than it had ever been.

God gives double for our trouble when we choose to keep our eyes on Him rather than on the pain we are feeling. And the comfort we receive from the Holy Spirit in those times is comfort we can then share with others. God does make miracles out of messes for those who will trust Him.

ARE YOU PRAYING AND NOT HEARING FROM GOD?

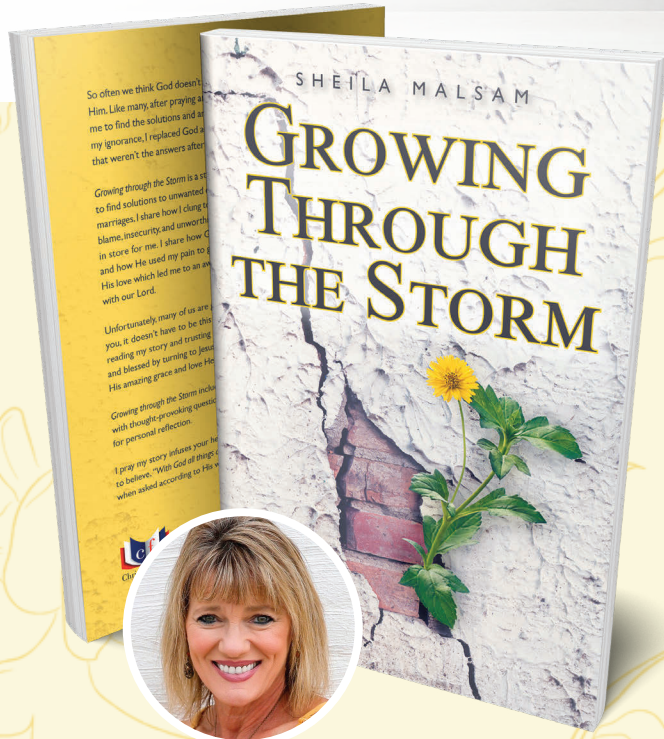
God, Are You Listening To My Prayers?

So often we think God doesn't hear us during our struggles when we cry out to Him. Like many, after praying and not getting a response, I thought it was up to me to find the solutions and answers to the struggles I encountered. Because of my ignorance, I replaced God and His power with what I thought were answers.

Is God whispering something within your spirit? Do you have a dream that you believe God has placed in your heart? If so, have you surrendered it to God? Or perhaps, like me, you believed you were in control and said "Yes" to that which God already responded "No," and now you're desperate for a second chance.

Growing Through The Storm is a story of triumphs and lessons learned while searching to find solutions to unwanted circumstances during not one, but two troubled marriages. I share how I clung to attachments such as doubt, fear, worry, self-pity, blame, insecurity, and unworthiness that kept me from receiving what God had in store for me. I share how God revealed Himself to me through the storm and how He used my pain to grow me stronger, wiser, and more confident of His love, which led me to an awakening in my spirit and a personal relationship with our Lord.

» Learn more at www.sheilamalsam.com/about-the-book



***"Growing Through The Storm* by Sheila Malsam is a heartfelt and inspiring memoir that delves into the author's personal journey through the storms of life. This book is a testament to the power of faith, resilience, and the unwavering love of God."**

— Jithendra Jithu

"Growing Through The Storm — For those that feel the pain of society's expectations and judgment instead of looking to God. Very inspiring and real."

— Private

"Growing Through The Storm — Through this book, the author wants us to learn that we shouldn't control everything by ourselves. Sometimes, if things don't happen, we should leave them in God's hands as God knows the best for us. This book is an eye-opener for me. It made me realize how I question my faith sometimes. I am glad to get my hands on this book at the right time. Thanks to the author for sharing her story with us. It's a book worth reading."

— Passionduniya



Available on
amazon.com

Free Chapter Download

The Key to Thriving in the Wilderness

In this world, we do have troubles. But Jesus tells us to take heart and be encouraged because He has overcome the world (John 16:33). He makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). That means we can be happy—even in the middle of a wilderness.

