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KILLING  
FIELDS

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NORTH KOREA

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THE BILLY  
GRAHAM  
OF IRAN

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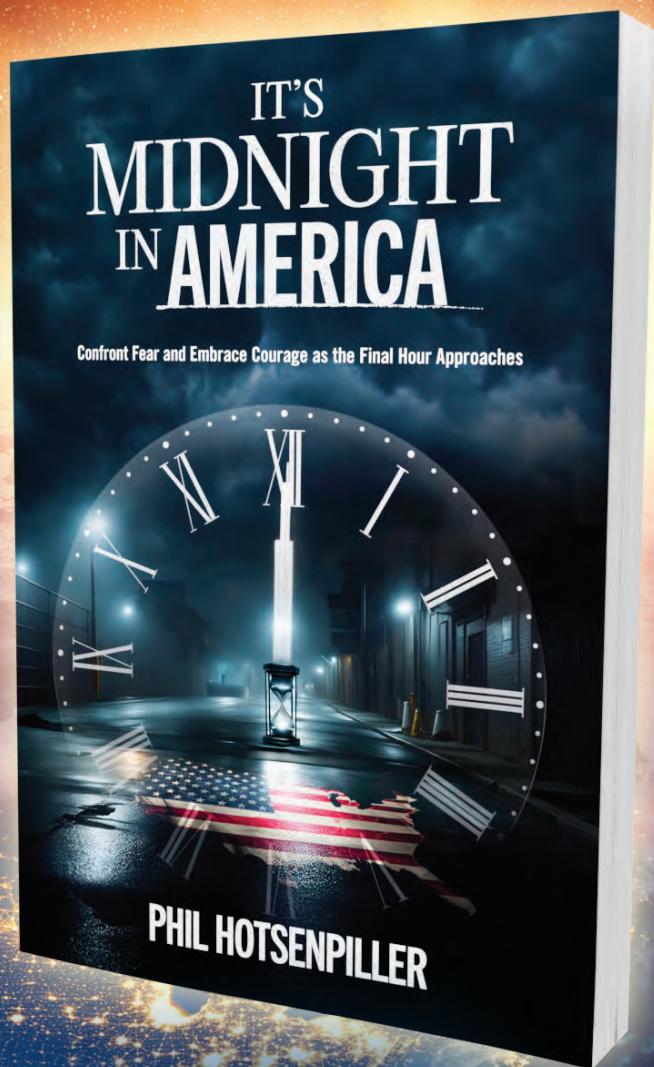
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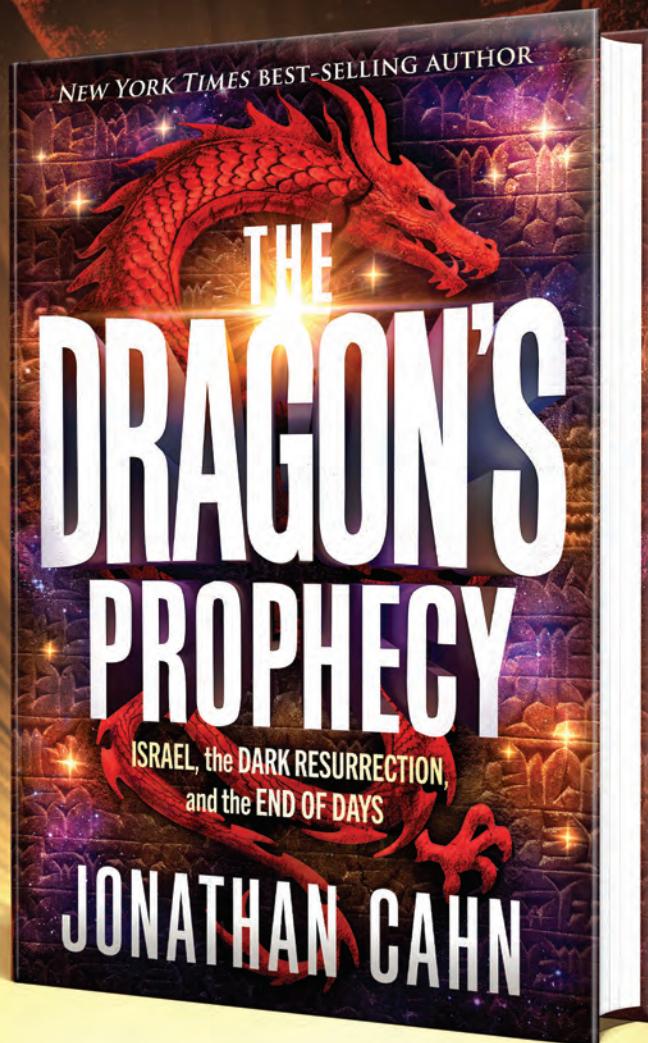
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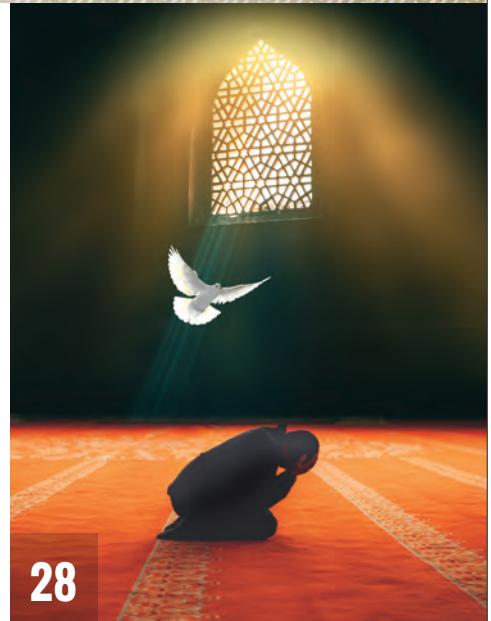
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## A NEW BEGINNING FOR AMERICA

Eight days after Easter, God is sending a sign in the Heavens, the Great American Eclipse of 2024, offering a new beginning for America.

Scientists may say that the Eclipse is an accident of celestial mechanics, but it is no coincidence that the moon is just the right distance from the Earth to produce the awesome Eclipse on April 8.

The Bible says that the Eclipse, or “Dark Sun”, is a sign of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (See Acts 2:17-20 and Joel 2:28-32).

But for those in the valley of decision who are undecided about following God, the Dark Sun is warning of judgment for those who reject Him and a promise of refuge for those who choose Him. (See Joel 3:14-16)

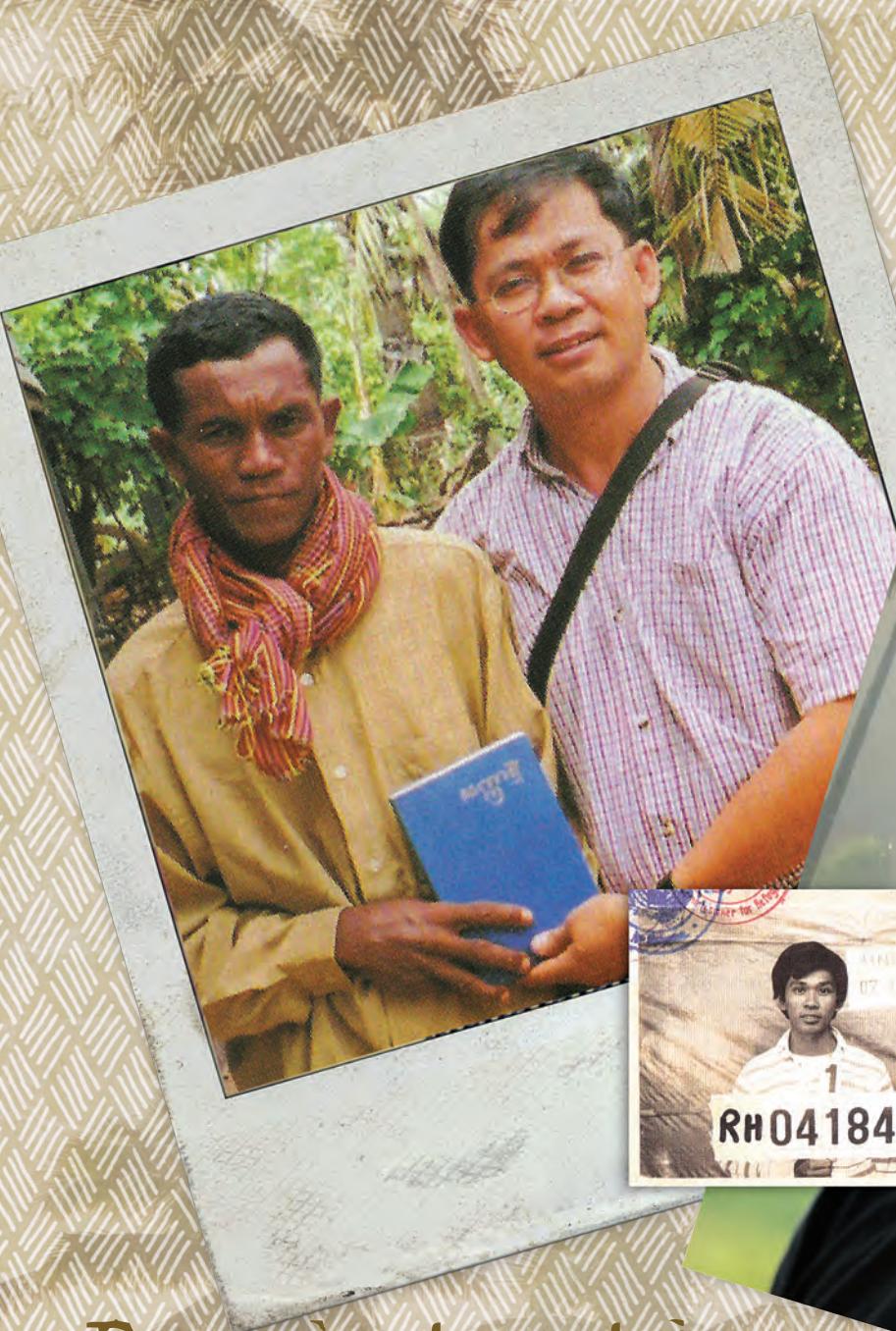
And we Christians who are watchmen on the wall and laborers in God's vineyard can reach out to those who are lost by showing them the promise and the warning of the Dark Sun.

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- Publicize the Outreach opportunity with your prayer partners, your church and other Christians in your community. (See “Christians Prepare for Great American Eclipse of 2024”)
- Print the “Meet the Artist” flyer attached.
- Plan to take a late lunch on Monday afternoon, April 8, to tell people about God as His sign passes overhead. (See “Praying on Site”)
- You can find these materials at (<https://shorturl.at/yAOR0>) or at [www.AmericanWakeUpCall.net](http://www.AmericanWakeUpCall.net)

May God bless you for partnering with Him.  
And may God bless America!



# Back to the Killings Fields

**After miraculously surviving an attack in which he saw 13 members of his family massacred by Khmer Rouge soldiers in Cambodia, Reaksa Himm swore revenge. But a radical encounter with Jesus gave him an entirely new reason to seek the murderers: to forgive them and share the gospel with them.**

**BY CHAD BONHAM**

**N**o one knows the exact number of Cambodians that were executed in the infamous killing fields between 1975 and 1979. Estimates range between 1.7 million and 2.5 million innocent men, women and children who were mercilessly slaughtered at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime.

