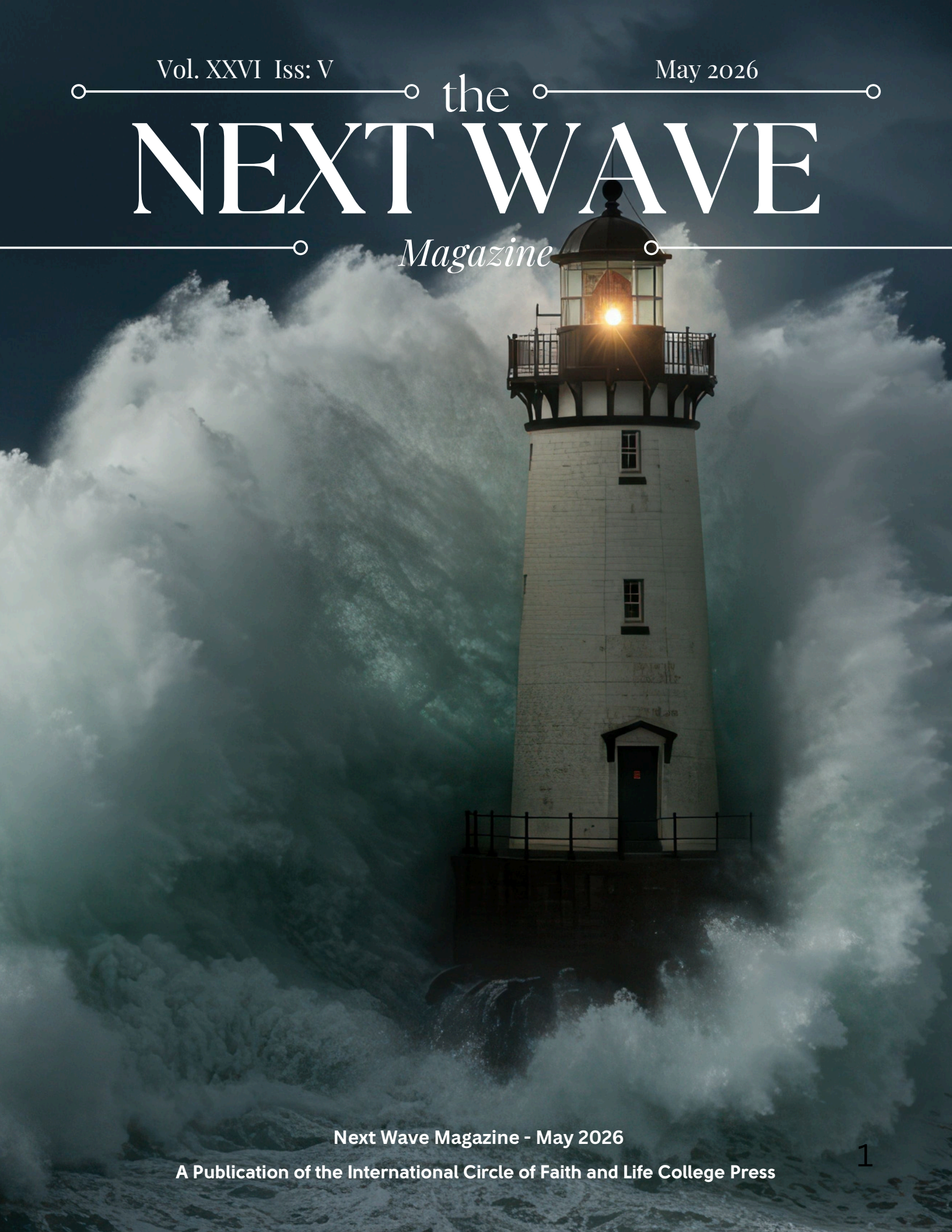
Vol. XXVI Iss: V

May 2026

the NEXT WAVE

Magazine





Focused on the prayer that Jesus prayed for His Church (Jn. 17:21) International Circle of Faith is a Christian World Network representing some 40,000 ministers with an estimated 25 million constituents. These lead tens of thousands of churches, ministries, colleges, universities, orphanages & feeding programs, humanitarian aid organizations, chaplaincies. other charities, Christ centered companies and business interests.

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From the Chief Editor

Dear Beloved Readers,



Praise Jesus!

We are delighted to have this opportunity to interact with you. During the days of the Apostles, we find that there were people healed from cloths from the apron of the Apostle Paul. This transference was through the power of the Holy Spirit resident in Apostle Paul's life.

Today, we continue to believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to do the supernatural. As followers of and fellow believers in Jesus Christ, we are honored that God has afforded so many opportunities to the ministry of International Circle of Faith (ICOF).

With these opportunities has come much responsibility. One of these responsibilities is reaching out to those in need through prayer. This is something that we take very seriously. We know first-hand that God is still in the business of healing people just like he did in the days of His flesh.

Often, it is impossible, because of time and funds, to get to those who have needs. However, we have developed a way to extend our prayers beyond the normal plain into the supernatural. Below you will find an Electronic Prayer Cloth. We have prayed for you and your need over this prayer cloth. We encourage you to print this out and use it just like a regular prayer cloth as a contact point for your faith to allow the Holy Spirit to do the miraculous! Put this prayer cloth in your bible, under your pillow, carry it in your wallet or purse, or anywhere you deem appropriate.

In His Grace,

Bernie L Wade

Bishop Bernie L. Wade, PhD

President – International Circle of Faith

Web: Http://www.icof.net

What a great day to live! We live in what is, without a doubt, the culmination of the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus Christ made to redeem mankind. The world is presented as being in despair and confusion. Yet, Jesus Christ came that we might have an abundant life. Since Adam and Eve violated God's trust in the Garden of Eden, there has been sin. Jesus Christ came to redeem us from that sin.

Be certain that God is working in your life! You might say, "It doesn't look like God is working!"

Oh, yes! Even when it does not look like it! God is working in your life! God is working in your family! God is working in your marriage! God is working in your ministry! God is working in your country!
God is working in your area!

Welcome to the Next Wave!

Healing Scriptures for Use of a Prayer Cloth

Courtesy of ICOF

The Spiritual Power Behind a Piece of Fabric

Healing is the children's bread. Jesus declared it, the prophets believed it, and the apostles demonstrated it. But how can a small piece of cloth—an inanimate object—become a powerful tool in the hands of a believer?

How can the touch of fabric usher in a divine touch from heaven? Prayer cloths, though simple in appearance, are profound in purpose. They are not magical objects or religious relics. They are prophetic, tangible contact points saturated with prayer and faith, used as a conduit to transport the power of the Holy Spirit into the lives of the sick, the oppressed, and the faith-hungry.

A Biblical Foundation for Prayer Cloths

The foundation for using prayer cloths is found in Scripture. In the book of Acts, we see the apostle Paul operating in extraordinary miracles: ***"God worked powerful miracles by the hands of Paul. So handkerchiefs or aprons he had touched were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them."***

Acts 19:11–12 (MEV)

Paul didn't advertise a handkerchief ministry. This was not a gimmick or product—it was a divine overflow. The anointing on his life was transferable because of the presence of the Holy Spirit upon him. When people took cloths that had come into contact with Paul, the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit was imparted to those in need of healing or deliverance.

This is not tradition. It's not superstition. It's the Bible.

International Circle of Faith Electronic Prayer Cloth

Your Name Here

Lord Jesus, you and you alone are King of the whole earth. We implore you on behalf of our friend to supernaturally supply healing! In faith, we know that you are answering even before we ask.

AMEN!

Healing Scriptures

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases. **Psalm 103:2-3**



He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. **Psalm 107:20**

...If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you. **Exodus 15:26**

But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. **Isaiah 53:5**

...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. **Matthew 8:17**

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. **Proverbs 4:20-22**

...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. **1 Peter 2:24**

...I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. **2 Kings 20:5**

And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you. **Deuteronomy 7:15**

A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones. **Proverbs 17:22**

Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the hillside. Look! A leper is approaching. He kneels before him, worshipping. “Sir,” the leper pleads, “if you want to, you can heal me.” Jesus touches the man. “I want to,” he says. “Be healed.” And instantly the leprosy disappears. **Matthew 8:1-3 TLB**

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me? **Jeremiah 32:27**

If you do these things, God will shed his own glorious light upon you. He will heal you; your godliness will lead you forward, and goodness will be a shield before you, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then, when you call, the Lord will answer. “Yes, I am here,” he will quickly reply.**Isaiah 58:8-9 TLB**

The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened. **Proverbs 10:27**

There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health. **Proverbs 12:18**

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. **Proverbs 15:4**

So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. **Exodus 23:25-26**

He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live.**”Proverbs 4:4**

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. **Psalm 147:3**

And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. **James 5:15**

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. **Psalm 118:17**

But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. **Malachi 4:2 TLB**

“For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,” says the LORD. **Jeremiah 30:17**

Be not wise in your own eyes; reverently fear and worship the Lord and turn [entirely] away from evil. It shall be health to your nerves and sinews, and marrow and moistening to your bones.
Proverbs 3:7-8 Amplified

Blessings on all who reverence and trust the Lord – on all who obey him! Their reward shall be prosperity and happiness. Your wife shall be contented in your home. And look at all those children! There they sit around the dinner table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees. That is God’s reward to those who reverence and trust him. **Psalm 128:1-4 TLB**

The eyes of those who see will not be dim, and the ears of those who hear will listen. **Isaiah 32:3**

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. **Psalm 91:10**

And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, "Live!” Yes, I said to you in your blood, "Live!” **Ezekiel 16:6**