Don't let the enemy convince you that you're disqualified from experiencing the promises in any of these verses. I used to read Romans 8:28 and think, "Well, do I love Him enough to qualify for this promise?" That was the enemy, of course, once again trying to put an impossible standard on me and telling me I didn't measure up. But nothing we bring to God, including

God wants you to remain there and endure it paint an unfair picture. God is for you. If you want to talk about unfairness, know that it's unfair how very much He loves and adores you.

By human standards, this isn't justice. But because of what Jesus did, God gets to do for you what He has always longed to do—to give you the kingdom as a co-heir with Christ and love you with such a strong love that you need supernatural strength to handle it. Regardless of any other voices you've heard, this is the truth about Him.

Spend some time thinking about who God is and who He is for you. It's always good to do that, but it's especially important when you're going through a dry and barren place. That is when distortions about Him are easiest

wants to do ridiculously good things for you. Until you allow Him to lavish love on you, you won't be able to enter into the fullness of His desire to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all you can ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

This is why so many believers are wandering in the wilderness without experiencing hope or joy. Sadly, for some people, the wilderness has become a place of distortion, full of lies about God, when, in fact, it is where faith gets tested and grows strong. But it can only grow strong when we know God's love because love is the root of faith. We can only trust someone we love, and we can only love God in response to His love for us. So getting His love is not just a nice thing to encourage us. It isn't just a celebration without any fruit. It's vital. It enables us to receive God's promises by faith, and those promises become our food in barren places.

When you really get the love of God, you actually open doors for faith to be released to see the kingdom of God established on earth.

The busier I become, the more I recognize that I need to schedule time to be loved—to simply look into God's eyes and receive His goodness. You can never be too busy to receive. The busier you are, the more of Him you need. His pleasure over you is like a river, and it never stops flowing.

If you've ever wondered how someone can be satisfied and fulfilled while still in the wilderness, this is the secret. The dreams God has given you will be satisfying and fulfilling but not nearly as much as He is. Those dreams may take a while to unfold; mine took years, as did the dreams and callings of Joseph, Moses, David and many more. But God is available now. His love is for every moment, no matter how barren the landscape is. And only He can truly satisfy. ◀

KATHERINE RUONALA and her husband, **Tom**, are the founders and senior ministers of *Glory City Church in Brisbane, Australia*. *Katherine has recorded two music CDs. She and Tom lead the Australian Prophetic Council and oversee the Glory Gathering International Network.*

"You are meant to thrive in the wilderness, not just survive in it. And receiving God's love—looking into His eyes and seeing how He really feels about you—gives you power to thrive in even the driest places."

our love, comes from us in the first place. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). In fact, even if our heart condemns us, He is greater than our heart (1 John 3:20).

There have been a lot of lies told about Jesus, and when you're in a wilderness, it's tempting to believe them. As human beings, we tend to judge God by our circumstances rather than judging our circumstances by Him, and our circumstances can be a very unreliable measure of who He is. The religious-sounding words about why you're in the wilderness or how

to swallow. Choose to believe the truth. When you wake up, remind yourself that His mercy is new every morning.

Know that He isn't looking to see how well you do; He's waiting to see whether you'll have faith in His goodness so He can come in, overwhelm you and fill you with joy and strength, allowing you to arise and shine as one of His glorious ones. Instead of buying the lies that you're supposed to walk around weak and frail, yield your weakness to Him and let Him clothe you with power from on high. If God is for you, who can be against you?

You are meant to thrive in the wilderness, not just survive in it. And receiving God's love—looking into His eyes and seeing how He really feels about you—gives you power to thrive in even the driest places. Until you get a revelation of His love that fills you to overflowing with His fullness, just as Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 says, you won't experience His joy. You won't be able to live in the confidence that He

TO LEARN MORE, READ THIS...