But for Reaksa Himm, the only relevant number is 13. That number represents how many family members he personally lost in the killing fields. Among those 13 family members were his father, his mother and nine brothers and sisters. To compound the tragedy, Himm witnessed the brutal murder of 10 of his loved ones just outside a small village called Thlok.

That Himm survived the mass execution is nothing less than a miracle. But no less incredible is long trek he took from revenge to forgiveness.

### **Journey to the Killing Fields**

Himm's road to spiritual revelation was paved with unfathomable pain and heartache. But it didn't start out that way. In 1975, Himm and his family were living a peaceful life in the city of Siem Reap despite an ongoing conflict between the ruling democratic leadership and the Khmer Communists led by brutal warlord Pol Pot. When the Khmer army defeated the American-backed government, Himm's world was turned upside down.

After systematically executing all leaders sympathetic to the previous government, the Khmer Rouge regime began rounding up the Cambodian people and sending them to work camps. They were told they would only be gone three days to allow the army to root out American soldiers they suspected were still in hiding. But days turned to months, and months turned to years.

For the first two years, Himm's family tried to conform to the new government's policies. They never dared say anything against the leadership.

"If you opposed them, they would usually come in the night and tell you they wanted to send you to school so you could change your behavior," Himm says. "But to be sent to school literally meant execution."

By the age of 14, Himm was working in the fields tending to cattle and water buffalo. Each morning he would take some rice and dried fish wrapped in a banana leaf for lunch and head to his post. But one afternoon, he met an older man who was



**LEFT:** Reaksa Himm gives a Bible to the man who killed his father and siblings  
**MIDDLE:** Awaiting immigration to Canada  
**RIGHT:** Himm today

RUSS STODDARD | © BRENDA SLOGGETT

a stranger. The man asked if he would share his lunch. As part of the Cambodian culture, Himm had been trained to respect his elders, so he gave the man half his lunch.

“Before I knew it, he had eaten all of my lunch,” Himm recalls. “I was so angry. I had nothing to eat after that. But then he wanted to tell me a story. So I sat down and listened to him.”

“In the next six months,” the man said, “all of your family is going to be killed, but you will not die. You will have to go through a lot of suffering.”

## Out of the Grave

A few weeks later, three Khmer soldiers came to the family’s house and arrested Himm’s father. When asked what he had done wrong, one soldier barked these ominous words: “Today we will destroy you! If we keep you, we gain nothing! If we kill you, we lose nothing! You are serving the American government! You are CIA!”

Himm had no idea what “CIA” meant, but he did know what happened to those faced with that accusation.

“That person became dead meat,” he says.

Himm ran back to his house and

tried to gather his younger brothers and sisters. Suddenly the soldiers busted through the door, dragging Himm’s father behind them. At first the soldiers put Himm’s hands behind his back, but then they released him so he could carry his 2-year-old brother.

And then they took them all to the jungle.

“When we finally arrived, the soldiers began digging graves for us,” Himm says. “For the next 15 minutes, we just stood there and waited for them to kill us. I tried to hug my father, but his arms were behind his back. Then I told him goodbye. My father responded by saying something I will never forget. He said, ‘I love all of you.’ In Cambodian culture, we rarely show affection. That was the first and last time I heard my father say those words.”

Himm stood there as the soldiers made his father kneel down in front of the grave. His father was clubbed from behind and fell into the pit. Then came the screams.

“I saw every single ax fall as they butchered my father,” Himm says. “It was my turn, and I laid my baby brother beside me. Someone clubbed me from

behind, and I fell on my father. Then I heard my baby brother scream so loud. Then I heard the chopping and the screaming.”

As the soldiers descended into the grave, they miraculously passed over Himm. When they noticed he was not yet dead, one of the men went back down and hit him again. Blood came through his nose and mouth. Himm began to suffocate and could hardly breathe.

“But no matter what, I didn’t move,” he says.

The soldiers left to find Himm’s mother and older sisters who were working on a farm back at the village. For the next 30 minutes, Himm struggled to climb through the bodies on top of him.

“At that time, I was just beginning to understand what had happened,” he says. “I couldn’t imagine how I could go on with my life. I was just lying there with the dead bodies and waiting for the soldiers to come finish me.”

Somehow he mustered the strength and courage to climb out of the grave. Had he stayed a few more minutes, the soldiers would have found him. Instead, he hid in the weeds and watched them drag his mother and sisters to the grave where they, too, were executed and dumped into the pit.

“After the soldiers left, I crawled back to the grave and knelt down and put my head to the grave,” he says. “I saw my mother’s face. I cried and screamed until I lost consciousness. When I woke up, it was about to become dark. I was by myself in the deep, dark jungle. That night, I decided to climb a tree and hold on to the tree the whole night. I couldn’t close my eyes. I was so scared.”

## Three Promises

For the next three days and nights, Himm stayed there and cried. He survived by eating bamboo shoots and wild fruit and drinking dew squeezed from his blood-soaked shirt. After serious thoughts of going back to the village so the soldiers could put him out of his misery, the traumatized 14-year-old headed away from the gruesome site in search of help.

Before he left the killing field, though, he made three promises to himself. First, he would take revenge on his family’s killers. If he couldn’t do that, he would

# Forgiveness on the Big Screen

A story like Reaksa Himm’s is meant to be shared with a mass audience

The Cambodian killing fields have been well documented in books, television specials and films since the 1980s. The 1984 film adaptation of *The Killing Fields*, in fact, won three Academy Awards. But it was not until Reaksa Himm wrote the book *Tears of My Soul* that such a strong message of forgiveness and redemption emerged from the tragic historical account.

When Los Angeles-based producer Tim Anderson stumbled upon Himm’s book while searching for another book by the same title, he knew the amazing story was tailor-made for the big screen. “The true elements are beyond any fiction we as filmmakers could recreate,” Anderson says. “It seems the Lord wanted this man to survive for many reasons. We hope this film is one of those reasons. The world desperately needs the message of redeeming forgiveness.”

Anderson’s production company, BASH Media Group, is currently raising funds for a documentary film and full-length feature film intended for theatrical release.

“We hope both films inspire waves of forgiveness in people’s hearts, which will lead to reconciliation,” he says. “Forgiveness is unnatural, so we hope people will discover God’s supernatural attributes of forgiveness.”

Himm is likewise hopeful his story will have a significant impact.

“I don’t want the movie to just reach out to the Christians, but to anyone who needs to hear a story like this,” he says. “I hope the film will be a blessing and help people cope with bitterness and anger so they can forgive those who have hurt them.”

For more information on the *Tears of My Soul* film project, visit the official website at [tearsfilm.com](http://tearsfilm.com).

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*Peter Aiello*



Reaksa Himm receives an honorary doctorate with his wife, Phaly, and two children

become a Buddhist monk to pay respect to his family. And if he couldn't keep his first two promises, he would go far away from Cambodia.

Over the next two years, Himm migrated among a succession of refugee camps that at times proved anything but safe. He also reunited with the only other surviving members of his immediate family—his older sister Sopheap and her husband, Chhounly. When neighboring Vietnam overthrew the Khmer regime in early 1979, Himm returned to the city and lived with his aunt.

By 1984, Himm decided to join the police force. His purpose in doing so was simple: It would help him get back to the village where his family was killed so he could “eradicate every single person in that village,” he says, to pay honor to his family.

But when Himm finally had the chance to arrest one of the men who had helped kill his family, he couldn't go through with it—despite dragging the man into the forest and aiming a gun at the man's head. Having broken his first promise, Himm then faced the harsh reality that he couldn't keep his second promise, as the current regime did not allow young men to become Buddhist monks.

“Finally, I tried to fulfill my last promise,” he says, “which was to escape from Cambodia.”

## Free Indeed

Leaving Cambodia was both illegal and very dangerous. But Himm was desperate to leave his problems behind. He headed for Thailand, facing numerous life-threatening situations along the way,

and eventually landed in the notorious Khao I Dang refugee camps. While there, he exchanged letters with a cousin who was living in California. Himm shared his desire to come to the United States, and his cousin, who was a Christian pastor, shared stories about his faith.

“He kept telling me about Jesus,” Himm says, “and I told him, ‘I need money, not Jesus!’”

Himm stayed in Thailand five years. His attempts to move to the United States were rejected by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Undaunted, he started a vigorous letter-writing campaign to the Canadian embassy. He also decided prayer wouldn't hurt either.

“I felt hopeless,” he says. “One night I knelt on my knees and prayed, ‘God, if you take me to Canada, I will start a new life and live for You.’”

About 90 letters later, in 1989, Himm gained entrance to Canada. He accepted Christ a year later. Then he enrolled at Tyndale College in Ontario and earned a bachelor's degree in religious studies, followed by a master's degree in counseling and Christian education from Providence Theological Seminary.

Yet even as Himm was growing in his new life of faith, he still struggled with bitterness and hatred for his family's killers, in addition to the depression and guilt he privately held on to because of his failure to avenge their deaths. The journey wasn't easy, but gradually, as he studied God's Word, passages such as Hebrews 12:15 (“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many,” NIV) helped him realize that his failure to forgive was blinding

him from seeing the grace of God in his own life.

As the Holy Spirit healed his deep wounds, Himm gained a revelation of both God's justice from passages such as Romans 12:17-19 (“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. ... ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord”) and God's forgiving grace (“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more,” Heb. 10:17).

“I had failed to allow God be the righteous judge,” Himm says in his book *After the Heavy Rain*. “Vengeance is the Lord's, not mine. ... God does not remember my sins anymore. God had cancelled all my sins, but I had failed to let go of the sins of my family's killers.”

By 1999, Himm felt God calling him back to Cambodia. He returned to lecture on psychology at a Bible college but stayed to plant churches, including one where his family was killed. And while he had already forgiven the killers from abroad, he knew the time had come for him to take the process one step further.

Himm located the man who killed his father and siblings, the man who had clubbed him from behind, and the man who had killed his mother and older sisters. He came prepared.

“I offered each of them a camel scarf as a symbol of my forgiveness,” he says. “I offered my shirt as a symbol of my love for them. And I gave them a Bible as a symbol of my blessing for them.”

As Himm reflects on those powerful encounters, he is reminded of Jesus' words found in John 8:36: “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

“To say ‘I forgive you’ from Canada to Cambodia was easy,” Himm says. “But to actually travel back and meet those killers and look into their eyes and say, ‘I forgive you,’ that was tremendously difficult. There's no way in my own humanity I could have done that. It was only the power of the grace of God in my life that gave me the strength to do that. It was only God's grace that set me free.” ♦

**CHAD BONHAM** is a journalist, author and broadcast producer who has worked in mass media for more than 20 years. A regular contributor to *Charisma*, he recently published *Life in the Fairway*.