So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.
Isaiah 59:19

O LORD my God, I cried out to you, and you healed me. **Psalm 30:2**

NEXT WAVE

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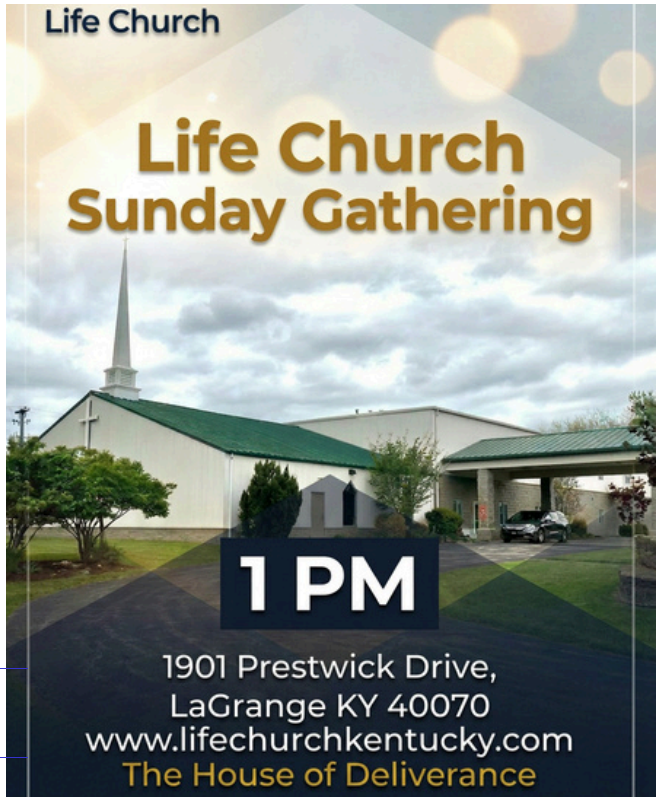
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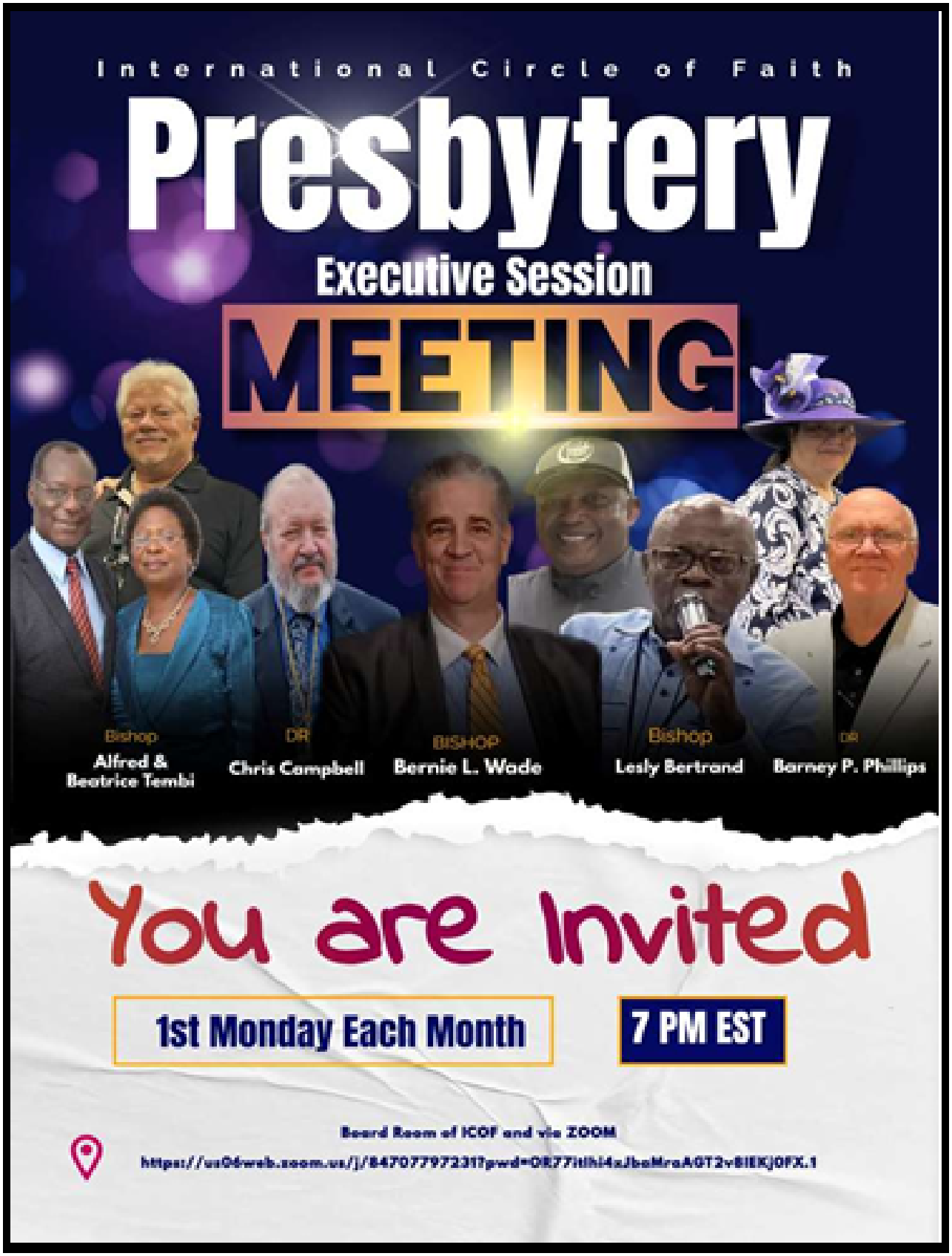
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International Circle of Faith State of the Union 2026

(Originally Published March 1, 2026)



'One day, we will be united again to spend eternity with our King.'

Members of the Presbytery of International Circle of Faith, members of ICOF, friends, and others,
Praise Jesus! He alone is worthy of our praise!

When I consider that this is my 24th opportunity to address this Global Body of Christ Followers, I stand in awe. In awe of you, our journey together, and the lives we have been privileged to impact. Most of all, in awe of Him, our King Jesus Christ, the One who bought this Church with His Blood. I know many who began this journey have had their Homegoing. Those who are gone Home are deeply missed, and their examples remain an inspiration to all. One day, we will be united again to spend eternity with our King.

Ministry is serious; the burdens are real. I salute all of you who have given your lives to the cause of helping others in the Body of Christ. The King's Business is of the utmost importance. King Solomon understood that there was a time for everything. Now, in this moment, I encourage you to take time to be thankful for those that God has sent you to help you on Life's journey.

The commitment and sacrifice of so many are worthy of honor. For my part, I thank God for all of you who labor in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and especially those who work with us in the various ministries and partners of ICOF. I am in your debt. International Circle of Faith is a big tent. All those who believe in essential Bible doctrine are welcome. Jesus said, ***'If they are not against us, then they are for us!"***

There are so many co-laborers in Christ that we have the privilege of working with that I would not be able to do justice to their names. I love all of you, and I will be eternally thankful that we journeyed together. I give special honor and thanks to those key leaders who give so sacrificially of their time and energy to help so many.

I thank God every day for my family, the 1st Lady, Dr. Daisy Wade, Prophet Bernie and Pastor Blanca Wade, Pastor William and Evangelist Rebecca Goins, Dr. Barney Phillips, and more. Christ is my first reason for living; you are my second. I am honored to serve with you. I appreciate your time, effort, and commitment to the cause of Christ. We have wonderful times here together, but I am most focused on the fact that we will be together with King Jesus for eternity!

I have to say that I believe I am among the most blessed people on the Earth. To God be the Glory!

History

I would be remiss if I failed to give honor to those who came before us. Since 1932 and even before, those sanctified vessels of the Holy Ghost (that began this ministry that has become the International Circle of Faith - ICOF) gave their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of Jesus Christ.

There are so many that deserve honor. I pause to give honor to the late Bishop Ray and 1st Lady Ruth Cornell, Bishop George A. and Lois Wade, and all the others who made the path so clear before us. Their example as believers is an inspiration to my life.

I also want to honor my parents, Bishop Sanford Wade, and the late Dr. Georgia Wade who along with my brother Brian and me, began a ministry (in 1969) to make a difference in the lives of others. My parents have both departed for their eternal reward. I have remained faithful to that vision and, like those who have gone before me, have pledged my life to that cause.

I expect our Great King will one day welcome us to enter eternal rest with Him. I expect that God does not just save individuals, but rather he saves families. The family is His focus.

Transition

It has always been my desire to raise capable leaders from this and the next generation. To that end, we desire not only to train but to transition those who are trained and qualified into leadership. I am pleased that those transitional transactions are well underway both internationally and nationally. We will continue to train leaders for this and future generations until the coming of our Lord.

- The qualified team at Life Churches continues to focus on equipping the saints for the ministry and training leaders.

- The Life Fest 2027 is planning to move to a new format on a Cruise ship! Gathering of Eagles will continue our focus on the Global Body of Christ and our mission that we would all be one.
- Led by our International Missions Director, Dr. Barney Phillips, ICOF Missions continues to be a driving force in the vision of ICOF. We must do all we can for all the people we can for as long as we can. We must go beyond preaching to being active in the lives of those to whom we minister.
- Life College and Seminary is in the capable hands of President, Dr. Stephen Barnhart, and the Board of Regents. We continue to focus on education rather than indoctrination. Life College students are encouraged to learn their calling, learn how to flow in the Holy Spirit, and apply their gifting properly. We will continue to add curriculum, certification, and qualified adjunct professors to our team. **http://www.lifecollege.education**
- Dr. Chris Campbell has taken the lead at Harvard High School International as the Superintendent. His most capable team includes Assistant Superintendents Bishop James Long, Dr. Michael Lobe, and Harvard President, Dr. Daisy R. Wade. Harvard has been instrumental in bringing opportunities to homeschoolers, International Students, and those who need to complete their High School education. **http://www.hhsi.education**
- International Circle of Faith Chaplaincy. New directions have arrived for International Circle of Faith Chaplaincy. **www.icofchaplains.org** led by the Chaplain Generals, the ICOF Chaplaincy's endorsing agency, International Circle of Faith (ICOF), and the chaplaincy accrediting body, AAHEA – American Association for Higher Education **https://www.aahea.org/**

Vistas

As ministries transition, we are by no means looking to exit stage right! Contrary! We are looking forward to new or expanded opportunities to make an impact on people's lives. Our world is facing a horrible opioid crisis, unprecedented broken marriages, and a plethora of other challenges. People are hungry for something that will satisfy. We know that Jesus remains the answer for the World. If we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit and creative in our approach, we can go to those who have the most need. In 2026, we will join the launch of the Christian World Network – CWN **www.christianworldnet.com,** forging a path to bring a new vista for the more than 2 billion Christ followers around the world. Our first partnership in this effort will be with Devotion Brands.

Challenges

Pride is like bad breath. Those who have it do not realize the problem. Unfortunately, the ministry is often a bastion of pride. Our forebears undoubtedly had their

struggles with pride. Yet, I keenly remember a ministry earmarked by humility, simple dependence on the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, and confidence that all they needed was in Him.

They may not have been suave, but they intimately knew Jesus. This is what we desperately need in the ministry today. We need men and women of God who know that they are dependent on the Holy Spirit and that without it, we can do nothing.
Tragically, Confessional Conversion has replaced the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was Nicodemus, a leader of the Jewish people, who asked Jesus what he must do to gain eternal life.

To this inquest, Jesus gave this key: “You must be born of the water (baptism) and of the Spirit (Holy Spirit).” Jesus and the disciples made this clear in key passages from the Gospel of Matthew (28:18-19), the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:38-39), and other places. Repentance followed by Baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in other tongues. There was no confusion about the criteria or method of salvation as outlined by Jesus Christ and followed through by the Apostles and leaders of the New Testament Church.

Today, those seeking Jesus are taught another Gospel. Some are teaching that salvation comes by repeating a prayer. This use of vain phrase is an insult to the power of the Resurrected blood of Jesus Christ. While this could be considered a decision with good intentions, it is not Scriptural that it replaces the need of baptism in water and Spirit.

Revival is an oft-used word. Those who use it rightly intend for the word to encourage all of us to see the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit impact our communities. Revival is being experienced around the world. We embrace this global awareness of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, many countries are more void of a move of the Holy Spirit than perhaps ever since the beginning of the New Testament Church. We pray for a fresh anointing to fall on these communities, cities, and countries.