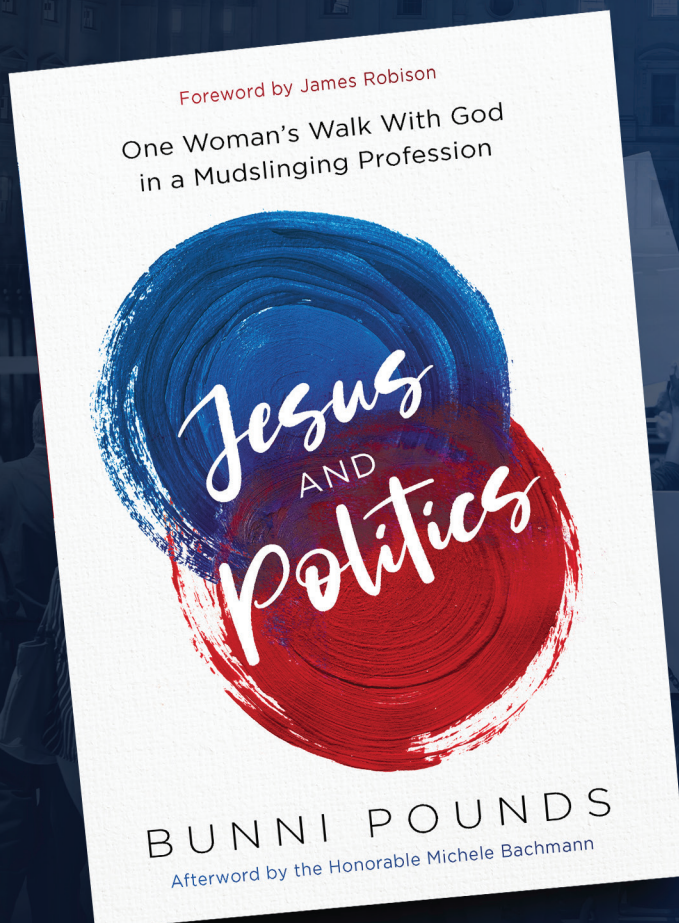
In *From Wilderness to Wonders*, author Katherine Ruonala examines the journey—the one that takes believers through wilderness seasons full of tests and trials—and emphasizes the importance of enduring the process. Find this resource at amazon.com, christianbook.com or anywhere Christian books are sold.



The Christian life isn't about doing things the easy way— *it's about living as Christ* *even in a hostile environment.*

Living out the Christian life isn't just a suggestion; it's something we are each called to do. With *Jesus and Politics*, you'll discover how to disciple a nation, one heart at a time by:

- **Cultivating intimacy with Jesus, even in a hostile culture and amid life's pressures.**
- **Effectively sharing the gospel, discipling others, and standing up for the truth in various settings.**
- **Engaging in politics and various spheres of government to protect liberty in America.**



CHARISMA
HOUSE

CHARISMA 

MyCharismaShop.com

SATAN'S 3-PRONGED ATTACK AGAINST AMERICA



**MEDIA
ENTERTAINMENT
EDUCATION**

More Americans than ever are counting themselves among the 'nones.' The key question is: Why?

BY BILLY HALLOWELL

Americans seem confused, lost and culturally disengaged. A higher proportion of people than ever before are losing touch with their moral center, with a biblical and ethical disconnect rapidly deepening and intensifying.

To a degree, the likely catalysts for these changing dynamics are understandable. Life is ever complicated; most of us are busy with work, kids and the chaos of life. Perhaps we're too tied up to think about the finer things in life as deeply as we once did, though I would argue there are other far more pervasive causal factors at play. Many of us are increasingly glued to our smartphones, tablets, computers, TVs, MP3 players and other devices.

Through these avenues, the messages streaming from Hollywood and the media that were once relatively benign and contained to a few channels are now blasting at us from multiple angles. The TV shows, movies, lyrics and news we consume have changed dramatically over the years, with evolving content and subject matter yielding an intense flow of increasingly graphic content.

The consumption level of this content differs based on the person. One thing is for sure, though: Over time, our nation has collectively become desensitized, growing accustomed to what we're viewing and hearing.

The collective situation has created a fault line, and the beginnings of a cultural earthquake are most certainly afoot. From a transformation in traditional moral understandings to shifting theological alliances, society is, in many ways, at a bizarre and troubling turning point.

Why a 'Nones' Generation Is Rising

More Americans than ever before are counting themselves among the "nones"—the cohort of Americans who are either atheist, agnostic or unaffiliated with a particular faith. To give you an idea of just how quickly the tides have changed, consider that 16 percent of Americans called themselves "nones" in 2007. By 2014, that number was up to 23 percent.