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# CHARISMA CARES

Want to help spread the gospel in Iran?  
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**N**ot long after the Iran hostage crisis, the authorities arrested Hormoz Shariat's 16-year-old brother, Hamraz, on a minor political charge. At the time, Hormoz was a new believer in America and was confident his brother, a political activist who had a small role with the Mujahedeen, would be released. But in 1984, after

two years in jail, Shariat's brother was executed by a firing squad.

Shocked by the news of his brother's death, Shariat broke down crying, asking God why He let it happen. He felt anger toward God and the people who killed his brother. A few days later, Shariat told God he wanted revenge—but then he recalled the Bible's words that say, "Vengeance is Mine" (Deut. 32:35;

Rom. 12:19). Shariat told God he hated those who had killed his brother—but then he remembered Jesus said anyone who is angry with their brother has already murdered them in their heart (Matt. 5:21-22).

He says he felt the Lord saying to him in prayer, "You know who your enemy is? These people—the clergy and the leaders of Iran—are not your enemy. They are

# THE BILLY GRAHAM OF IRAN

BY TROY ANDERSON

Born into a Muslim family in Iran, **HORMOZ SHARIAT** used his brother's execution to compel him to share the hope of Jesus with millions in the Islamic world. With the underground Iranian church growing more than ever today, he's now seeing his prayers answered.



lost children. You have only one enemy. Satan has been working to bring about this injustice. If you want to hurt Satan, evangelize. It hurts him really bad when you bring people to Christ.”

As Shariat tells it, that's when he committed himself to sharing the gospel the rest of his life.

“I had a vision that by the end of my life I could bring 1 million Muslims

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to know Him,” he says. “I also learned that God's love is the greatest power we have to stop Islam and help Muslim captives be free.”

## Visions of Jesus

In the three decades since Shariat set his resolve, this minister—dubbed “the Billy Graham of Iran” by *New York Times* best-selling author Joel C.

Rosenberg—has not only watched that goal come to fruition, but has also been given a front-row seat to one of the most astonishing supernatural phenomenon in modern times: thousands of people in Iran and throughout the Middle East reporting visitations of Jesus in dreams and visions.

“It's amazing,” says Shariat, who founded the satellite broadcasting

ministry Iran Alive Ministries in 2001. “God is graciously appearing to people in visions, dreams and through miracles. Sometimes they have dreams or visions of Jesus, run across our satellite television broadcast, hear the gospel, and then they believe. They may have, as children, had dreams or saw visions of Jesus. The vision or dream prepares them for the gospel. Other times they watch our program, ask if this is true or not, and then they have a dream or vision that confirms what they heard.”

Shariat believes the message is clear—that God is telling Christians in the West, “You look at them as terrorists who have no hope of salvation. Are you looking at them that way? I’m not. Look at Me. I’m appearing to them. I’m doing it Myself. Would you join Me to reach out to the Muslims?”

Rosenberg wrote about this phenomenon of dreams and visions in his book *Inside the Revolution*. “It’s an exciting development,” he says, “and it’s consistent with the Bible prophecies found in Joel 2, in which the Lord says in the last days He will pour our His Holy Spirit and people will see dreams and visions.”

## Explosion of Faith

Since the hostage crisis ended in 1981, Rosenberg says the number of Christians in Iran has increased exponentially, from 500 to a conservative estimate of 1 million. Shariat, however, says the number may be far larger, noting that Iran—the world’s only theocracy, with 76 million residents—has the fastest-growing evangelical Christian population on the planet, according to the latest edition of Operation World’s manual. In fact, more Persians have come to Christ in the 35 years since the Islamic Revolution than in the prior 1,400 years combined—and most of these conversions have occurred in the past decade, as an estimated 62 million Iranians have gained access to the gospel message through satellite TV broadcasts.

“Some people put the number [of Christians in Iran] at 3 to 5 million,” says Shariat, who launched Network 7, Iran Alive’s 24/7 satellite broadcast network, into Iran, the Middle East, Northern Africa and Europe in January 2012. Shariat says it is hard to estimate how many

have come to Christ through his broadcast because the phones are controlled and it is dangerous and expensive for Iranians to call the ministry.

“Nevertheless,” he says, “over the last 12 years of broadcasting, we have the names of over 27,000 people who have called us to pray to receive Christ or to indicate that they have done so through our broadcasts. Probably 10 times that many have made the same decision but did not dare to call us.”

The program has more than 100 million potential viewers, and Shariat estimates that at any given time, 3 to 6 million people are watching.

## Hungry for Christianity

The remarkable growth of Christianity in a nation whose Islamic leaders are believed to be developing nuclear weapons and have called for the annihilation of Israel and America—labeling the U.S. as the “Great Satan” and Israel as the “Little Satan”—is certainly one of the most surprising developments in the Middle East in recent years.

While many factors play into what Rosenberg describes as a “historic spiritual awakening” in Iran, faith leaders say Shariat’s satellite broadcasts have played a key role. Rosenberg says, “Satellite television has been a game-changer in Iran, and Hormoz [Shariat] is at the forefront of that.”

“I see him operating in his anointing, and God is using him,” agrees Kamil Navai, pastor of the Iranian Christian Church in Sunnyvale, Calif., a church Shariat co-founded with Navai and pastored for many years. “It’s like David, with only one stone and a sling and taking on the giant of Islam.”

David Cannistraci, pastor of GateWay City Church in San Jose, Calif., and a longtime friend of Shariat, says people in Iran are “very hungry for the faith” and that Shariat is the “single greatest hope for his nation in our day.”

“As Hormoz has explained it to me,” Cannistraci says, “people tend to think of Iranians through the filter of national news—crazy people in the streets calling for the death of America. But Hormoz points out that Islam is not Iran’s original religion. Christianity pre-dated Islam in Iran, and the heart of the Iranian people

is longing for freedom.”

In fact, Islam didn’t come into existence until the seventh century.

“Prior to that time, the gospel had made inroads into Iran,” Cannistraci says. “They were invaded by the Muslims and forced at the point of a sword to take on Islam. Today they are very hungry for Christianity, and this is what explains the pent-up demand and hunger for Christian programming.”

“So Hormoz has just stepped into an environment that is a spiritual vacuum. He’s a man at the right place at the right time for such a time as this.”

## Simplicity of Faith

Shariat was born Sept. 9, 1955, into a Muslim family in Tehran, Iran. He grew up as a fairly devout Muslim but began to question his Islamic faith as a teen.

“I started thinking, ‘What is this religion I’m following? I’m repeating these prayers, but it’s not adding anything to my life. I’m not changed. I don’t have peace. I don’t have joy. I don’t even experience the presence of God,’” he recalls. “So I stopped doing it, and I focused on my studies and being a good person.”

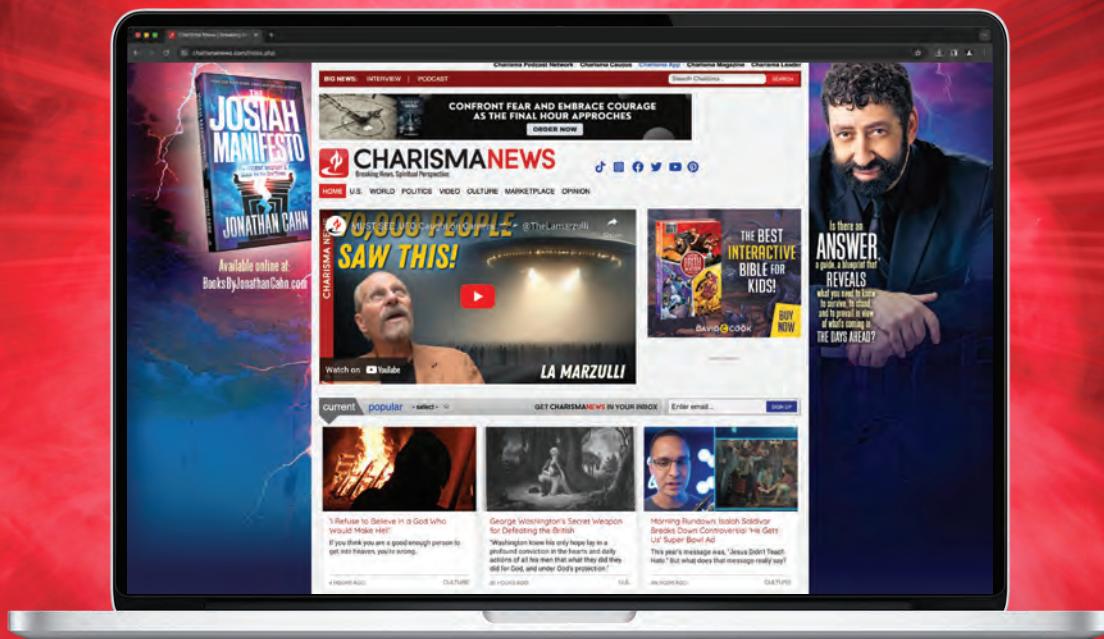
Shariat, along with his wife, Donnell, came to the U.S. following the Islamic Revolution in 1979 to earn his Ph.D. in computer engineering at the University of Southern California. The revolution reawakened his spiritual yearnings, and he began to read the Bible.

“I was struggling with every verse,” Shariat says. “Who is this Jesus? At the time, my theory was that all religions were the same. But the more I studied the Quran and the Bible, the more I realized that both could not be true. They are so contradictory.”

After struggling for a while with this dilemma, Shariat began attending the Church of the Open Door in downtown Los Angeles in 1980, famous for its huge “Jesus Saves” sign on the building.

“I went there to get my answers,” Shariat says. “After a few weeks, I realized the message was simple: You believe the simple truth that you’re a sinner and that God loves you. I read the Sermon on the Mount and learned that we’re all sinners. The basic message of the gospel was very logical to me. I came to the point where I said I was going to try it. I said, ‘Jesus,

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come into my heart and my life.’”

## Satellite of Hope

After obtaining his Ph.D. in 1987, Shariat obtained employment in San Jose doing artificial intelligence research. He and his wife also felt led to start a house church, which began with just a few people but quickly grew to include hundreds of Muslim converts and now remains one of the largest churches of its kind in the U.S.

After planting more churches among Iranian Muslims in Northern California, Shariat founded Iran Alive Ministries in 2001. Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Shariat’s first satellite broadcast program aired in Iran.

“From day one, the response was amazing,” he says. “We were getting hundreds of phone calls. TV is a life-line for Iranians. Christian television is not entertainment. This is their only source of hope.”

Although satellite dishes are illegal in Iran, Shariat reports that more than 80 percent of Iranians have access to satellite television broadcasts.

“A friend of mine came back from Iran recently and showed me pictures of Bedouin tents with satellite dishes,” he says. “They don’t have running water, but they have a satellite dish with a generator. [It’s] their only connection to the outside world.”

In 2003, Shariat’s ministry became involved in planting underground churches in Iran. In recent years, hundreds of house church leaders have been arrested, including American pastor Saeed Abedini, who’s married to Shariat’s niece, Naghmeh. Abedini, whose plight has gained international media attention, remains imprisoned in Iran’s deadliest prison.

Shariat says that after several decades under the current regime, many Iranians are concluding Islam is not the answer. They see the regime as a problem and the reason for their miserable lives, and they’re turning to Christianity despite severe government persecution.