Alliances

It has been the legacy of our forefathers and our own journey to embrace opportunities for unity. In this year, 2026 and beyond, we will forge new alliances with ministers and ministries of like-minded vision. The time is now to come together. Jesus said succinctly that ‘if they are not against us, they are for us!’ Those who are for us are allies we need. Our world faces all the hordes of hell. I encourage you to be diligent. Stand fast! We will see greater things this year than ever before. God will use you to make a difference. Thank you! God Bless you!
Blessings!
Bishop Bernie L. Wade, PhD.
Presiding Bishop
International Circle of Faith - ICOF **https://www.icof.net**



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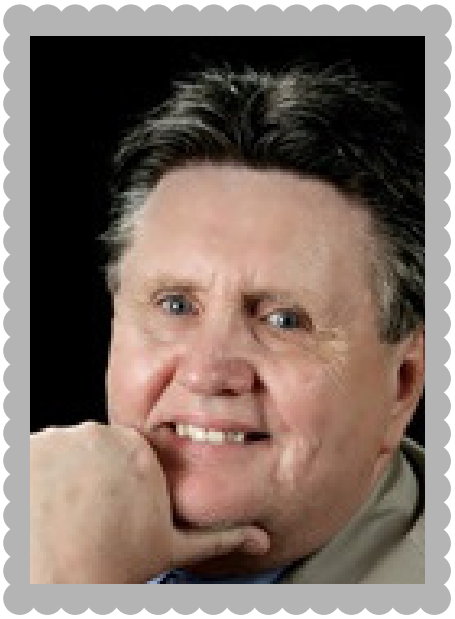
The Cover Story

The Lighthouse

A Meditation for the Storm

by David James Dunworth S.D.G.

In the SPOTLIGHT



‘I have built my house on fear, on the approval of strangers, on the next paycheck, on the illusion of control.’

When the waves rise like mountains, when the wind howls its fury, when the sea becomes a beast that knows no mercy.

Look to the light.

I have stood on shifting sand. I have built my house on fear, on the approval of strangers, on the next paycheck, on the illusion of control.

And the storms came. They always come.

The waters of anxiety, the gales of uncertainty, the relentless, crashing waves of a world that offers no anchor.

They do not ask permission. They do not wait for readiness.

They simply rise.

But there, on the rock, unmoved by the tempest, stands the Lighthouse.

Not swaying. Not flickering. Not questioning whether the foundation will hold.

It holds.

Built not on sand, not on sentiment, not on circumstance— but on the Cornerstone that the builders rejected, the Rock of Ages, cleft for me.

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

— Matthew 7:24-25

The storm rages still. I will not pretend otherwise.

The bills arrive. The diagnosis comes—the relationship fractures. The news scrolls endlessly, each headline a new wave threatening to pull us under.

This is the sea we navigate. This is the age we inherit.

But the Lighthouse does not depend on calm waters to shine. It was made for the storm. Its purpose is revealed in darkness.

And so I turn my eyes from the height of the waves to the steadiness of the beam. Not ignoring the tempest— I feel every spray of salt, every roll of the deck beneath me— but choosing, again and again, to fix my gaze on the Light that does not waver.

He is not moved by the markets. He is not shaken by elections. He does not pace the floor at 3 a.m., rehearsing worst-case scenarios.

He stands. He shines. He calls us home.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

— John 16:33

The waves will not stop. Not today. Perhaps not tomorrow. The storm is real, and I am small upon this sea.

But the Lighthouse is taller than the tallest wave. The Rock is deeper than the deepest trench. And the Light—

The Light has never, not once, gone out

So let the waters rage. Let the winds make their arguments. Let the world spin its chaos and call it news.

I know where the shore is. I know where safety waits. I know the One who stands in the fury of the night and whispers through the roar:

"Peace. Be still."

"I am with you."

"Come home."

A Prayer for the Storm-Tossed

Oh, Lord of Light,

The waves are high today. I feel small, and the sea feels endless.

But You are the Lighthouse. You are the Rock. You are the Light that no darkness can overcome.

Help me to stop measuring the waves and start trusting the foundation. Help me to stop straining against the wind and start resting in Your presence.

You have not promised me calm seas. But You have promised me Yourself—steady, shining, sure.

That is enough. You are enough.

In the name of Jesus, who walked on the very waters that terrify me,

Amen.

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

— Psalm 18:2

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



D**avid James Dunworth** is the Editor of The Nexxt Wave Magazine, as well as the Managing Publisher of Life Press -

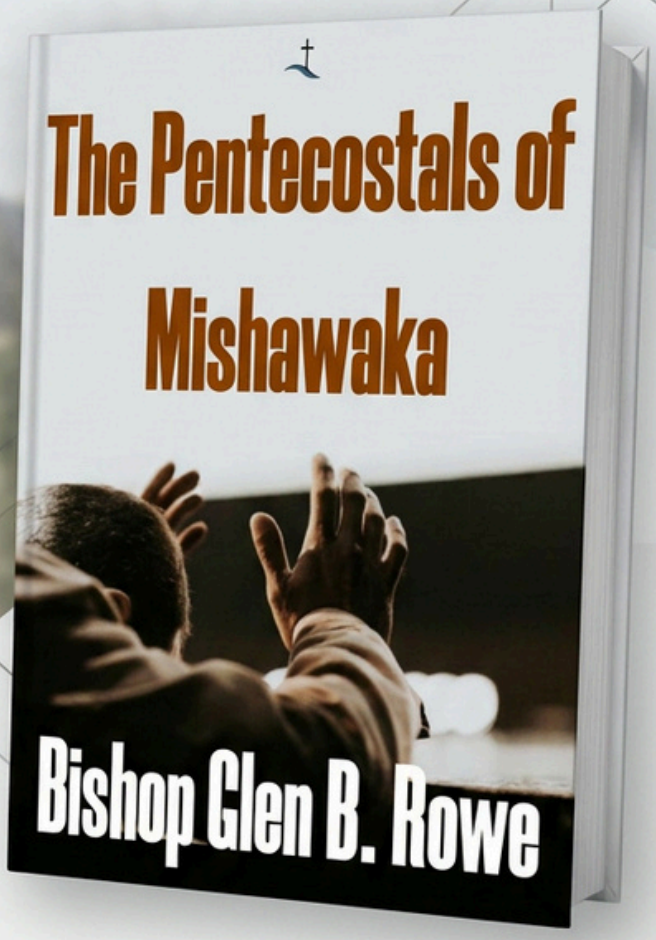



Fourth Week of Easter
READING I
Acts 13:26-33
What God promised,
He fulfilled by raising up Jesus.

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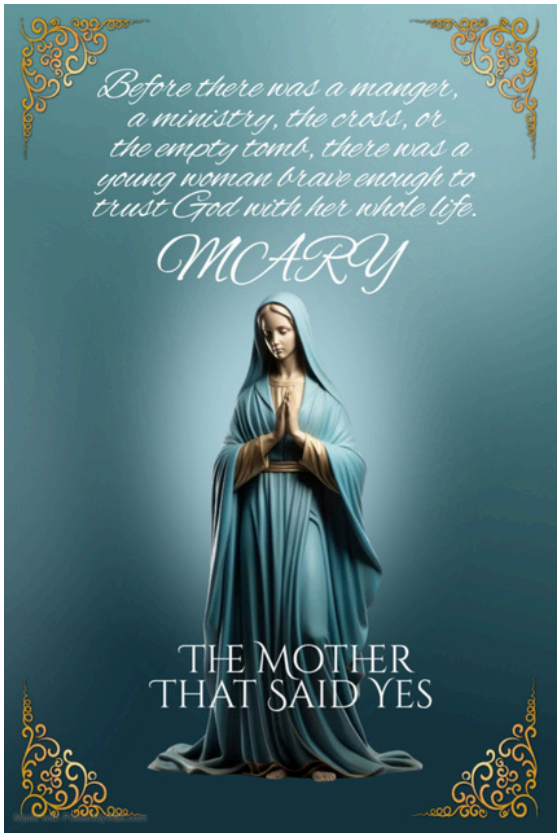
BOOK RELEASE — The Pentecostals of Mishawaka

Bishop Glen B. Rowe



Available now on Amazon

https://a.co/d/02M6Z8rk



MARY
The Mother That Said Yes

Before there was a manger, a ministry, the cross, or the empty tomb, there was a young woman brave enough to trust God with her whole life.

Before there was a manger, there was Mary's yes.
Before there was a ministry, Mary's surrender was there.
Before the cross, there was Mary's courage.
Before there was an empty tomb, a mother was willing to trust God with a future she could not fully see.

This Mother's Day, before the flowers are bought, before the cards are signed, before families gather around tables of gratitude and memory, perhaps we should begin with Mary, the mother of Christ. Not because Mary is the historical founder of Mother's Day, but because she gives us one of the most sacred portraits of motherhood the world has ever known.

Mary shows us that motherhood is more than sentiment. It is more than biology. It is more than one day of appreciation on the calendar. Motherhood, at its deepest, is a sacred yes.

It is a yes to life.
A yes to sacrifice.
A yes to uncertainty.
A yes to love that stretches the heart beyond comfort.
A yes to standing faithfully, even when the path becomes painful.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she was not handed a detailed plan. She was not given a guarantee that the road would be easy. She was not told that everyone would understand her, honor her, or protect her from suspicion. She was given a calling. And in one of the most courageous responses in Scripture, Mary answered, ***"Let it be to me according to your word"*** (Luke 1:38).

SAFE PEOPLE
20 Traits of Unsafe People

(from Dr. Henry Cloud's book ***Safe People***)

Part 1 of a 4 Part Series



'Establishing solid boundaries with unsafe people can be life-changing, but difficult.'

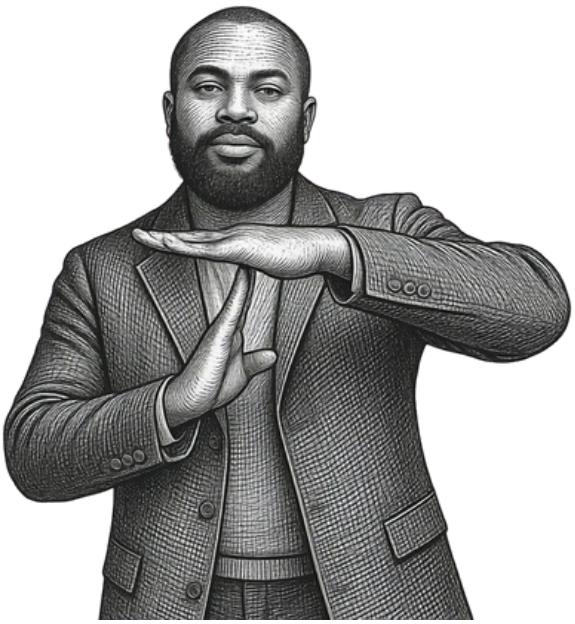
While none of us are perfectly safe relationally speaking, this list is very helpful for everyone who wishes to become a safer individual in relationships. In addition to developing the ability to recognize these things in ourselves and working to change, this list can also help us to identify the unsafe people in our lives.

Learning to identify and disconnect from the behaviors and traits that promote relational dysfunction is key to living a productive and fulfilling life. If you have someone in your life who qualifies for 5 or more of these traits consistently, it may be a good idea to reconsider how you interact with that relationship. Counseling can help you learn to interact differently with co-dependent or unhealthy individuals. Establishing solid boundaries with unsafe people can be life changing, but difficult.