We're living in an era in which people are increasingly unable to firmly embrace a set of solid truths. Just consider the fact that in 2016 nearly 6 out of 10 Americans said that "knowing what is right or wrong is a matter of personal experience"—whatever that means. Sadly, many of us don't even recognize what's happening as we trade in a set of norms that have underpinned our society for a moral relativism that offers little ethical consistency.

The key question surrounding all of these changes is, why? Though there are a plethora of potential reasons, I would argue fervently that there's a very specific cultural education paradigm at play that Americans, and in particular, Bible believers and political conservatives, must adequately understand if they want to help stem the tide of cultural chaos.

Pause for a moment and consider where many people, particularly young adults, receive an education in contemporary society, taking into account that my definition of education is, in this instance, extended to include any avenue or venue through which people are fed potentially transformational information. Without a doubt, the university classroom, the media and Hollywood are the three main systems, outside of the church, that feed the masses with life-changing and perspective-shaping information.

continued »



“From a transformation in traditional moral understandings to shifting theological alliances, society is, in many ways, at a bizarre and troubling turning point.”

Now here's the problem: There's evidence that these three main educational veins—the entertainment, the university system and mainstream media—lean to the political left and on a theological front typically misrepresent, under-represent or paint an inaccurate picture of what Christianity and faith truly encapsulates. And with some churches losing footing or, at the least, cultural reach—especially in those three educational settings—there's a clear problem we must confront.

Unmasking the Harlot in Hollywood

Hollywood is just one influential industry that often draws the ire of conservatives, evangelicals and Christians. But it seems the broader issue of concern is rooted not as much in political whims as in the increasingly raunchy content coming from Hollywood. Every year it seems TV shows and films get a little bit edgier, with many Americans wondering when the sex, violence and other unpalatable themes will cease, or at least temper. With adult content continuing to worsen in some sectors—particularly television—it's not surprising that some people see Hollywood as hostile or unfriendly to Christian values.

A Barna Group study found that less than 1 percent of Americans agreed that Hollywood is faithful to Christian beliefs. Just 10.4 percent said Hollywood portrays Christianity in a positive light.

Does that prove a bias? Well, that's a bit complicated, as public perception can only take us so far. What's clear is that something has profoundly changed when it comes to the nature of our entertainment. Even if one argues that Christianity isn't being intentionally attacked and sidelined, there's surely a feeling among many that the values embraced by the faithful are either under assault in pop culture, or are simply excluded from the majority of Hollywood content.

Ideologies aside, money is what drives Tinseltown—a fact that must be confronted when addressing how entertainment content has drifted so fluidly into a land of total and utter moral depravity. In a world where sex sells, one can see why—from a profit perspective—Hollywood companies have increased the use of shock factors, including violence and explicit themes. After all, the intended goal is to capture and retain audience attention, with executives constantly looking for the latest and greatest methods to make that happen.

The unintentional consequence of using these tactics, though, is that many of the faithful are marginalized, cut out of the discussion, misrepresented, told that their values are antiquated and unworthy, or—at the least—are simply not served by what the industry is offering. What results is a cornered market that, over time, shapes hearts and minds. The forces that have the most power and prevalence over the

masses will have the greatest ability to impact public thought and perception.

Discerning Higher Education's Irony

Perhaps the greatest irony of our age is that colleges and universities—the very institutions that are intended to educate and intellectually challenge the masses—oftentimes foster one-sided and biased environments. College is intended to be an intensive time of self-exploration—one in which young people are theoretically opened up to the world around them with diverse perspectives and experiences helping to shape their contextual understandings. Yet, in contrast, higher education today is often a breeding ground for exclusively progressive ideals and values that are marketed to young minds as definitive, unadulterated truth.

Unfortunately young people are all too often fed this information from left-of-center professors who are injecting their worldview into the classroom with little regard for the need for divergent beliefs in the educational marketplace. Their ideals, presented as truth and many times so filtered that opposing views are either denigrated into silence or ignored entirely, are often pervasive and treated as gospel when in fact they're nothing more than mere personal opinion.