“I’ve seen a new movement and a new mindset developing among Iranians, especially young people,” he says. “I read more and more young people’s blogs that are saying, ‘If we want to have a future,

we need to get rid of Islam.’ I believe Islam is experiencing its greatest defeat in history. It’s so wide and deep that it’s irreversible.”

## Battle for Souls

This is where the connections to America’s most beloved evangelist come in. Rosenberg says the impact Shariat is having on the Persian-speaking world is “evocative of how God used Billy Graham for much of the 20th century.”

“The difference, of course, is that Billy Graham used stadiums as well as broadcast television and radio to preach the gospel, and Hormoz Shariat doesn’t have access to stadiums in Iran,” Rosenberg continues. “But through the miracle of global satellite television technology, he is able to broadcast the gospel in Farsi into Iranian homes in a way that allows him to bypass the Iranian government and Islamic religious system. That is an extraordinary development in the last decade and has really opened the doors for the gospel in unprecedented ways in such a closed country as Iran.”

At this time, a cosmic, supernatural battle is underway for the souls of the Iranian people, Rosenberg says. Christ will win, but Satan is fighting very hard.

“That’s my perception of what’s happening,” Rosenberg says, “and so what you have inside Iran is a conundrum. Iran’s leadership is arguably the most evil and dangerous political leadership on the planet right now, feverishly trying to acquire operational nuclear warheads and the means to deliver those warheads against Israel and the U.S. Simultaneously, more Iranians are coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the process renouncing Islam than in any other time in the history of Islam. Those two truths are simultaneously operative in Iran, and it’s a complicated and fascinating development.”

Ironically, more Iranians are coming to faith in Christ than Israelis, yet Iran’s leadership is preparing to try to annihilate Israel.

“I believe the prophecies of Ezekiel 38-39 and Jeremiah 49 indicate that a divine judgment of Iran’s leadership is coming,” Rosenberg says. “At the same time, I believe those prophecies indicate

a great spiritual awakening and revival is coming to Iran as well.”

The prophet Ezekiel foresaw the end-times war of Gog and Magog, a reference interpreted as an alliance between Russia, Iran and other nations to attack Israel. Furthermore, Rosenberg says the references in Jeremiah 49 to the wrath of God in Elam refer to modern-day Iran.

“I believe Iran is going to become arguably the greatest sending country of gospel-preaching missionaries the world has ever known in the not-too-distant future, based on the prophecies of Jeremiah 49 and Christ moving His spiritual throne there in the end times,” he says. “It’s an intriguing development, and that’s why we as believers in the West need to be praying for our enemies in Iran, knowing that, yes, some are going to be judged, but some are going to come to faith and be used by Christ to preach the gospel all over the planet.”

Shariat also believes Iran will become a largely Christian nation in the end times, making it Iran Alive’s mission to transform Iran into a Christian nation in this generation.

“We believe this is a possibility,” Shariat says. “This is already happening fast, and it’s very possible. Christians in the West need to work together. If we are ready and work together, it’s very likely in one generation—30 to 40 years—that we’ll see Iran become a Christian nation.”

He knows it cannot be done by the work of one person or ministry alone.

“There is a historical window of opportunity to impact Iran and the Middle East with the gospel,” Shariat says. “It will not last forever. The task is greater than what one ministry can accomplish. We cannot do it alone. I am making a Macedonian call to our brothers and sisters to join us to transform Iran and the Middle East with the gospel.” ◀

**TROY ANDERSON** was an award-winning reporter and editorial writer at the Los Angeles Daily News, The Press-Enterprise and other newspapers for two decades. He currently writes for Reuters, Newsmax, Charisma and many other media outlets. Learn more at [troyandersonwriter.com](http://troyandersonwriter.com).

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# NORTH KOREA





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# HOPE FOR NORTH KOREA: CHRIST'S FREEDOM OVER COMMUNIST RULE

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DESPITE TURMOIL, NUCLEAR THREATS AND RUMORS  
OF WARS, HOLY SPIRIT WILL MOVE ACROSS THIS  
IMPRISONED NATION AND SET HER PEOPLE FREE

BY LAWRENCE TATE

**S**ooner or later, the “hermit kingdom” must tear down its prison walls to welcome Christianity and join the 21st century.

North Korea, the secretive, oppressive, isolated communist prison under the leadership of the Kim dynasty, is notorious for a horrible record of human rights violations going back to the Armistice signed in 1953 at the concluding of the Korean War. The victims of the regime’s brutal policies run the gamut covering every people group imaginable, but Christians

continue to pose the most substantive threat to the regime’s existence and therefore face the worst of severe persecution, often in silence and hidden from the world’s view. They have been forced to meet secretly, routinely are rounded up and sent to labor camps—or just shot on sight because they do not worship Kim Jong-un as their god.

### **Last of the Cold War Holdouts**

One of the last communist nations in the world, North Korea is known for its strict and

total control of every aspect of the regime, over information, communication and religious practices. The regime, as controlled by dictator Kim Jong-un, adheres to a state ideology called Juche, which prioritizes the supremacy of the state and its leaders over any other form of allegiance, especially religious faith. Any form of worship or religious activity outside the state-sanctioned ideology is considered a threat to the regime's control and is harshly punished.

Life in North Korea has been unbearable under Kim Jong-un. About six million citizens are starving and a third of North Korean children suffer from chronic malnutrition. (It is said that North Koreans are, on average, two inches shorter than South Koreans because of starvation.) Most people in North Korea don't have electricity, the internet or access to news from the outside world.

North Korean "democracy" is a farce; people "vote" in "elections" where only one name is on the ballot—and those who cross out Kim's name are herded and jailed. Even certain hairstyles are restricted! Meanwhile, if someone is convicted of a crime, he does not go to jail alone. His children and grandchildren are also imprisoned. The U.S. State Department has learned that as many as 40% of all people in North Korea's gulag system are Christians who are in jail because of their faith.

Yet in the midst of this oppression God has been working. Some defectors have reported that North Korean officials are worried that Christianity will defeat Juche and its state-sponsored worship of the Kim dictator clan. Something began to change when Kim Jong-un became dictator in 2011. His cruel regime and the misery of famine and economic ruin caused people to become disillusioned with the phony utopia Kim claimed to rule over. "In the past, the people were told to worship the Kim family as their god," one defector told *The Telegraph*. "That means they are looking for something else to sustain their faith."

## Extreme Persecution of Christians

Christians in North Korea face

## "IN THE MIDST OF THIS OPPRESSION

*God has been working."*

relentless persecution due to their religious beliefs. The regime views Christianity as a Western influence that challenges the authority of the state and its supreme leader. The government has implemented a system of surveillance that monitors citizens for any sign of religious activities. Owning a Bible or participating in secret underground churches can lead to dire consequences for individuals and their families.

The fear of discovery and subsequent punishment forces many Christians to worship in secret, making it a constant struggle to maintain their religious identity. Additionally, Christians face discrimination in various aspects of life, including education, employment and social interactions. The regime actively promotes a pervasive atmosphere of fear and mistrust. In many cases, families are torn apart as members are arrested or forced to flee the country in search of religious freedom. Children grow up brainwashed such that expressing religious beliefs becomes not merely forbidden but can also endanger their lives. The psychological toll on families is grotesque as they live in constant fear, knowing that at any moment they could be separated or subjected to violence for their faith.

## 10 Ways Communist North Korea Is Completely Bizarre

If we step back and study how strange North Korea is—and how backward and barbaric—we would realize what an historic breakthrough it will be when the yoke of communism is destroyed. Consider these facts about this nation of 25 million and its

bizarre government:

### 1) Christians in North Korea have been crushed by steamrollers and roasted over fires.

North Korea has the world's worst record of religious persecution. Christian Solidarity International has reported that believers in Jesus are routinely taken to prison camps where they are tortured, subjected to forced labor or herded off bridges. One source has reported that women and children were forced to watch other Christians being shot by machine guns. Possession of a Bible is considered a crime punishable by death.

### 2) As many as 3 million North Koreans starved in the 1990s.

The economy is so poor that as many as two in five, more than 10 million people, are malnourished today, according to the United Nations. One-third of all North Korean children are stunted because of starvation. North Korea's communist government makes it one of the poorest countries on earth, yet it has an army of 1.3 million soldiers, twice the size of South Korea's military.

### 3) Officially, North Korea is a necrocracy—a government led by a dead man.

Even though Kim Il Sung has been dead for 30 years. The communist regime says he assumed "the office of the eternal presidency" on the day of his death, July 8, 1994. His current successor, Kim Jong Un, reportedly had plastic surgery to make him look more like his grandfather.

### 4) There are 34,000 statues of the late Kim Il Sung in the country.

That's one statue for every 750 North Koreans. The dead leader's embalmed

# Simply Christ

## Gospel Insight

with Keith Surface

### Anointed by Another

Many in our generation try to make out that the apostles were sinful men who were also crowned with the glory of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The apostles of Christ were manifestations of the gospel they preached. Paul said they “...renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” II Corinthians 4:2.

Just recently, someone sent me a video of a world-famous preacher who was explaining why those who are greatly anointed of God may go out immediately and commit fornication. He claimed the Spirit that was upon them had nothing to do with the Spirit that was within them. His teaching was that you could be very immoral or even demon possessed, yet the Spirit of God would come upon you and anoint you to do the mighty works of God. It honestly seemed that this man was justifying the condition of his own heart. When asked by the one who sent me the video what I thought of it I did not mince words. I simply replied, “The man is reprobate.”

After God rejected Saul from being King over Israel, the Bible says “...the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.” I Samuel 16:14. Saul had rebelled against the word of God, so God turned him over to an evil spirit. What is astounding about this is that when the evil spirit came upon Saul he prophesied, just like he had when the Spirit of God came upon him. The difference is that now an evil spirit was the source of his prophesies. King Saul had fallen from being an instrument of God and became the instrument of an unclean spirit. It was while the evil spirit was upon Saul to prophesy that he attempted to kill David with a javelin. I Samuel 18:10-12. A minister who is unclean at heart may

When the evil spirit came upon Saul he prophesied, just like he had when the Spirit of God came upon him.

indeed have supernatural manifestations, but you can be certain their “manifestations” are not coming from God, but from the same spirit which works uncleanness in them.

The Apostle John was very clear when he said, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil...” I John 3:7-8. A man or woman may be renowned as an anointed prophet or miracle worker, but if they are sinful in heart or action, their “anointing” is not of God.” As John clearly tells us they are “of the devil.”

When the Apostle Paul told us “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” Romans 8:16, he was declaring that the Spirit of Christ within a child of God and the

Spirit of God upon them speak in unison. A child of God is an open book “known and read of all men.” II Corinthians 3:2. Their spirit and life will manifest Christ, and they are vessels the Spirit of God can come upon to give an even more powerful witness.

However, if Spirit within them is unclean, the Spirit that comes upon will not be of God.

Peter warned of those who come “Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices...” II Peter 2:14. These ministers are very practiced at getting your money, but they have “eyes full of adultery” and they “cannot cease from sin.” Their words sound wonderful but their anointing is not of God. You should not fear nor follow them.