In extreme cases where the person may have more than half of these traits, it may be time to consider walking away from the relationship for a season until the person has the courage to work on the issues and becomes a safer person. Either way, I generally recommend that my clients read Dr. Cloud's book Safe People, and sincerely believe every person can benefit from learning to recognize these traits both in ourselves and others. We all want to be people with whom others consistently feel safe.



- Unsafe people think they have it all together instead of admitting weakness.
- Unsafe people are religious instead of spiritual. (Legalism)
- Unsafe people defend themselves when confronted instead of being open to feedback and understanding their own faults and mistakes.
- Unsafe people are self-righteous or falsely humble instead of being genuinely humble.



Unsafe people rarely apologize and own their actions, but when they do, the apology is not followed by a change in behavior.

- Unsafe people go to great lengths to avoid looking at (much less working on) their problems.
- Unsafe people demand trust instead of understanding trust is earned.
- Unsafe people blame others and work hard to assign blame to their situations instead of owning their responsibilities in the matter.

• Unsafe people do not admit fault and will make statements such as “I am sorry you feel that way” or any other form of an apology that does not contain the confession of their fault.
• Unsafe people lie and manipulate. They aren’t honest about a myriad of things.
• Unsafe people are stagnant and show little to no signs of growth.
• Unsafe people avoid closeness instead of connecting.
• Unsafe people are only concerned about the “I” rather than the “we.” Even when expressing empathy, they will say things like, “I feel so bad about your loss.” As opposed to “You must be in so much pain after your loss.”
• Unsafe people resist the freedom associated with healthy boundaries instead of encouraging it. They have an unhealthy relationship with your “no” responses and often violate boundaries.
• Unsafe people only flatter and never confront, or only confront and never flatter. The balance between the two is nonexistent in unsafe people.
• Unsafe people condemn us instead of covering our faults with grace or forgiveness. They will say things aloud like, “Oh, you forgot to pick up your son?” or “You didn’t know that?” Often repeated more than once to exploit weakness.
• Unsafe people stay in parent/child roles instead of relating as equals. They often want to parent you or revert to childlike states in unhealthy extremes. Everyone has this trait to a certain degree, but unsafe people polarize in this department.
• Unsafe people are unstable over time. A season of instability is normal, but when a person seems to have chronic instability, that is a red flag.
• Unsafe people influence us negatively. We often leave interactions with them feeling bad, but unsure why. They bring out the worst in us instead of promoting and inspiring our good qualities.
• Unsafe people talk about others negatively when they are not around. We can be sure that we aren’t so special that we are excluded from their gossip. When a person assassinates another person’s character, name-calls or shares private information about others, this is a sign of relational manipulation common in unsafe people.



To this list I might add…

• Unsafe people tend to disagree with much of what is said. I call them "habitual contrarians" because they are habitually contrary. We all enjoy being around agreeable people. It's not to say that we all have to agree 100% of the time, but people who voice disagreement habitually make it difficult to feel safe and difficult to have a conversation of substance.

• Unsafe people have no idea how to validate feelings, experiences, and pain that they don't feel themselves. For example, *"You are so emotional." "It's not that big of a deal, get over it."* or *"Stop crying."*

• Unsafe people have poor communication habits. This can be a wide range of things, but generally speaking, unsafe people communicate poorly.

• Unsafe people make lots of assumptions that typically lead to them being offended. It is very difficult to defend ourselves against assumptions that unsafe people dream up out of thin air. It is a good idea not to try.

• To reiterate, this list is hopefully to help us become safer people. As we read it, we can all identify areas we can work on to better ourselves, but we should temper this with grace and compassion for the things that shaped us. No one is perfect, but everyone can work on imperfections.



PART 1

Picking Safe People

Have you ever wondered why some relationships seem to lead to growth and happiness, and others to pain and injury? Have you ever had the experience of meeting someone, finding them attractive and charming, trusting them in some way, and then later being hurt very badly by them? Or, worse than that, have you done that more than once with the same kind of person?

It would be nice if we could all answer “no” to the above questions, for that would mean that we would have avoided a lot of pain in our lives. And it would also be nice if those realities did not even exist, so that we did not have to think about them. But the truth is that relationships can have the power to save our lives or ruin them.

Everywhere you turn, you can find people who can give testimonies of how God brought someone or a community of people to them in a specific time of their life and virtually turned their whole life around. In fact, that is God’s plan, to use good people to deliver his grace to us and cause us to grow. (1 Peter 4:10; Eph. 4:16) God has ordained that we grow and are strengthened in our relationships with each other, as we find people who exercise the gifts that He has given them.

At the same time, you can find others who are in a lot of pain because the people whom they have entrusted their hearts to have hurt them deeply in various ways. And the reality is that God has talked about that

fact as well. He has warned us that there are people whom you are to avoid getting into deep relationships with for a variety of reasons. They can hurt you, they can corrupt your morals, and they can lead you away from Him.



David said that he would be very careful to choose who would "minister to" him, and that he would avoid the ones who were hurtful. (Ps. 101) Jesus told us to watch out for people who make "little ones stumble," and are like devouring "dogs." (Luke 17:1,2; Matt. 7:6) God is very into reality. He does not sugarcoat anything, especially in an area as important as relationships.

These kinds of hurts in the lives of students come in various areas:

·Dating

·Friendship

·Spiritual Relationships

And the problem is that people have the tendency to pick certain kinds of people who hurt them over and over again. We have the tendency to fall into certain patterns of choosing hurtful people out of our own character weaknesses over and over again. How do you do with the following questions?

·Have you ever noticed that the problems or feelings that you are experiencing in your dating life are the same ones you had in a previous relationship?

- Do you find that you continue to pick people to fall in love with or become close friends with who hurt you in some way?
- Do you find yourself wondering, *"Are there any 'good ones' out there?"*
- Do you ever go through periods of emotional turmoil that are the result of picking someone who was not good for you?

If you answer *"yes"* to many of these, it is time to take a look at the ways and reasons you pick people who hurt you. And be sure that God has an interest in helping you to grow out of the pattern.

People who are honest about these patterns have a chance through spiritual growth to change their tendency to get into hurtful relationships. People who do not see that they play a part in the choosing set themselves up for more pain until they discover what is going on. And the change has to do with two areas. One is learning to recognize the character traits of hurtful people, and the other has to do with dealing with your own character issues that make you vulnerable to that kind of relationship.

Evaluating Character

Many times, Christians do not think of evaluating the character of those with whom they choose to be in relationships. They often think that to do so would be to be judgmental. **(Lk. 6:37)** Certainly, we are not to play God and judge someone's eternal state as the Judge of the Universe will. But we are commanded to judge in the sense of evaluating others in terms of our deciding to have close fellowship with them. **(1 Cor. 5:9-13; 1 Cor 15:33)**



Instead of looking to the kinds of character traits that God deems important, we look to external things that do not have much to do with how someone ultimately performs in relationships. We look at externals, religious performance, how they appear, instead of what Jesus talked about as the deeper relational aspects of the law, such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness. **(Matt. 23:23)** Is someone honest and fair? Are they merciful? Can they be trusted? These are the issues that Jesus told us to look at.

So, the first thing that we have to get over is the feeling that God does not want us to look at these things. It is OK to evaluate people. (Gal. 6:1) He wants us to help each other as well as to protect ourselves from evil. **(Prov. 22:3)**

In the book Safe People, John Townsend and I defined a person of safe character as someone who:
·Draws me closer to God
·Draws me closer to others
·Helps me become the person God created me to be

As you think of people to date and become close friends with, or to put yourself under spiritual direction with, think about those issues. Does your relationship with them help you to grow spiritually and get closer to a loving God? Does it help you to become more loving and relational? And does it help you to grow as the person God wants you to be? These are good things to think about as they have to do with the two greatest commandments and becoming Christlike.

Learn what traits are helpful and hurtful in people. We discussed many in the book **Safe People**, and I also wrote about many in ***Changes That Heal,*** also by Zondervan. Those would be helpful guides, and there are many others. The important thing is that you learn to recognize things like:



- ***perfectionism***
- ***inability to connect***
- ***control issues***
- ***judgmental***
- ***domineering traits***
- ***defensiveness***
- ***denial***
- ***dishonesty***
- ***other traits the Bible talks about that are destructive.***

We all need to know what it is that we are looking to confront and to avoid. If you are going to give your heart to people and trust them, you have to know what you are looking for. Search the Scriptures and other Biblically based materials that teach about relational patterns.

And remember that God wants you to be able to recognize character problems for two reasons. One is to be able to confront each other with the truth so that we can see our faults in a community and overcome them **(Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18:15-18.)** We are to be redemptive agents in each other's lives. The second one is for your own protection and growth, as we discussed above.

Character Growth

In addition to learning about the character of others, we must find out what it is about us that causes us to make such poor, hurtful choices. The truth is that it is not just a lack of knowledge. We usually make such choices out of our own weaknesses.

For example, if we are unable to confront people who hurt us and set good boundaries, we will continually be attracted to controlling, hurtful people. So, in a very real sense, as **Proverbs 22:3** says, we bear responsibility for the problem.

Or, if we are so isolated and lonely that we are afraid to end or confront hurtful relationships, we will choose hurtful people to avoid being alone. We need to make sure that we have a good support system in place and are not so in need of any one person.

Or, if we are still trying to please some perfectionistic standard in our own heads, we will find perfectionistic people to live out that standard in our lives. Or to live out the role of a person from our past that we are not *"finished with."*

There are many character weaknesses that we all have that cause us to continue these patterns, and it is part of your sanctification process to submit them to God for Him to change. The problem is for you to identify them and begin to work on them.



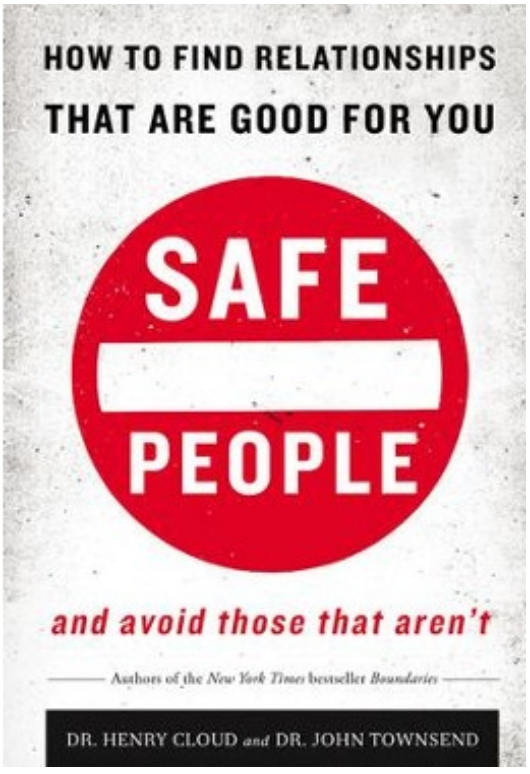
There are many character weaknesses that we all have that cause us to continue these patterns, and it is part of your sanctification process to submit them to God for Him to change. The problem is for you to identify them and begin to work on them. Remember that to do that, you are going to have to do several things:

1. **Own the problem.** Admit that you have the pattern. This is called confession.
2. **Make sure that you have help.** God has given you other people to support you in the process, and you cannot make character changes in a vacuum. You have to have a safe support system.