Don't get me wrong. There is absolutely nothing wrong with liberal professors being employed by colleges and universities (just so we're clear here). What is improper, however, is an environment in which young people are given an imbalanced perspective on key social, political and international issues, or one in which conservative professors are too afraid to share their views with colleagues for fear of reprisal.

Such imbalances create unaccommodating and uncomfortable environments for those who do not share left-of-center perspectives, though the more pervasive and concerning issue is the notion that young, impressionable minds are potentially robbed of the ability to make decisions for themselves, especially when they aren't presented with a fair assessment of all the available and pertinent information.

Mainstream Media's Clear Anti-Christ Bias

Like Hollywood and universities, the media too are routinely accused of holding anti-Christian and anti-conservative biases. When you dive deeper into the issue and examine reporters' personal views, demographics and expert analysis, the roots of the bias conundrum start to take shape.

It's no secret that many critics see the media as unfair and politically biased, but a topic that gets somewhat less attention is the "God gap" that has apparently taken root in many newsrooms. On the whole, it seems there is a disconnect between journalists and the public at large when it comes to Christianity and, more specifically, evangelicalism. That fact is quite ironic considering that the nation overwhelmingly embraces the Christian faith, with evangelicals forming a sizable portion of the population.

There appears to be plenty of evidence to at least show that religious representation in American newsrooms isn't necessarily reflective of nationwide demographics. And while that doesn't directly prove bias, it is a factor worthy of discussion. Imbalanced statistics among reporters when it comes to their political and faith views most certainly point to a dearth of cultural diversity in American newsrooms. In the end, a lack of representation of Christians in media is ideologically dangerous. Fixing the problem, though, involves engaging an ignorance of sorts—an ignorance of the problem itself and a failure to understand why it really matters.

Religious adherence is unlike any other personal attribute; it plays a deeply intricate role in shaping the thoughts, feelings and actions of the

faithful. Few descriptors or personal attributes hold such fervent power. Here's why that matters: True faith isn't merely a nominal marker. Rather than serving as a mere system that someone subscribes to by slapping a label on himself and marching on his merry way, Christianity calls on its adherents to live out its values in every area of their lives.

There are often intricate reasons why believers hold various stands on social and political issues. What seems like bigotry to some critics is quite often a sincerely held religious belief that is rooted in a long-standing theological explanation that goes far deeper than some critics comprehend. Understanding these intricacies is key because faith shapes how millions upon millions of Americans live their lives; it helps to mold and solidify beliefs, practices and actions like no other force.

But if mainstream reporters truly have little exposure to what Christians believe and why they believe it, is it really possible for outlets to always get it right when it comes to covering topics such as abortion and gay marriage, among others? And what about locating the best, most articulate—and representative—individuals among the evangelical ranks to discuss those issues? Without base knowledge of something as important as religious motivation, coverage gets a bit complicated.

4 Ways to Combat the 3-Pronged Attack

With all this in mind, it's clear we have a major cultural problem, as our three main educational spheres are dominated by values that run counter to Christianity. So what's the solution? One practical solution is for all of us to become more aware of what we're consuming and to make a concerted effort to avoid certain forms of negative content. Not only are we then protecting our hearts and minds, but we also can then send a collective message about what we're willing to tolerate.

At the least, we should all think more deeply about the media, entertainment and university messages we're consuming and ask some key questions: What am I really being told? What do these themes say about the current state

of our society and culture?

Christian apologist Josh McDowell presented a series of steps and parameters he believes people must take seriously if they actually wish to understand and come to grips with the problems we face in modern society.

"One, you've got to be informed," he said, referencing John 8:32. "Second, you need to come to understand what are rational, physical, sound solutions, answers. See, most Christians can tell me what they believe, but 95 percent can't give me any intelligent reason why they believe it."

He said this dynamic will no longer suffice because people need to be fully aware and cognizant of not only what their values and beliefs are but why they subscribe to such ideals.

"Then, third, we've got to live it," McDowell said. "If we do not live out our faith in our own personal lives, in our marriages, with our children, in our business, in our ministry, whatever—if we don't live out Christ in a vibrant way—then no one is going to believe whatever we say, and they shouldn't."