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# “NORTH KOREA IS OFTEN IN A STATE OF *blackout*, THE ELECTRIC GRID IS SO POOR THAT-SATELLITE IMAGES SHOW THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IN *darkness*.”

body is on display in the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, and it is the most popular tourist site in the country. All citizens of North Korea are required to wear a badge that features Kim Il Sung's face.

**5) In North Korea, it is not 2024.** It is the year 113. The nation uses what is called the “Juche” calendar, which marks time according to the birth of Kim Il Sung in 1912. Any North Koreans who were born on July 8 or Dec. 17 are not allowed to celebrate their birthdays—because Kim Il Sung and his son, Kim Jong Il, died on those days.

**6) The country is called a “democratic republic,” but there is nothing democratic about it.** Elections are held every five years, but only one name appears on the ballot. If a voter wishes to choose someone else, he or she can cross the name out, but the ballot is not secret. There is no court system in North Korea, and no private property.

**7) Kim Jong Un's loyal subjects believe he can control the weather.** The government's propaganda machine has convinced the population that a new star appeared in the sky when the 42-year-old leader was born. An official biography published by the government also says Kim learned to walk and talk before the age of six months and that he can control the weather with his moods.

**8) North Korea is often in a state of blackout.** The electric grid is so poor that most people have no light, especially at night. Satellite images show the entire country in darkness (and tourists say North Koreans love the dark because it gives them privacy). To make matters worse, only three

percent of roads are paved—but the roads are rarely used since there are so few vehicles. A very small, elite number of North Koreans have access to the internet, but all online content is filtered by the government.

**9) Children are taught a song in school titled, “We Have Nothing to Envy in the World.”** Schools are used to brainwash North Koreans from the earliest grades. Yet the kids are expected to bring their own desks and chairs to school, and often students are required to do government work during school hours. Parents sometimes bribe teachers to keep their children from doing hard labor.

**10) Citizens of North Korea must produce a certain quantity of human waste.** The government requires this because farmers have little or no access to chemical fertilizer. Many citizens have had to place locks on their outdoor toilets to keep neighbors from stealing waste to meet quotas.

## Free In Christ Is Free Indeed

Christians are often ridiculed because we believe demons are real and that those devilish powers are working behind the scenes to affect world events. Thankfully, the Bible also says Christ overcame Satan's power through His death and Resurrection—and that God's kingdom will expand wherever the gospel is preached. Because of Christ's victory, swords will be beaten into plowshares, and freedom will replace tyranny, including for North Korea.

The international community has been slow to address the persecution of Christians in North Korea. The secretive nature of the regime makes it

challenging to gather accurate information about the extent of human rights abuses, including religious persecution. However, various human rights organizations and advocacy groups continue to shed light on the issue, calling for increased attention and action from the global community. Severe restrictions on religious freedom coupled with harsh punishment for Christians has produced the deadly environment and abominable human rights record for which North Korea is infamous.

Psalms 46 says: “Come, see the works of the Lord, who makes desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts off the spear; He burns the chariot in the fire,” (vv. 8-9, Modern English Version). God can work a miracle. He has heard the prayers of His people on both sides of this conflict and the prayers of the faithful around the world who feel North Korea's pain. He can engineer a lasting peace in this part of the world—and throw open the doors wide for the Gospel to flourish in a thirsty land.

Before long, the churches of South Korea will freely send teams into the North with food, medicine and the message of Christ. Like a patient who has been in a coma, North Korea will awaken. And the world will see a national transformation, hopefully witnessing the greatest display of God's sovereign power over nations since the Berlin Wall fell, and a nation, finally, stepping boldly and thankfully into the brilliant glow of freedom. ✦

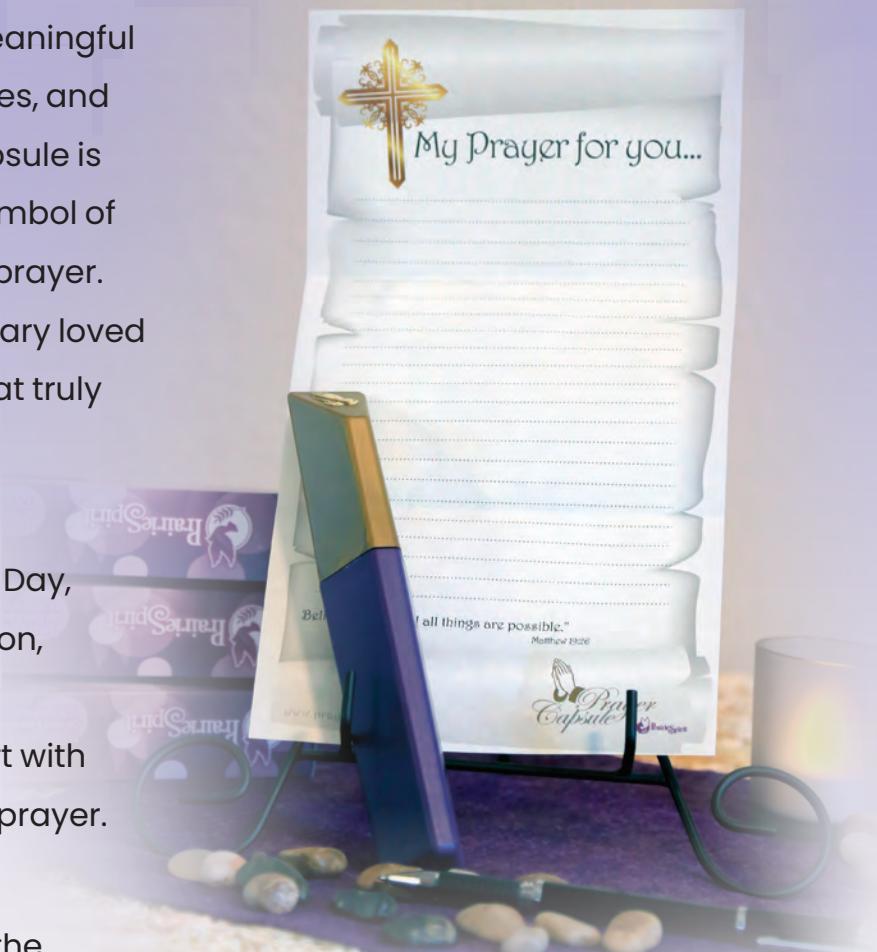
**LAWRENCE TATE** is a contributor for *Charisma magazine*.