This concludes Part 1 of 20 Traits of Unsafe People from Dr. Henry Cloud's book

Safe People: *How to Find Relationships That Are Good for You and Avoid Those That Aren't*

Available here



Please Welcome Your New Life Press Manager/Publisher

and Editor of The Next Wave Magazine

David James Dunworth S.D.G.



Greetings,

I am pleased to have been awarded the management of Life Press, which includes the editing and publishing of this great periodical. You may have already noticed my image, or at least my name, included in the previous two issues, as I patiently waited for matters to become “official.”

With the I’s dotted and the T’s crossed, it is now time to announce several initiatives that I will be slowly rolling out over the next 4-8 months, if all goes as expected. Life being what it can be, I must proceed with caution, as things can change at the drop of a hat. Earlier this year, I suffered some health setbacks, but now I am right as rain (even though where I live is experiencing a drought).

As you stroll through the pages, you’ll find several notices that are sprinkled into the mag, and a full document of the proposed enhancements and offerings will be for you to copy, snap an image of, or what-have-you to remember things that may be of interest.

There’s a lot ahead for Life Press - Referred to and marketed going forward as Life College Press.

Blessings,
DJD



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because without You,
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Amen.



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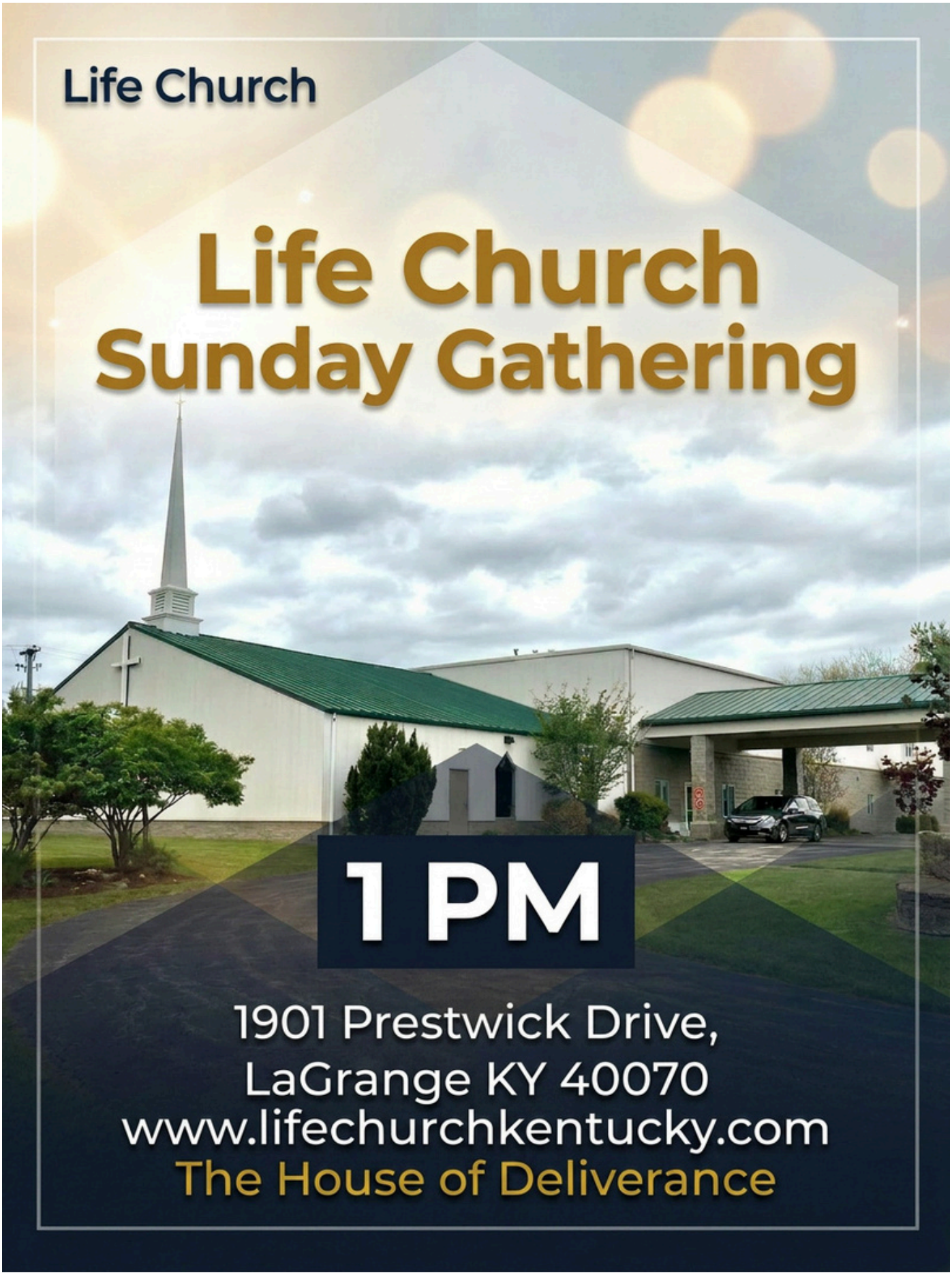
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10 Baseless Practices in The Contemporary Church

by Bishop Joseph Mattera

Article Reprinted With Athorization. Originally Published June 24, 2025

SHOWCASING



'The tragedy is that instead of seeing Christ in every passage, some now see the NAR.'

As someone who has served in the church for over four decades, I've witnessed movements come and go, trends rise and fall, and innovations that either served or sabotaged the mission of Christ.

Yet, in recent years, it seems as though the line between orthodoxy and novelty has become so blurred that the average believer struggles to discern the sacred from the absurd.

In this article, I want to address 10 baseless practices that have emerged in contemporary Christianity—some of which are rooted in ignorance, others in spiritual arrogance, and still others in a distorted understanding of Scripture and church tradition.

1. Seeing the Bible and the Church Through the Lens of the NAR

We are living in an age where discernment has devolved into paranoia. For many, the so-called New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) has become the new bogeyman.

There are legitimate theological concerns within certain NAR expressions, but what's equally problematic is the rise of a counter-movement that sees everything—from political engagement to the word "apostolic"—as evidence of a nefarious global conspiracy. Every sermon, every book, every preacher is suddenly suspect.

The tragedy is that instead of seeing Christ in every passage, some now see the NAR. The lens has shifted from Jesus to fear. This is not discernment; this is theological McCarthyism.

2. Prosecuting Fellow Believers Through Online Platforms Without Ecclesial Process

The Apostle Paul instructed the church in Corinth to judge matters internally (1 Cor. 6). Today, however, the church has outsourced judgment to the Twittersphere. Believers now play judge, jury, and executioner without due process or any semblance of ecclesial order.

Social media has become a tribunal, and reputations can be assassinated with a single click. This practice not only bypasses biblical structures of accountability but also reveals how biblically illiterate and spiritually reckless much of the body has become. The church is not a mob. It is a family governed by elders, not online outrage.



3. Presumptuously Calling for a "Court of Heaven"

For over a decade, the "courts of heaven" teaching has gained traction in certain charismatic circles. The idea is that one can summon a heavenly court to break generational curses and demonic strongholds.

While there are kernels of truth—God is a righteous Judge—nowhere in Scripture do we see mortals initiating heavenly court sessions. In Isaiah 6, 1 Kings 22:19–23, and Revelation 5, it is always God who opens the courts, not man. To presume otherwise is to cross a line into spiritual presumption. We do not command heaven; we respond to it.

4. Scheduling Heavenly Visitations

On more than one occasion, someone has told me they could arrange for me to visit heaven - via a person they follow on Facebook. Let that sink in as if heaven were a destination managed by a prophetic travel agent. This is not only absurd but spiritually dangerous. Scripture is filled with reverence and trembling in the presence of divine encounters. Paul himself was reluctant to speak of his vision of heaven (2 Cor. 12), and yet today, people are scheduling it as if it were a conference call. This practice trivializes the holiness of God.

5. Claiming Titles With No Fruit

We live in an era where many claim the titles of Bishop, Apostle, or even Doctor—without the corresponding fruit, character, or qualifications. Titles without transformation are empty. If one has not been tested, mentored, or affirmed by credible spiritual authority, then claiming these roles is nothing short of self-deception. Worse, many now flaunt degrees from unaccredited "diploma mills," which undermines the credibility of true scholarship and ministry. The kingdom is not advanced by titles but by substance.

6. Communing With Departed Saints

Necromancy was condemned in the Old Testament (Deut. 18:10–12), yet Today, some leaders openly claim to receive counsel from dead saints. (See also 1 Samuel 28) Others promote the practice of praying to saints, despite the New Testament's clear instruction that we come to the Father in the name of Jesus alone (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). There is one mediator between God and man—Jesus Christ. To commune with the dead or invoke their intercession apart from Christ is not just unbiblical—it's spiritually reckless.

7. Using the Hebrew Calendar to Guide the Church

In recent years, prophetic voices have increasingly drawn guidance for the Church from the Jewish (Hebrew) calendar, declaring divine mandates for each year based on its numerical or mystical significance. While the Old Testament calendar has deep historical and redemptive meaning, to use it as a primary tool for Church direction is to conflate covenants and lapse into a form of Christianized Kabbalah. The New Testament Church is led by the Holy Spirit and guided by Scripture and apostolic tradition, not Jewish numerology.

8. Giving Unaccountable Prophetic Words on Social Media

First Corinthians 14:29 commands that prophetic words be judged by other prophets and leaders. Yet today, untested voices with no visible accountability or ecclesial connection are releasing words to thousands on social media. Who are their pastors? Who mentors them? What lifestyle do they live? This lack of context and

accountability is not prophetic; it is spiritual anarchy. True prophetic ministry is rooted in the local church and must pass the test of community, Scripture, accountability, and fruit.

9. Building Churches Around Mega-Personalities Instead of Christ

We've built platforms bigger than pulpits, and personalities people highlight more than the Lord they claim to serve. When churches are built around the charisma of a person rather than the character of Christ, collapse is inevitable. We are witnessing the fallout—celebrity pastors burning out, moral failures, and congregations that disband once the star leaves the stage. Paul said, "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5). The church was never meant to orbit a man.

10. Basing Success on Crowds Rather Than Disciples

Nowhere in the sacred text or apostolic tradition are we commanded to draw a crowd. We are commanded to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). Of course, evangelism is essential—winning the lost is the beginning of the process—but the Church has often mistaken attraction for transformation. A full building does not equate to a full heart. The early Church in Acts didn't build around events but around spiritual formation and covenantal community. If we measure success only by size, we will fail to measure what truly matters.

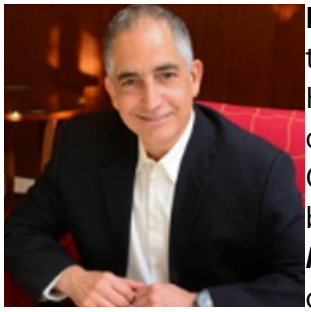
Conclusion

These practices, though diverse, share a common flaw: they replace biblical fidelity with man-made innovation. They reflect a Church that, in many cases, has lost its moorings. The answer is not in swinging to reactionary extremes but in returning to Scripture, to Christ-centered orthodoxy, and Spirit-led wisdom rooted in the historic faith. Let us reform not with suspicion but with clarity and conviction, grounded in truth and tempered by love.
Let the Church be the Church again.