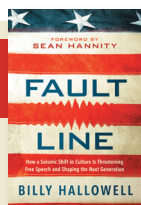
The fourth and final solution McDowell offered is for people to truly learn to listen without interrupting or being judgmental. It's after listening to what people think and feel—particularly nonbelievers—that he said it's possible to more appropriately engage. It is through these steps we can begin to understand and fix the problem—or, at the least, have an impact by having a presence in the culture. Being informed, of course, is the first step, as McDowell noted; learning and discerning truth is key.

We need to be the shining examples of what we claim to espouse. We can't simply say we're Christians; we need to show it in the way we live, the decisions we make and the content we choose to consume. The stakes are high. Now more than ever we must take a stand, regardless of the uphill ideological battle. ♦

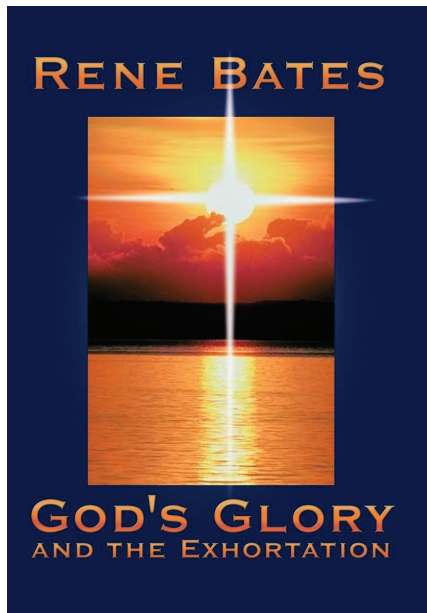
BILLY HALLOWELL has contributed to *The Washington Post*, *The Daily Caller* and *The Huffington Post*, among other news sites. *Hallowell has worked as a journalist and commentator for more than a decade.*

IF YOU LIKED THE ARTICLE,
YOU'LL LOVE THE BOOK

In *Fault Line: How a Seismic Shift in Culture Is Threatening Free Speech and Shaping the Next Generation* (FrontLine), Billy Hallowell reveals America's three main educational systems and how they're dragging down our moral compass. Find this at amazon.com, christianbook.com or anywhere books are sold.



Refresh Your Spirit



THE FINAL TESTAMENT

A Warning from God to the Saved and Lost.

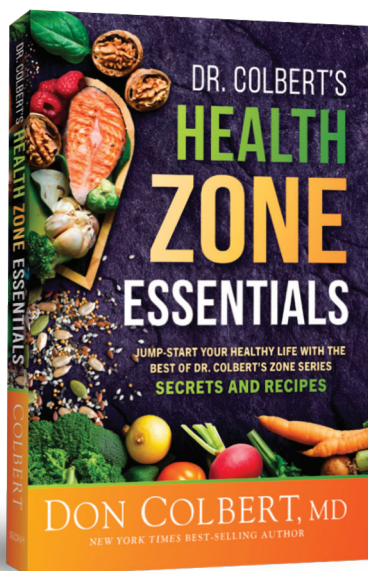
To the Lost: Receive Jesus Now.