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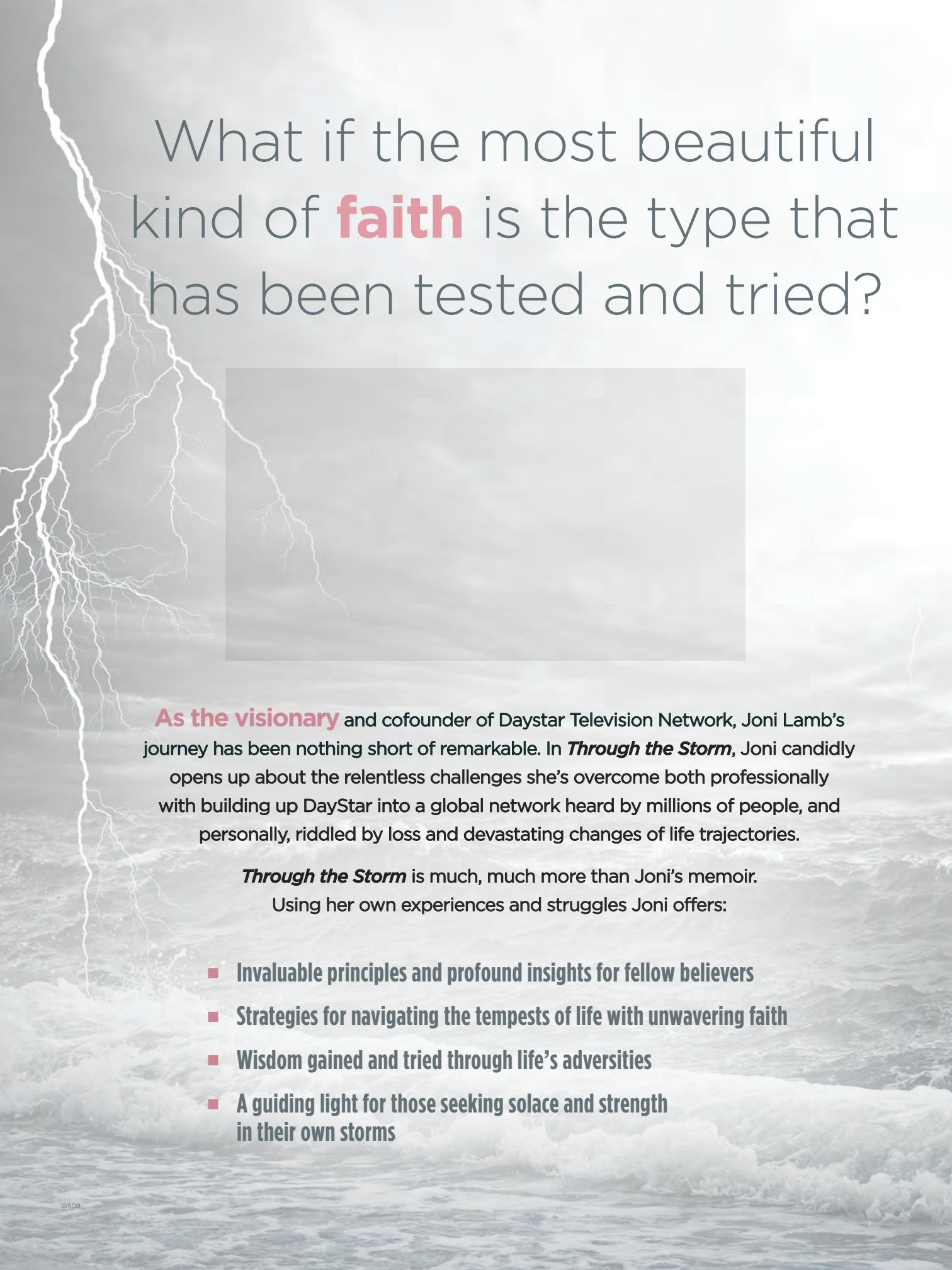
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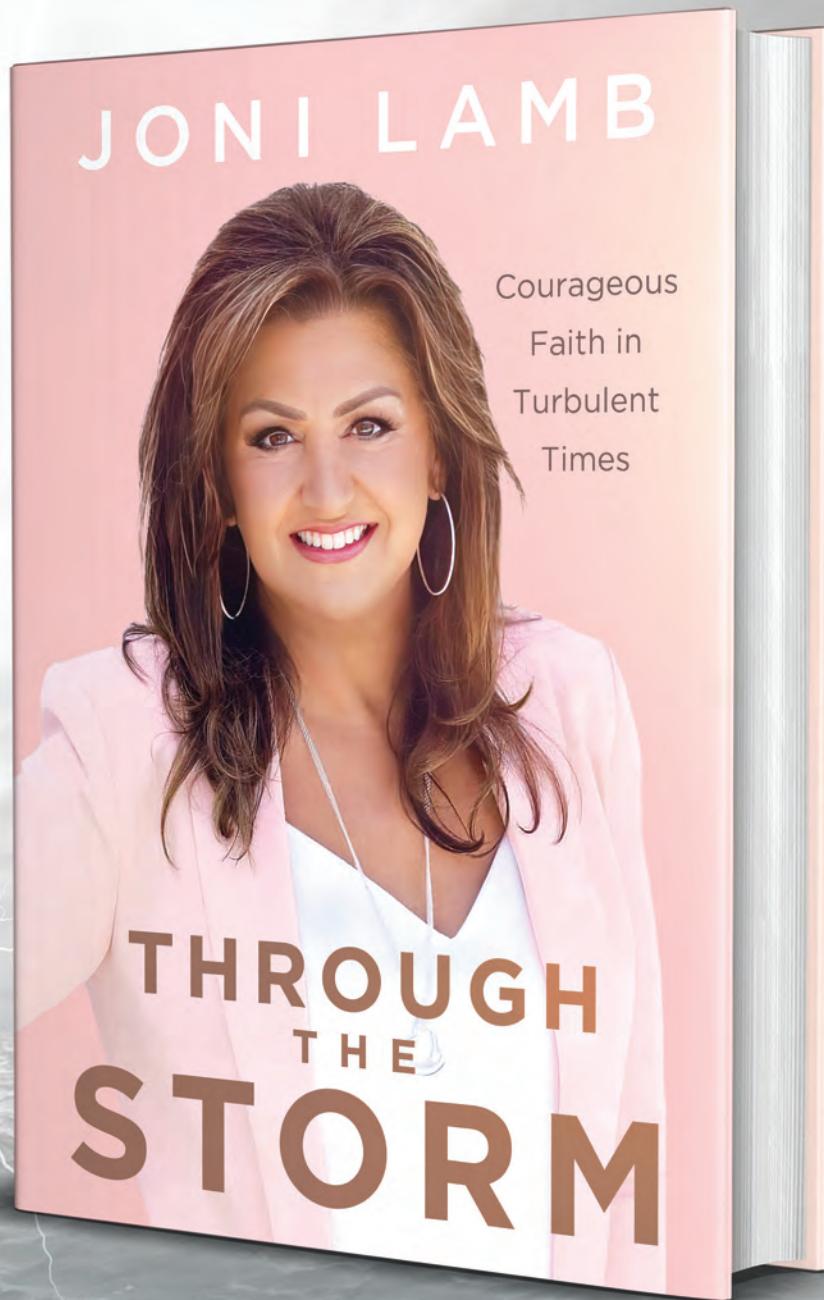
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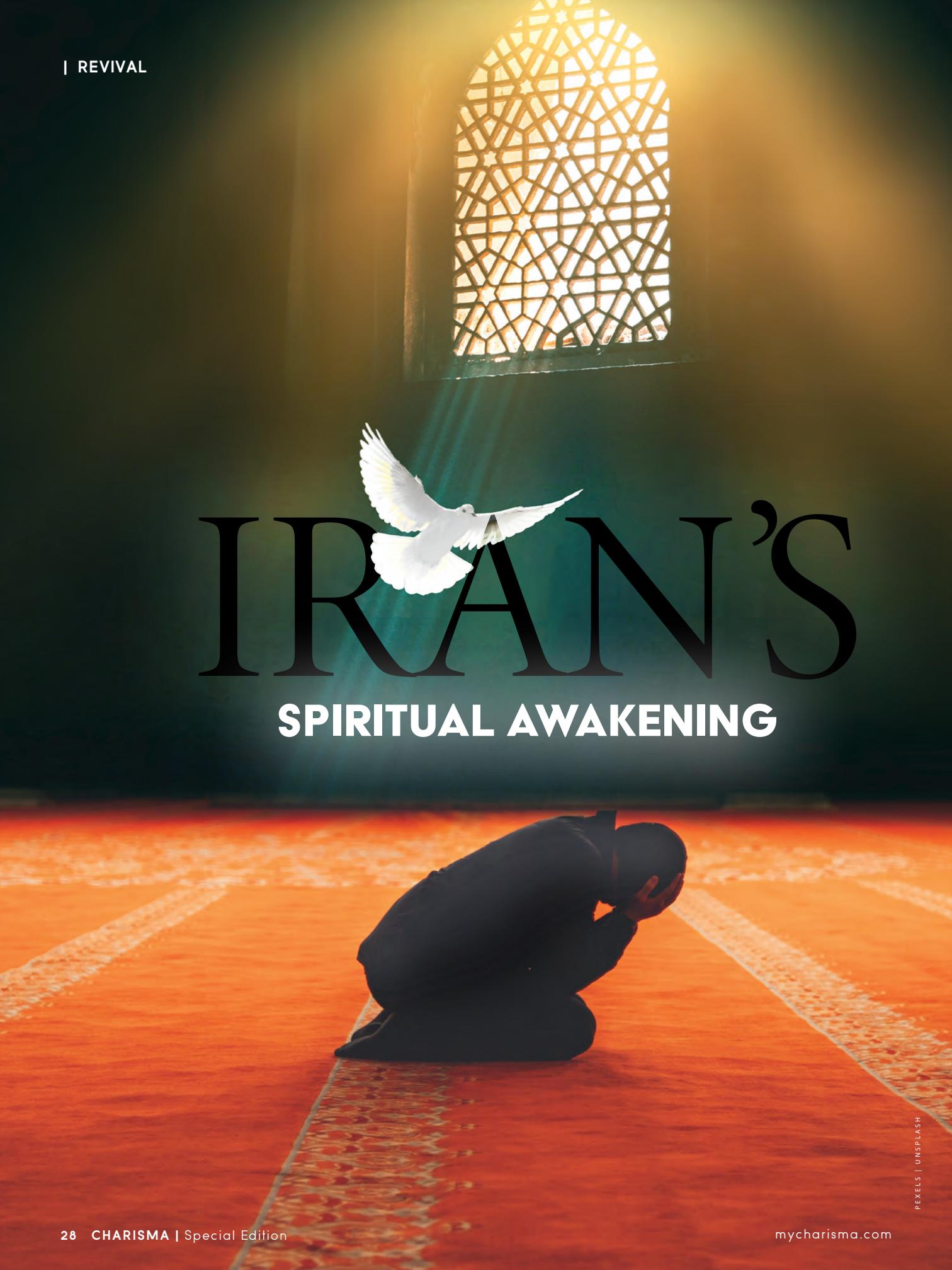
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# IRAN'S

## SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

# The center of Shi'ite Islam is exploding in Christian revival

BY LAZARUS YEGHAZAR WITH LANA SILK

**T**he Holy Spirit is active in Iran; there is no doubt about that. The supernatural is commonplace. People are having dreams and visions. Miraculous conversion stories are a daily occurrence. The sick are being healed. And God is speaking directly to His people, providing supernatural guidance in a physically hostile environment. Over the past 30-plus years, 222 Ministries, now known as Transform Iran, has joined God in His supernatural work, and we are watching Him bring revival to this Muslim land.

Ali is stuck in an endless cycle of depression and addiction. He has been a devout Muslim his whole life. One night he has a dream. Jesus visits him and shows him a better way. He wakes up free from his chains and in search for more about this Jesus who saved him. He contacts us for help. We begin weekly discipleship classes with him, all run remotely from the West and in the privacy of his home. He shares his newfound faith with his family. They all accept Christ. A house church is born.

Maryam has been abused her whole life. First her father, then her brothers, then her husband. She has now been left destitute by a system that does not protect women. The only way she knows to make ends meet is through prostitution. She hears about our work (Pearl of Persia) with prostitutes in Iran and reaches out for help. She finds healing, love and acceptance in Christ. She discovers her true identity and steps out in a freedom she has never known before. Now she is training to help others like her.

Fariba has been curious about Jesus her whole life. But such talk at home could get her killed. One day someone meets her in a park (the Holy Spirit had directed them there) and hands her a New Testament. She reads it and discovers water in the desert. How has she never known about this before? She can't stop reading and feasting on these words of life. She cannot tell her family. She finds herself sneaking to the restroom to secretly read her Bible. She is discovered, and her life is threatened. She escapes to Turkey, where she now serves with our ministry team reaching millions of Iranian tourists there as well as using mass media to share the gospel directly into Iran.

Siroos decides to read the Bible to fake his own conversion so he can gain refugee status outside Iran

for himself and his family. To his surprise, he cannot put it down. He experiences a powerful conversion that includes instantaneous freedom from alcoholism. His broken marriage is restored. His wife and children are saved. Having suffered 15 years of strife in marriage as well as the effects of alcohol, he and his wife become powerful tools for marriage counseling amongst new believers who also need marriages restored.

He is arrested and spends two weeks in solitary confinement, but God shows him visions of angels standing guard around him. His wife prays for light for him in his dark prison cell. She neglects to ask for darkness at night, and God so illuminates Siroos' cell that he needs to sleep with a towel on his head. His hunger for the Word of God grows to the point that he cannot stop reading it. He now leads our Bible translation efforts into the ethnic languages of Iran. (Read his story on page 32.)

## The Light Shines in the Darkness'

The list goes on.

But why? Why so much and why here?

It certainly is true that Iran today is an oppressive place for Christians to live. The law of the land protects and promotes Islam. It is illegal to convert from Islam or to aid someone else in their conversion. Both are punishable by death, and the government is not shy about enforcing the law.

When I was a young man, living in a secular Iran led by our West-loving monarchy, I would spend days in the streets handing out pamphlets and wanting to share the Good News of Christ with anyone who would listen. Not one person ever stood and engaged with me. Iran was free then, and the people were not interested.

In 1978, the people turned against the ruling regime. In an effort to weed out greed and corruption, they chose to bring in "pure religion," "pure morality" and opted for an authentic Shiite Islamic regime. The ruling body became the clergy. When the regime changed in 1979, freedom was denied in the name of a restoration of morality. Alcohol was banned. Bibles were banned. Relations outside of marriage were banned. The media was controlled. Those in the arts were exiled. But the sin and greed of man had not changed, and as the people choked under oppression and darkness, they

began to search for light.

The Word of God tells us, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

Since the revolution in Iran, my prayers for an open harvest in Iran have been answered. The truth is that when we are comfortable, when we have options and multiple sources for life, for joy, for hope, it’s easy to be complacent and distracted. We don’t realize how much we need God. But when we are out in the desert, desperately reliant on the only true source of life, joy and hope, we run to and cling to the living

water, just as David describes the deer panting for water in Psalm 42.

When all other options are taken away, we become reliant on God, on His provision and on the supernatural.

This is what has happened to the church in Iran. There is no way but the way of the Holy Spirit. There is no hope but the hope of the gospel. There is no freedom but that found in Christ. The physical world around us is dark and full of persecution. But the light we carry is bright, and the Holy Spirit is kind and ever-present.

## Transformed by the Power of the Word

By Lazarus Yeghnazar with Lana Silk

Transform

From a young age, Siroos had a desire to know God.