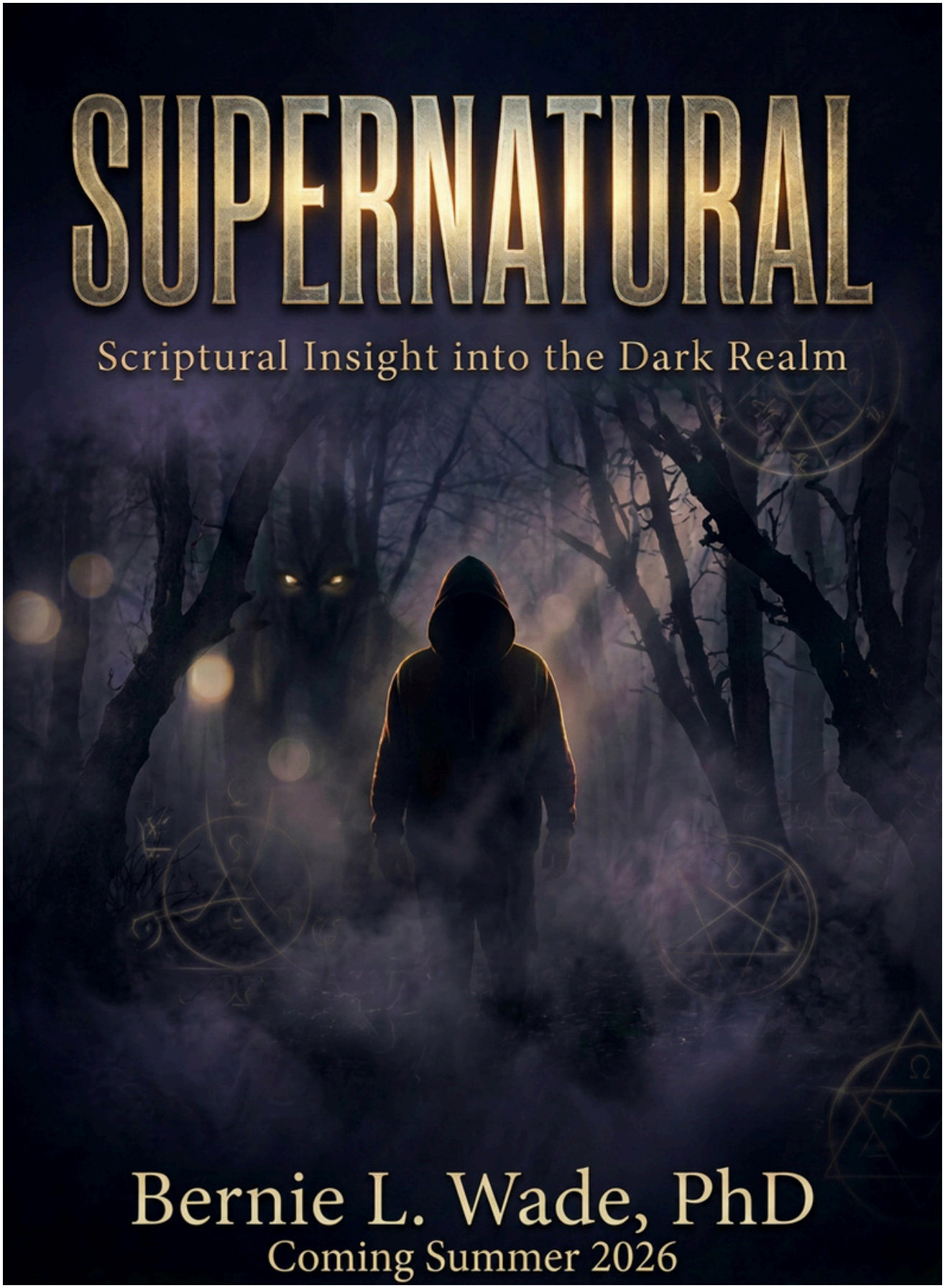
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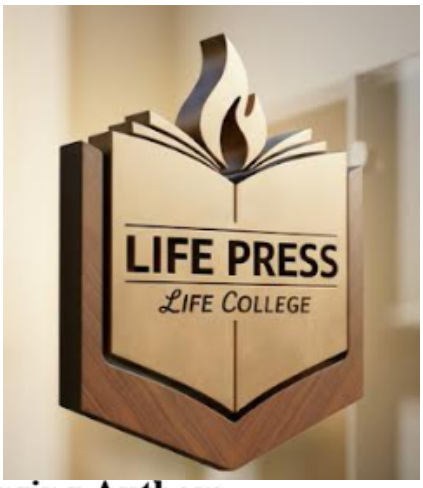
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Joseph Mattera is an internationally known author, consultant, and theologian whose mission is to influence leaders who influence culture. He is the founding pastor of Resurrection Church and leads several organizations, including The U.S. Coalition of Apostolic Leaders and Christ Covenant Coalition. Dr Mattera is the author of 13 bestselling books, including his latest, ***"The Purpose, Power, and Process of Prophetic Ministry,"*** and is renowned for applying Scripture to contemporary culture. To order his books or join the many thousands who subscribe to his newsletter, go to josephmattera.org


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Down the Rabbit Hole

The Parable of the Sower



4 And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude* was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. **2** Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds [a]of the air came and devoured it. 5 Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no [b]crop. 8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased, and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

9 And He said [c]to them, ***"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"***

Note: (This is about understanding. In all your getting, get understanding. Without understanding what do you have?

The Purpose of Parables

10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 11 And He said to them, ***“To you it has been given to know the [d]mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 so that***
‘Seeing they may see and not perceive,
And hearing they may hear and not understand;
Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’ ”

The Parable of the Sower Explained

13 And He said to them, ***“Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The Sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble…***

Note: Down the Spiritual rabbit hole.

…Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, [e]accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

Note: 3 things: 1. Cares of this world. 2. Deceitfulness of riches. 3. Desires for other things.

1. **Note:** *A great Multitude. The phrase* ***"cares of the world"*** *typically refers to the various concerns, responsibilities, and distractions that people face in daily life. It encompasses a range of issues, including:*

- ***Personal Responsibilities:*** *Family, work, and financial obligations.*
- ***Social Issues:*** *Community problems, social justice, and environmental concerns.*
- ***Emotional Burdens:*** *Stress, anxiety, and mental health challenges.*
  - *The tension between spiritual pursuits and worldly distractions.*
  - *A need for balance between material concerns and deeper, more meaningful pursuits.*

- *What truly matters in life*
- *The importance of prioritizing one's values amidst everyday challenges.*

Note: *Story of the Rose by the trash dumpster.*

- *Riches. Security: Wealth can create a false sense of security.*
- *·People rely on material possessions rather than spiritual or ethical foundations.*
- *·Distraction from Values: The desire for riches can distract individuals from important life priorities, such as relationships, community, and personal integrity.*
- *Wealth is often temporary and can lead to disappointment or loss*
- *We need God when we have ack. Yet, we often forget Him when we have stuff.*

3. Human inclination to prioritize worldly pursuits and material possessions over spiritual growth and devotion to God.



Down the Rabbit Hole
a metaphor for something that transports someone into a wonderfully (or troublingly) surreal state or situation. On the internet, a rabbit hole frequently refers to an extremely engrossing and time-consuming topic.

The earliest written record of the phrase dates to the 17th century. But the figurative rabbit hole begins with Lewis Carroll's 1865 classic, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. In its opening chapter, "Down the Rabbit-Hole," Alice follows the White Rabbit into his burrow, which transports her to the strange, surreal, and nonsensical world of Wonderland.

The Oxford English Dictionary finds the first allusive rabbit hole in a 1938 edition of The Yale Law Journal: *"It is the Rabbit-Hole down which we fell into the Law, and to him who has gone down it, no queer performance is strange."* Rabbit hole has many metaphorical applications—from frustrating red tape to the mind-bending complexity of science to hallucinations during altered states—all united by a common sense of passing into some labyrinthine, logic-defying realm that, once entered, is hard to get out of.

One can fall down the rabbit hole of government bureaucracy, healthcare, obtaining a green card, tax law, the political economy, puberty, college admissions, or quantum mechanics.



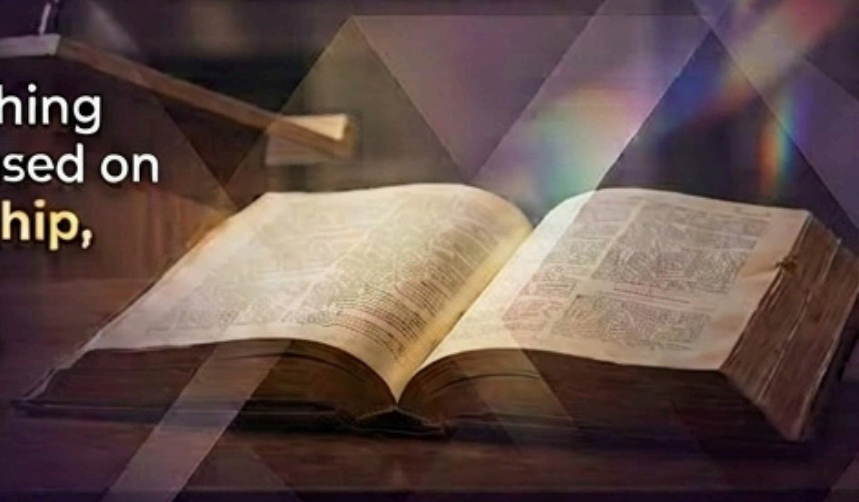
If you're Neo in the hit film The Matrix, you can take the red pill—a pill that shows you the truth, as opposed to the blue pill, which keeps you in ignorance—and *"see how deep the rabbit hole goes."* In a related note, some people literally take pills and go down the rabbit hole of a psychedelic drug trip.

"The early Christians emphasized lifestyle practice. They told stories, much as Jesus did, about ego, love, peace, divine union, and inner freedom."
— Fr. Richard Rohr

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Practically Speaking

You might think that finding the right person will make all your problems disappear. But the truth is, challenges don't vanish just because you're in a relationship.

Picture this → You wake up next to your partner, but the silence between you feels heavier than usual. You want to fix it, but you aren't sure where to start. It's normal to feel frustrated or even hopeless when communication breaks down. Even couples who seem to 'have it all together' have moments of doubt.

Life's challenges are unavoidable, even in the strongest relationships. The upside is that you and your loved one can face difficulties together. However, tough times may also create distance or lead to blame, making it even harder to overcome obstacles. Some days, you'll take two steps forward, one step back. That's part of the process.

Resilient couples do more than just endure tough seasons—they often emerge stronger. The following insights can help you grow closer to one another, even in difficult times. Start with just one small change today. You might be surprised at how much it matters.

Seven Secrets of Resilience

1. Remind yourself that every couple faces challenges—don't take it as a sign that something is wrong with your relationship.