**To the Saved: Get Rid of Your “Traditions of Men”
Before the Soon Coming of Christ.**

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

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

Available for purchase on Amazon and Barnes & Noble

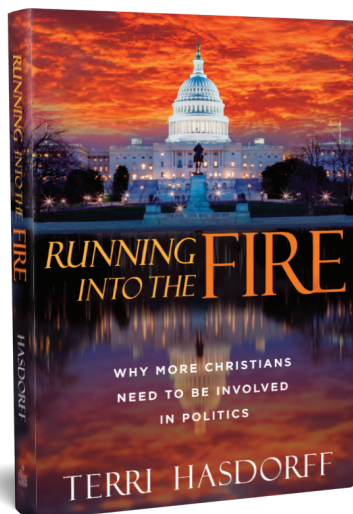


Dr. Colbert's Health Zone Essentials

by Don Colbert

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

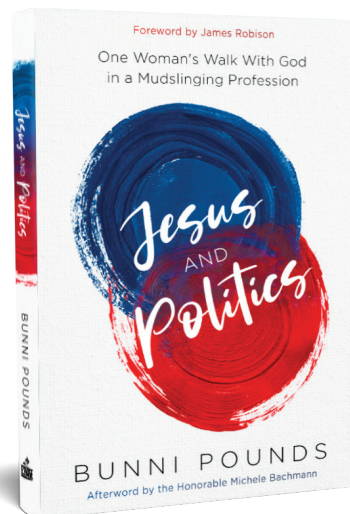
DrColbertBooks.com



Running Into the Fire by Terri Hasdorff

Did you know that we are the answer to America's growing darkness? In Terri Hasdorff's *Running Into the Fire*, you will discover what it means to be a key participant in America's political system as a citizen of this nation. Drawing from her more than twenty years in politics to show people of faith how to effectively influence the government, Hasdorff sheds the light on how to be proactive so we can see significant changes in the redemption of our land.

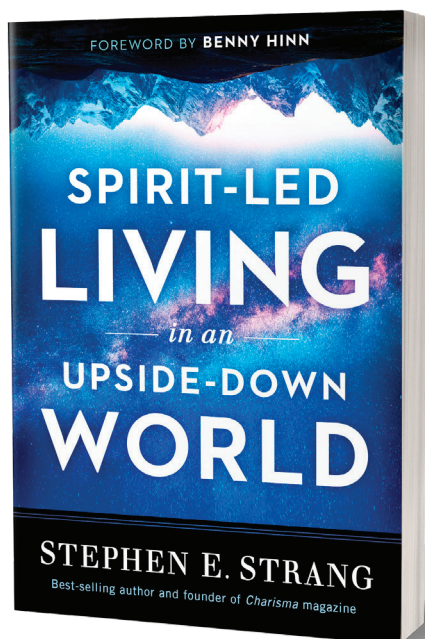
MyCharismaShop.com



Jesus and Politics by Bunni Pounds

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

MyCharismaShop.com



Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World by Stephen E. Strang

Best-selling author and founder of *Charisma* magazine, Stephen Strang's latest book will guide you to walk confidently in the power of the Holy Spirit for a life of abundance and joy. You'll discover how important walking with the Holy Spirit is during these critical times as we draw nearer to the Christ's return. As you go through *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, you'll uncover new and fresh ways to connect with God so you can be a light in the darkness for the glory of God. Regardless of what's happening in the world around us, you can be assured that God wants to perfect His will in your life far abundantly more than all you could've ever asked for or imagined.

SteveStrangBooks.com

Simply Christ

Gospel Insight

with Keith Surface

“...But I Believe!”

One night in a dream I saw myself standing on top of one of many open-top boxcars on a train speeding down a railroad track. The boxcars were field with people, some of which I knew. It had the appearance of a social gathering where people had glasses in their hands and snacked on “party foods.” In retrospect, I have often considered these boxcars were churches or groups of church people. I got the attention of a man I recognized, who reached up and shook my hand. I grabbed his hand and spoke these words: “Jesus is coming! We’ve got to be real!” The man agreed with what I spoke but seemed embarrassed that I was speaking it at that moment. I knew he did not understand the urgency, so I held to his hand and repeated the statement. “Jesus is coming! We’ve got to be real!” This time the man tried to ignore my grip on his hand and continued his socializing with others in the boxcar.

At this point Jesus appeared in the sky accompanied by a host of angels and an innumerable company of saints. I was still holding on to the man’s hand when I began to feel myself lifted up to meet Christ in the air. I loved the man and did not want to turn loose of his hand but very soon my grip broke as I was lifted away. The man’s attention was turned upward, and I saw the disbelief in his eyes as he spoke these words: “No ...but I believe!” He spoke the same words again, but the disbelief was turning to horror. “No ...but I believe!”

As I was lifted higher and higher away from the train, others in the boxcars began to notice what was happening. They all cried out with the same words: “No ...but I believe!” I watched as the train sped down the track until the track and land ended and the train began to tumble into the abyss. Almost in unison, everyone on the train was screaming, “No ...but I believe!”