Despite his Muslim upbringing, nothing in Islam connected with this heart. He tried Buddhism and other religions. Still no connection. Eventually he pursued graduate studies, filling his head with knowledge—and decided he did not need God. He married, but his marriage soon deteriorated due to his heavy drinking. When drunk, he would shame his family with wild behavior and profanities. As his three children grew, he decided he wanted a better life for them away from Iran. He was advised his best chance was claiming asylum as a Christian. He began to read the Bible as preparation for his interview.

Little did he know what power God’s Word would have.

As he read the Sermon on the Mount, he wept. This was the God he had been searching for all his youth. These were lifegiving words! No condemnation, no fear of punishment. Just love. As he read, he came face to face with his own sinfulness, particularly his drunken behavior. As if in an instant, his appetite for alcohol vanished.

He shared what he had found with his wife, and the moment he confessed the truth, he felt a physical uprooting of all his addiction. His friends tried to lure him back, to no avail. God had supernaturally freed him.

His wife saw his transformation and began to read the Bible. She gave her life to the Lord, and their marriage was restored. Their children followed fast. Within two months, the whole family was saved.

Siroos and his wife were discipled by a 222 Ministries pastor and began ministering as marriage counselors, particularly among those with addiction and alcoholism.

Who better than a couple who had struggled for 15 years and seen healing in their own marriage?

He was eventually arrested and sent to 15 days solitary confinement in Evvin Prison. As they lifted his blindfolds, he saw the color of the walls. He had seen this room in a vision just a few weeks before. In the vision, he also saw the fiery angels standing guard all around the room. He knew he was under God’s protection.

“The most beautiful moments of my life were there, just me and my Father,” he says.

While in prison, Siroos’ hunger for the Word grew. Today he leads 222 Ministries/TransformIran’s Bible Translation teams. Read more of his story at [222ministries.org](http://222ministries.org) or [transformiran.com](http://transformiran.com).



Lazarus Yeghnazar with children

## ‘The Time of God’s Visitation’

God is using many ways to speak to the lost and encourage and strengthen His bride. One key way is through dreams and visions. People often ask us why Iranians have so many supernatural dreams. I would say dreams are a part of our culture, and God loves to use language we understand to communicate with us. Dreams give strength and encouragement, inform decision-making and alter the course of lives. These dreams saved lives—even the life of the infant Jesus.

Ask the members of any congregation in Iran if they have had a dream or vision of Christ, and over 90% will raise their hands. God is speaking to the people of Iran, and they are responding.

So why Iran, and why now?

The kingdom of God is all about times and seasons. In Chronicles 12, we read about the sons of Issachar. They were aware of the times; in fact, the Bible says they *understood* the times. This made them rulers. When the disciples asked Jesus about the timing for when the kingdom of God would be established, He answered by saying only the Father knows. But in Matthew 16:1-4 we find Jesus rebuking the Pharisees because they should know how to “discern the signs of the times” (v. 4b). So there are some things which are hidden from us,

but there are seasons, times of the move of God, that He desires us to be aware of and act accordingly.

At the end of Luke 19, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and her people’s inability to discern the move of God: “You did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you” (v. 44b, NIV). The King of kings, Jesus Christ, had visited their city. And they had missed it.

This is the time for Iran. Jesus is visiting. Why is the revival happening? Because His hand of grace is on Iran for this time. We must be aware and act accordingly. Let us not be those who “did not recognize the time of God’s visitation” and miss His move.

God has chosen this particular moment of history to visit Iran, and the people are opening their hearts to Him. No sector of society is exempt. The poor, the destitute, the illiterate, yes. But also

the learned, the businessmen, the politicians, the mullahs (Muslim clergy members). Men and women, young and old. All are opening their hearts to Christ.

Elham was a mullah, giving religion lessons to young girls. When she found out she had breast cancer, her world fell apart. Someone connected her to one of our pastors, who introduced her to Jesus. She says she felt a ray of hope from that day on. She began to undergo treatment, and the pastor began discipling her as she learned about her newfound faith. She experienced a miraculous touch from God and complete healing of her cancer. She left her position as a mullah and began to seek the Lord about His plans for her life. Today she is studying to teach the younger generation about Jesus.

She says, “Since following Jesus, I have felt His presence every day in my life. Even though I was a Muslim cleric, I never had this feeling of God’s presence that I have now. My Lord Jesus Christ guides and teaches me and gave me a new life. I feel His presence every day and everywhere, and I’m so glad that He chose me to know the true God.”

No one is beyond the reach of the love of God. Studies have been done in the West on the size of the church in Iran and its rate of growth. Open Doors says Iran has the fastest-growing church in the world right now, with a rate of 20%. In fact, more Iranians have become Christians in the last 43 years than in the previous 13 centuries put together since Islam came to Iran. We are seeing the biggest revival in the history of Iran. In 1979, there were an estimated 500 Christians from a Muslim background in Iran and now, Dutch research firm Gamaan estimates there are 1.5 million followers of Christ in Iran (that’s over 1.75% of its 84 million population). And all this in a country that Open Doors puts as the ninth most hostile to the gospel right now.

The light shines in the darkness.

## ‘Filled With the Knowledge of the Glory of the Lord’

People often ask us, “How can we know the times?” I would say that our loving Father loves to reveal His secrets to us, to invite us to share the adventure of it all with Him. In Amos 3:7a, He

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Women praying at a prayer meeting

says, “The Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants.” In Isaiah 42:9b, God tells us that He will tell us about the new things which are happening (“before they spring into being I announce them to you”).

When you love someone, you want to be in relationship with them, which includes communication. God loves His bride, and He wants to be in relationship with her. He not only wants to equip her to serve and be effective for His kingdom, but He also wants to *inform* her to be prepared.

As an organization, we make it a priority to hear from Him, to see what He sees and to be prepared. We use every opportunity available to us to maximize this open heaven over Iran, whether it be sharing the gospel via satellite TV, internet, social media, radio or printed Bibles; or discipling the converts through WhatsApp, Telegram or Zoom. As an organization, we do our best to ensure we don’t miss a single opportunity to partner with what the Holy Spirit is *already doing* and ensure as many as possible have access to the lifesaving words of Jesus and come to know a meaningful, deep-rooted relationship with Him.

Seeing some of this in the Spirit years ahead, we were able to prepare. We were privileged to pioneer Farsi Christian television broadcasting over 20 years ago. Many others have now joined us in this mission to use mass media to reach millions in Iran. We pioneered the only Farsi Christian apologetics center.

The church is growing, and we want to help it become strong. It continues: a

Freedom in Christ course, Bibles, theological resources, digital church for the scattered believers, 24/7 radio broadcast, social media evangelism, 1:1 remote discipleship for those unable to meet in person, a mobile app bursting with evangelistic and discipleship resources, training events, trauma counseling, translating the Bible into Iran’s 40-plus ethnic languages so all have access to the Word in their own language. Why do we do it? Because in His kindness, God has shown us ahead of time what He is doing and given us the grace to partner with Him and see our beautiful nation come into the light. Iran will be transformed for Christ. Of that we have no doubt. What joy, what privilege, to have been a part of it.

I encourage you to also invite Him to open your eyes to what He is doing—not only in your own life and in your immediate surroundings but also around the world. Where is He visiting? Where can you join forces with the work of the Holy Spirit and see a great harvest for the kingdom of God?

“That the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord” (Hab. 2:14a). ◀

**LAZARUS YEGHNAZAR** and his daughter **LANA SILK** work as founder, president and CEO of 222 Ministries, now known as TransformIran. TransformIran has over 30 years experience church planting, discipling and developing leaders in Iran and amongst the Iranian diaspora in 17 countries. If you would like to support their work or find out more about what God is doing in Iran today, visit [222ministries.org](http://222ministries.org) and [transformiran.com](http://transformiran.com).

# MEGA PRAYERS

A 120,000-member church in South Korea has been holding service every day for 35 years in the power of prayer and believing for a miraculous reunion

**BY STEVE LITTLE AND HEATHER SELLS/CBN NEWS**

**F**or one church in South Korea, meeting only once a week on Sundays is hardly enough. Myungsung Church in Seoul gathers for early morning prayer every day, and it's been doing it for 35 years.

In the early morning, thousands of people stream out of the downtown church, passing the thousands of others who are waiting in the cold and the dark to go inside. When the signal comes, they stream inside and scurry down the street to arrive on time. Myungsung Church holds four early morning services on a daily basis.

"Christians cannot live without faith and prayer, even for a moment," says church elder Seon Gyoo Kim. "I believe morning prayer is God's blessing for us, so I am joyfully attending to the gathering, even though the church is far and it takes long."

Recently, the church celebrated 35 years of early-morning prayer. Since Rev. Samhwan Kim started the church in 1980, it has grown to more than 120,000 members. He credited that success to prayer and an unyielding commitment to historic Christian truths.

"The power of church is from the gospel in the Bible and the tradition that we inherited from the ancestors," Kim says. "If we preserve those values, the world will follow us, and we can lead this era."

continued »



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The History Museum of Myungsung Church seeks to glorify what the Lord has done in the nation.

“Those in the South cry out for their families in the North, believing fervent prayers will avail much for the people of North Korea.”



“We need prayer to save North Korea.”

## Prayers That Aim for Reunification

Well into his 70s, Pastor Kim still leads two morning services. Myungsung Church has planted 24 churches and supports more than 500 missionaries in 63 countries. The church also supports a children's home, a hospital and other social ministries.

Pastor Kim says it's prayer that has made this ministry possible. He and his church believe that if they ask, God will do the same for their kinsmen in North Korea.

“North Korea is in despair, but at the same time, it is very hopeful in Christ,” Kim says. “Isaiah 9 says, ‘The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.’”

“I believe the time of gospel must come to them. We need prayer to save North Korea,” he says. “God will work on them through our prayer. He must liberate the land and perform the miracle to open the way in the desert for the unification of North and South.”

North and South Korea have been separated for 65 years. Since the armistice was signed, South Korea has grown into a modern state with a booming economy.

North Korea is one of the most isolated nations on Earth, ruled by a family of dictators who repress its people and threaten the world with nuclear holocaust. On the border of North and South Korea, people come to look into the “Hermit Kingdom” and to leave messages for their families on the other side.

At Myungsung Church, the people pray passionately for reunification.

Among them is a group of North Korean refugees now living in the South. Though they're free, it's hard to escape the grip of the totalitarian regime just across the border.

“Actually, North Korean defectors have a trauma by the North Korean regime,” says Wonjoon Sung, who escaped North Korea. “We often have a nightmare of being taken to the North. Whenever I wake up in the morning, I feel the freedom but become sorrowful thinking (of



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The Myungsung Church choir sings praises to Jesus during a Sunday morning service.

“Refugees came to Christ after escaping the North, but saw firsthand how the North Korean government persecuted Christians.”



The Myungsung Church held an outreach Thanksgiving week, sharing food with the local community.

my family, who are living perilously without freedom in the North.”

These refugees came to Christ after escaping the North, but they saw firsthand the government’s persecution of Christians.

“In the North, the Christians were singled out for torture,” says Hyejin Lim, another North Korean escapee. “They were found because of their knees, because they have (to) sit kneeling to pray. The Christians were separated and right away sent to other places such like concentration camp.”