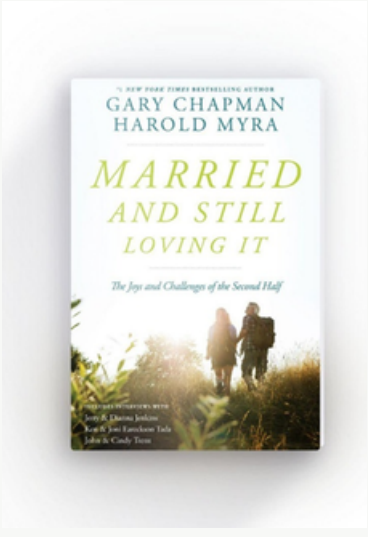
- When a problem arises, focus on working together instead of blaming each other. Say, “Let’s tackle this as a team.”
- When things get tough, choose a positive attitude—even if you can’t change the situation. Encourage each other to look for the bright spots.
- When you hit a rough patch, ask each other, “What can we learn from this?” instead of dwelling on “Why us?”
- If you feel tension rising, pause and really listen to your partner before responding. Aim to understand, not just to be heard.
- Reach out to your partner for support—don’t try to go it alone. Remind each other, “We’re in this together.”
- If faith is important to you, pray together or share your feelings with God when you’re struggling. Find comfort in your shared beliefs.

These seven secrets can support any couple, but may be especially meaningful for those in the second half of life, when challenges often feel greater. For further insights on building a lasting marriage in the second half, you’ll find helpful guidance in Married and Still Loving It—now 30% off for a limited time.

“If you have team members you don't want to lose, you'd better make sure they feel valued. . . . Often the same top performers are recognized repeatedly over time, while the middle 50% of the team members hear nothing.”

Gary Chapman & Paul White
The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace

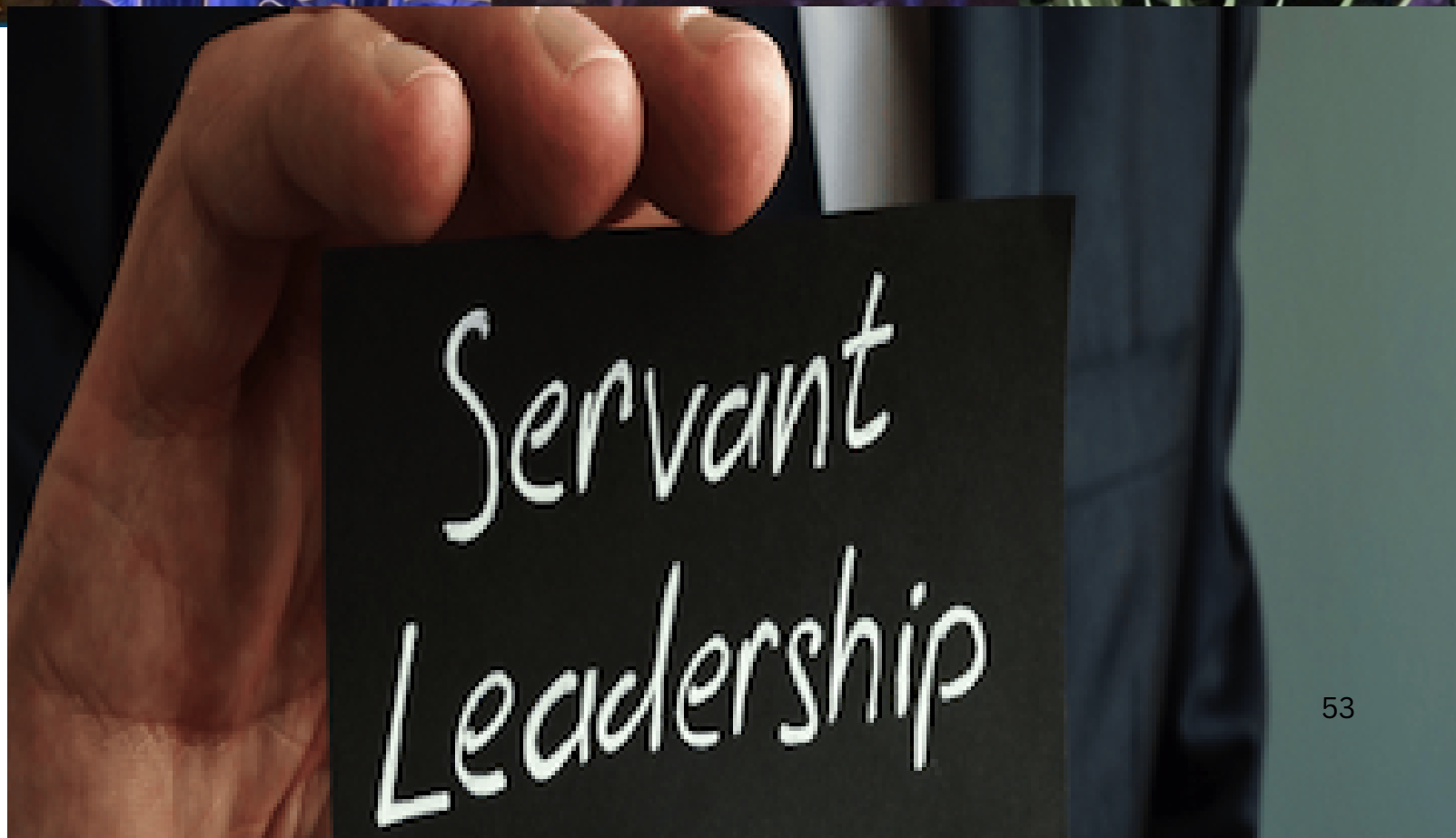
BOOK OF THE WEEK 🔥



LEGACY

Jesus in the heart of evey man, woman and child...



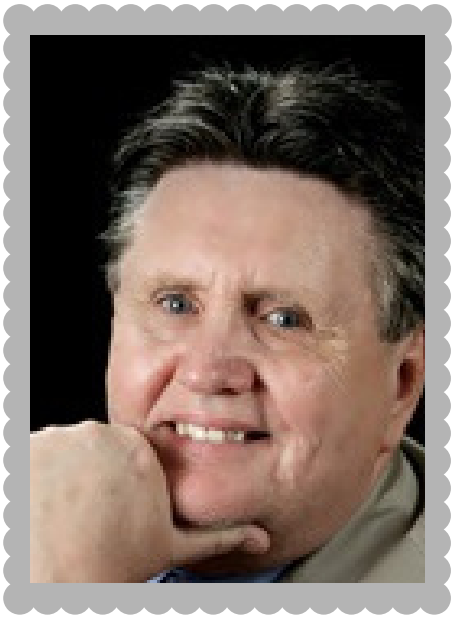


The Church Is Not Conflict-Free:

It Is Called to Be Conflict-Faithful

by David James Dunworth S.D.G.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



'But it is not always an honest reading of Scripture, nor an honest reading of human nature.'

The church was never promised a life without conflict. It was promised the presence of Christ in the middle of it.

That distinction matters deeply. Many pastors, board members, ministry leaders, and committed church members carry an unspoken expectation that the church should be the one place where disagreement does not wound, where personalities do not clash, where power is never mishandled, where love always rises quickly, and where everyone naturally chooses peace.

It is a beautiful hope. But it is not always an honest reading of Scripture, nor an honest reading of human nature.

The New Testament does not give us a conflict-free church. It gives us churches learning how to become faithful while conflict is pressing against them.

Paul's letters are filled with congregational strain. The church at Corinth struggled with division, pride, spiritual arrogance, sexual disorder, lawsuits, and confusion over gifts.

The churches addressed in Revelation 2–3 faced lost love, compromise, false teaching, lukewarm faith, spiritual sleepiness, and

endurance under pressure. Even the early church in Acts had to face serious disagreement. Acts 15 records a major dispute over Gentile believers and the requirements of the law. The apostles did not pretend that the conflict was not there. They gathered, listened, debated, discerned, and sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

That is the model. The goal is not avoidance. The goal is faithfulness.



Conflict Reveals What a Church Really Believes

Church conflict is rarely just about the presenting issue. It may appear to be about music, budgets, building use, staff decisions, preaching style, bylaws, programs, or generational preferences. But beneath the surface, deeper questions are often moving.

Who has influence here?
Whose voice matters?
What future are we willing to follow?
What past are we afraid to lose?
Do we trust our leaders?
Do our leaders trust the body?
Are we protecting mission, or are we protecting comfort?

A church can say it believes in grace, humility, forgiveness, truth, and unity. Conflict asks whether those words have become practices. It exposes whether love is only a sermon topic or whether love has become a discipline.

Ephesians 4 gives the church a demanding and beautiful standard: *"speak the truth in love"* and grow into Christ, who is the head of the body.

That phrase is often quoted but less often practiced. Some speak truth without love, and it becomes a weapon. Others speak love without truth, and it becomes avoidance. Christian maturity requires both.

Truth without love can crush people. Love without truth can leave sickness untreated.

The conflict-faithful church refuses both errors.

Anger Must Be Discipled

Ephesians 4:26 says, *"Be angry, and do not sin."* That is a mercy to honest believers. Scripture does not pretend that anger is always absent from faithful people. Anger may reveal grief. It may reveal injustice. It may reveal fear. It may reveal that something sacred has been mishandled.

But anger is not automatically righteous simply because it feels powerful. Every person in a church conflict is tempted to baptize personal frustration as holy con-



viction. *“My anger is righteous,”* we tell ourselves. *“Their anger is divisive.”* That is why anger must be brought under the lordship of Christ.



A pastor may be angry and still need humility.
A board may be angry and still need patience.
A member may be angry and still need self-examination.

A critic may be angry and still carry a truth the church needs to hear.
Disciplined anger asks better questions. What am I protecting? What am I afraid of losing? What have I not heard? What part of this conflict belongs to me? How can I remain truthful without becoming cruel?

The church does not mature by pretending anger is absent. It matures by refusing to let anger become sin.

Matthew 18 Is Not a Weapon

Matthew 18 offers one of the clearest teachings on addressing harm within the community of faith. Jesus describes a process that begins personally and privately, then widens carefully if repentance and restoration do not come. The spirit of the passage is not punishment. It is restoration. It is not gossip with Bible verses attached. It is not triangulation. It is not gathering allies before speaking to the person involved.



HELMET OF SALVATION



SHIELD OF FAITH





BELT OF TRUTH



BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS



SANDALS OF PEACE

Matthew 18 honors the dignity of the person and the health of the body.

That means church leaders must resist two common failures. The first is avoidance, where harmful behavior is ignored in the name of peace. The second is escalation, where every offense becomes a public battle. Neither reflects the way of Jesus.

A conflict-faithful church dares to address harm early, directly, truthfully, and prayerfully. It does not humiliate people. It does not excuse destructive behavior. It seeks restoration without surrendering accountability.

Put On the Armor, Not the Ego

Ephesians 6 reminds believers that the church's struggle is not merely against flesh and blood. That passage has often been misunderstood. The armor of God is not permission to treat people as enemies. It is preparation to withstand fear, deception, accusation, bitterness, pride, despair, and spiritual confusion without losing the character of Christ.

The belt of truth does not permit us to be harsh.

The breastplate of righteousness does not permit us to be self-righteous.

The shield of faith does not excuse denial.

The sword of the Spirit is not for cutting down the body of Christ.