This dream ended in great horror for those who thought their “believing” would save them. Somehow, faith in Jesus Christ had been substituted for an empty mental assent. There is no doubt that we are saved “*by grace ...through faith*” Ephesians 2:8, and we also “stand by faith.” Romans 11:20. “Saving faith,” however, is always based upon belief of the truth of the gospel. **If just believing “anything” constitutes “faith,” then believing a lie would also be faith.** Yet Paul warned of those who received “...*strong delusion, that they*

should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” II Thessalonians 2:10-12. A suicide bomber may believe his death will guarantee himself Heaven, but his firm belief is not faith. He is only believing a lie. Believing a lie never brings you into the promises of God.

True “saving faith” brings such a response from God unto the believer that the existence of such faith is evident for all to see. The Apostle John told us “*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness (evidence) in himself...*” I John 5:10. The Biblical evidence of “saving faith” is as a city set on a hill. It cannot be hidden. Let’s look closer at the biblical witness of “saving faith.”

“God ...bare them witness ...purifying their hearts by faith.” Acts 15:8-9. Saving faith brings a clean heart to the believer. God said, “*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:*” Ezekiel 36:26. The Apostle told us “*the blood of Christ*” would “*purge your conscience (inner thoughts and feelings) from dead works to serve the living God*” Hebrews 9:14.

“...sanctified by faith that is in me.” Acts 26:18. Jesus went to the cross to “*that he might sanctify the people with his own blood...*” Hebrews 13:12. Through faith in Jesus Christ, sin is washed from our heart and nature by his precious blood. Remember, Jesus “*...loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*” Revelation 1:5.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...” Romans 10:10. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are transformed from one born a sinner into one who has been made righteous by the work of Christ. The Bible tells us “*For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*” Romans 5:19.

Paul told us to “*examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...*” II Corinthians 13:5. If our “faith” has not brought us what the Bible says saving “faith” brings, then we should examine whether we are in the faith. Your eternity depends upon it!

What did the
angels tell us
about our great
Salvation?

Free
Paperback
Order Now

Behold the Lamb
Publications

Salvation!
according to
The Angel Gabriel



by Leroy Surface

Behold the Lamb PO Box 750 Porter, TX 77365

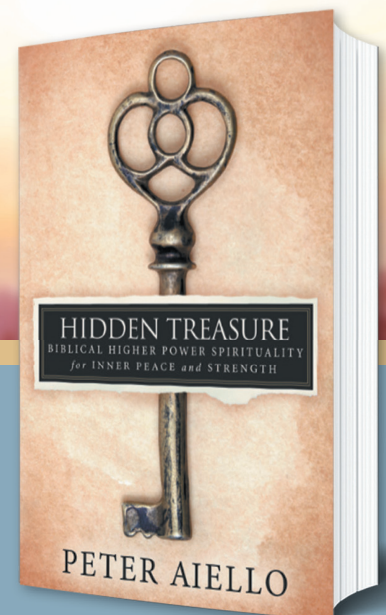
Find Peace. Find Joy. Discover a Childlike Faith.

Worry. Fear. Anxiety. Anger. Guilt.
Depression. Addictions.

Emotional stress drains. Do you feel like
peace and strength elude you?

Hidden Treasure points you to the biblical answers
for receiving God's peace and strength in your life.

You can defeat emotional stress, addictions, and
unforgiveness in your life and be FREE!

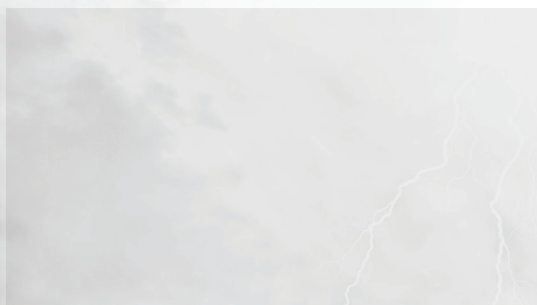


This book is about my personal testimony of how God taught me to surrender to Him through the instruction from the Bible. It told me to be anxious for nothing by casting all of my care on Him. *Hidden Treasure* shares my insights on Biblical spirituality and how to walk in the Spirit.

Visit HiddenTreasure.website for a **FREE** download of *Hidden Treasure*

Peter Aiello

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



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

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