### How the Word Runs Swiftly

Still, the church in North Korea is growing. A woman named Yunsun Lee says some North Koreans who visit China are converted to Christianity by missionaries on the border.

Despite the risk of imprisonment or even death, some of them return to North Korea to preach the gospel.

“After they go back to the North, they evangelize others one by one in (the) basement, and then the newcomers bring their families or friends as well,” says Yunsun Lee. “In this way, the gospel is being spread secretly. If this comes out, (the) whole family will be murdered. So the churches are performing in (the) basement in secret but actively.”

Meanwhile, those who have found safety in the South cry out for their families in the North, believing that these fervent prayers will avail much for the people of North Korea.

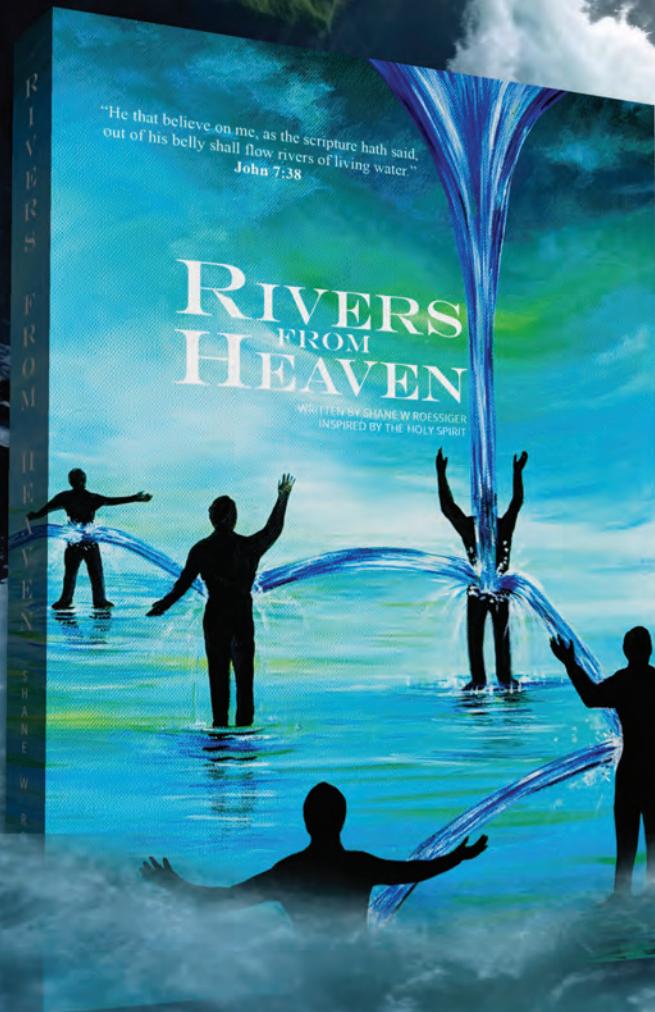
“I really pray, ‘God, may His gospel enter to the North so that the people there can live like decent men enjoying freedom.’ Every human being has the right to freedom, but in the North, this most basic right is being restricted,” says Wonjoon Sung. “I am praying to God earnestly to allow this blessing for the people in the North.”

**STEVE LITTLE** produces Christian World News, CBN’s weekly news program featuring stories about the global church.

**HEATHER SELLS** covers a variety of issues for CBN News, ranging from immigration and religious liberty to human trafficking, privacy issues and food.

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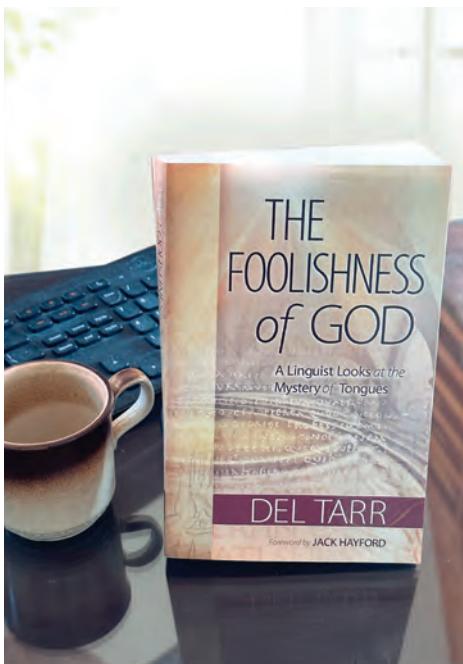
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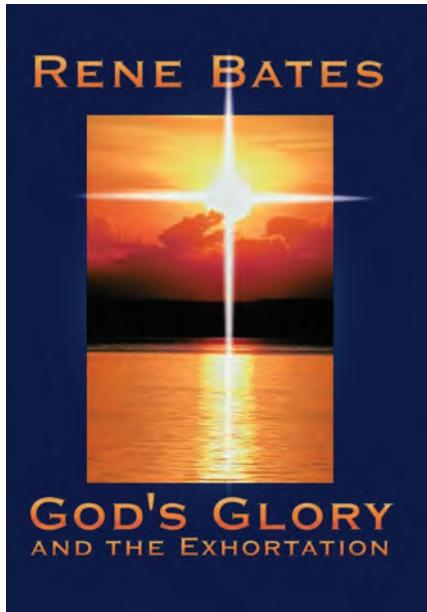
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## The Foolishness of God

The foolishness of God comes from 1 Corinthians 1:25, which describes how God often operates in ways that the world would define as "foolishness." Speaking in tongues (or glossolalia) is a perfect example of God operating in what the world might see as foolishness or senselessness. In Acts 2:1-13, God gives us an example of a crowd interpreting tongues as "being drunk," and even those speaking in tongues being made fun of. Similarly, much of the Western world's thinking is rooted in logic, making it difficult for some to believe in a God that would work in and with humans in an illogical way. In addition, the world has also embraced a more written version of communication, getting further away from the oral communication of Biblical times. In this book, Dr. Del Tarr takes the reader on an academic journey to understand the mystery of speaking in tongues through the Biblical lens of God's foolish workings in an oral context.

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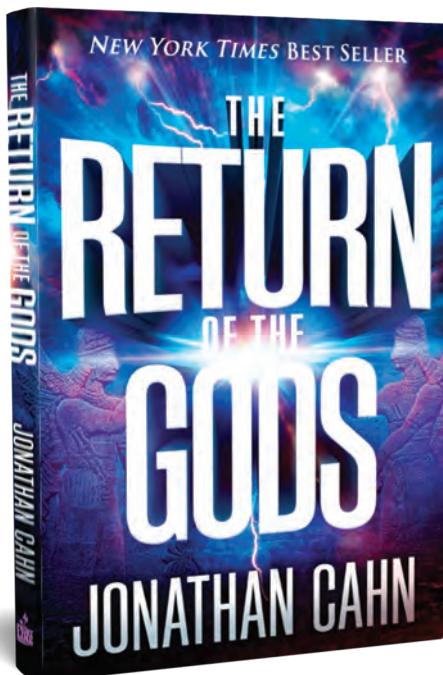
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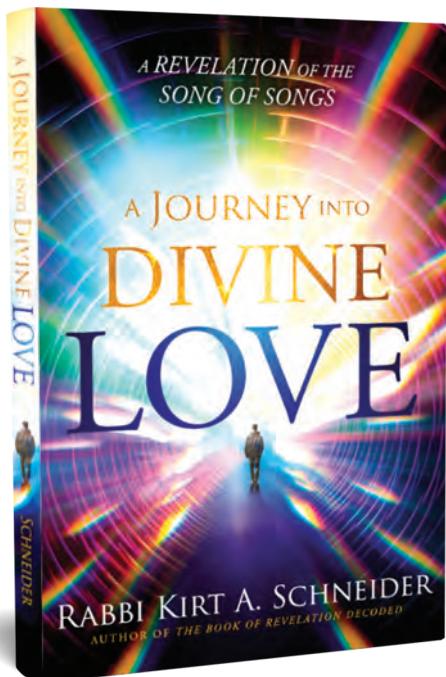
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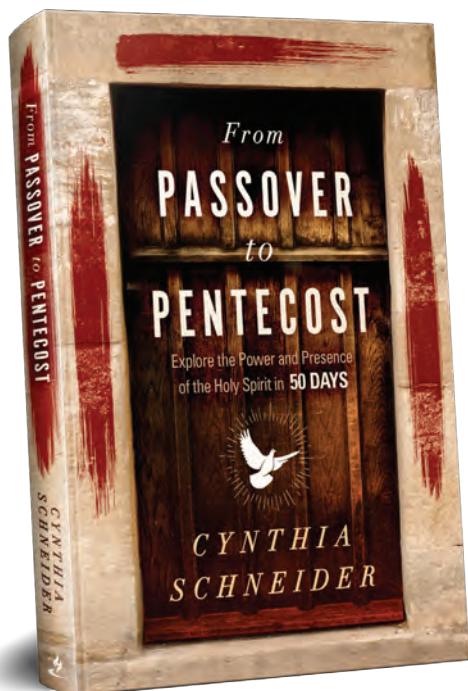


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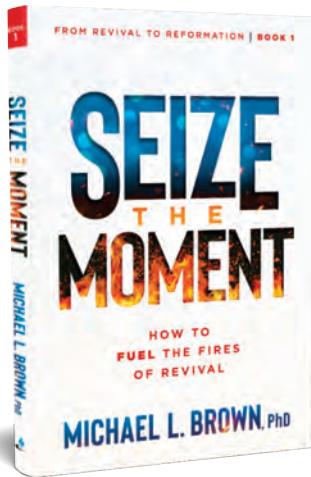


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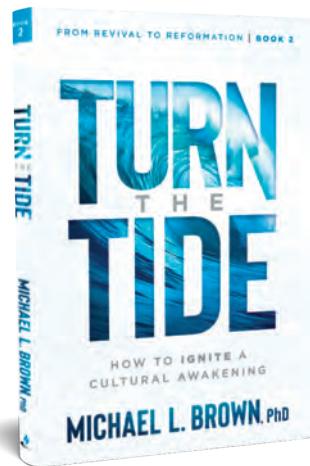
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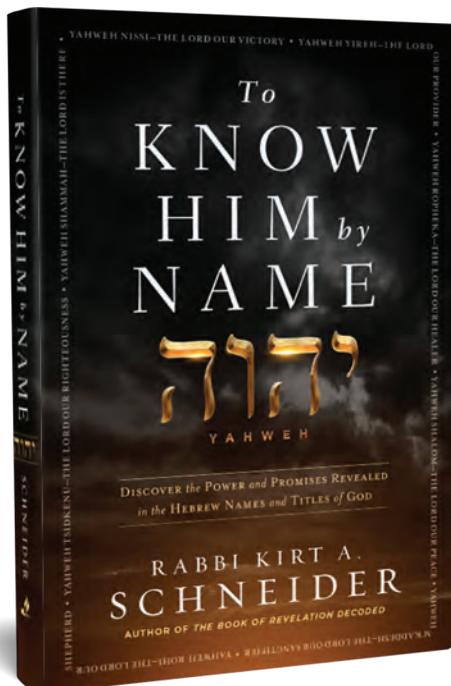
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