The armor of God equips the church to stand. It teaches leaders not to collapse under pressure, not to retaliate when criticized, not to confuse unity with silence, and not to mistake spiritual warfare for personal combat.

Love Is Not Niceness

First Corinthians 13 is often read at weddings, but Paul wrote it into a conflicted church. That matters. The *"love chapter"* was not sentimental decoration. It was corrective discipleship.

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It rejoices in the truth.

This is not vague affection. This is agape, covenantal love under pressure. It is the kind of love that seeks the long-term good of the other, the body, and the mission of God. It does not avoid truth. It does not flatter dysfunction. It does not confuse peace with passivity.

Love asks: What response most reflects Christ? What protects the vulnerable? What tells the truth? What preserves dignity? What serves the mission? What opens the door to repentance, healing, and renewed trust?

The Calling Before Us

The church is not conflict-free. It has never been. But it can be conflict faithful.

- It can learn to speak truth without contempt.
- It can practice accountability without cruelty.
- It can listen to critics without becoming defensive.
- It can confront destructive behavior without dehumanizing people
- It can hold anger without being ruled by it.
- It can seek unity without demanding uniformity.
- It can put on the armor of God without taking off the gentleness of Christ.

The question is not whether conflict will come.

It will.

The question is what kind of people we will become when it does.

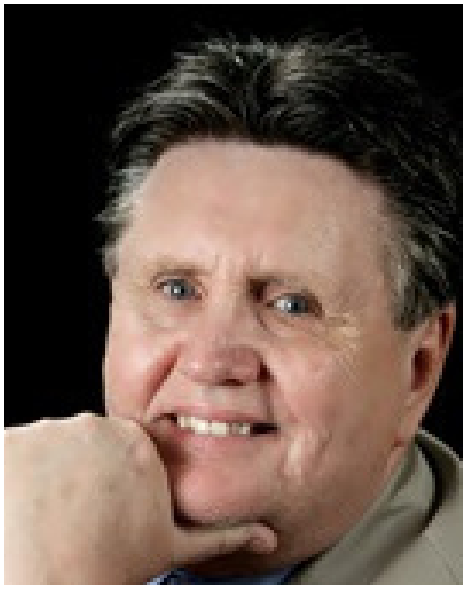
A church becomes mature not because it never disagrees, but because, when disagreement comes, it remembers to whom it belongs. It belongs to Christ, the wounded and risen Lord, who entered human hostility and answered it not with fear, not with vengeance, not with cowardice, but with truth-bearing, sin-forgiving, cross-shaped love.

That is the church's calling.

Not conflict-free.

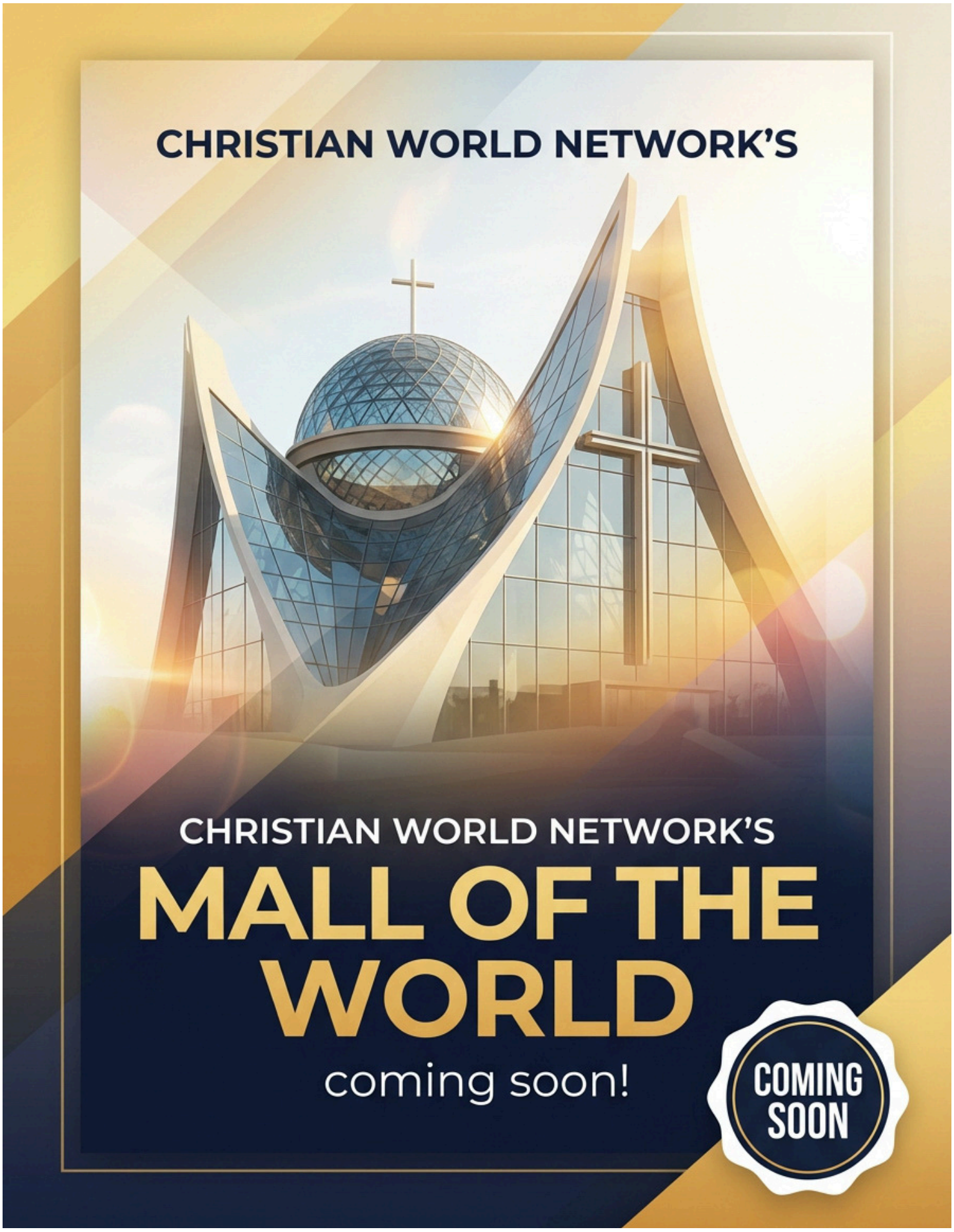
Conflict-faithful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David James Dunworth, S.D.G., is a Strategic Philanthropist, Kingdom Wealth Counselor, Managing Trustee of Trinity International Ministries, the Family Office Family of Faith, and Managing Publisher of Life College Press. He is an internationally acclaimed speaker, international best-selling author, and the leader overseeing Trinity Brands' associated products, services, and mission-driven initiatives.'

As Global Trustee for Trinity International Ministries, David serves more than 24 rural Ugandan villages through education support, orphan care, entrepreneurial training, church ministry, health clinic development, schools, agriculture, and community advancement. His suffix, **S.D.G.,** stands for Soli Deo Gloria, ***"To God Be the Glory."***


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When Worship Is Interrupted

How Churches Can Respond with Calm, Courage, and Conviction

We live in uncertain times. The public square is tense, the national mood is often divided, and ordinary disagreements can quickly become emotional confrontations.

Churches are not immune to this atmosphere. Sanctuaries that were once assumed to be places of quiet refuge may now face moments of interruption, protest, accusation, or fear.

This does not mean churches should become paranoid. It does mean they should become prepared.

A worship service is a sacred gathering. It is also a public assembly of people who deserve to worship without intimidation, confusion, or disorder. Pastors, elders, boards, ushers, greeters, and church security teams must think wisely about what to do if a service is disrupted. The goal is not to create a fortress mentality. The aim is to maintain peace, uphold witness, and act with spiritual maturity.

Prepare Before the Moment Comes

The worst time to create a plan is during a crisis.

Church leaders should discuss possible disruptions before they happen. Who gives instructions to the congregation? Who contacts law enforcement? Who escorts a disruptive person out if necessary? Who speaks to the media? Who helps children, elderly members, or vulnerable attendees remain calm?

These questions should not be left to impulse.

Just as churches prepare for fire, medical emergencies, severe weather, or child safety concerns, they should also prepare for intentional disruptions. A simple written response plan, reviewed with key leaders and volunteers, can prevent fear from taking control.

Do Not Escalate the Situation

When someone disrupts a worship service, the natural instinct is to react. People may feel angry, insulted, frightened, or protective. But the first rule of response must be restraint.

Do not shout back. Do not threaten. Do not argue from the platform. Do not allow untrained members to rush toward the person. Do not turn a disruption into a physical confrontation unless there is an immediate threat to life or safety.

A disruptive person may be seeking attention, reaction, or video footage that can be used to portray the church negatively. A calm congregation denies them that advantage.

Scripture reminds us***, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"*** according to **2 Timothy 1:7**. That sound mind matters in moments of pressure. Courage is not panic in religious clothing. Courage is disciplined peace under strain.

Let Trained People Respond

Every church should know who is responsible for handling disruptions. That may include trained ushers, designated safety volunteers, off-duty law enforcement, or a formal security team.

The congregation should be taught not to swarm, argue, or improvise. Most members should remain seated, pray, sing, and wait for direction. This protects everyone. It protects the worshipers. It protects the staff. It may even protect the disruptive person from unnecessary harm.

Security should be calm, measured, and professional. The objective is not punishment in the moment. The objective is to restore order with as little conflict as possible.

Keep Worshipers Calm

One of the most powerful responses during a disruption is worship itself. A congregation that begins singing, praying, or sitting quietly communicates something stronger than anger. It says, *"We are not ruled by fear. We are not surrendering this sacred moment to chaos."*



Anti-ICE agitators disrupted service at Cities Church on Jan. 18, 2026. (Don Lemon/YouTube)

Document and Communicate Wisely

In today's world, the incident does not end when the person leaves the building. The story may continue online, in local media, or through social media posts.

Churches should designate one spokesperson before any crisis occurs. That person should be prepared to speak clearly, calmly, and truthfully. Congregants should be encouraged not to speculate online or speak for the church without authorization.

Video documentation may also be helpful. When the congregation remains calm and the disruption is recorded accurately, the truth is easier to establish.

Hold Mercy and Accountability Together

Christians are called to forgive. They are also called to protect the vulnerable, preserve peace, and respect lawful order.
There may be times when legal accountability is appropriate. That decision should be made carefully, with counsel from



Minnesota Church Disruption January 18, 2026 - Armstrong Interview

church leadership, local law enforcement, and, when needed, legal advisors. Mercy does not require churches to ignore unlawful behavior. Forgiveness does not mean future worshipers should be left exposed to repeated disruption.

The church can pray for those who oppose it while still taking responsible steps to prevent harm.

Pray for Those Who Disrupt

This may be the hardest part.

After the anger, after the fear, after the confusion, Jesus still calls His people to pray for their enemies. The church must not allow disruption to turn its heart bitter. The goal is not to hate the protestor, mock the troubled person, or demonize the angry outsider.

The goal is to remain faithful.

When worship is interrupted, the church has an opportunity to show the watching world what calm conviction looks like. Not weakness. Not rage. Not fear. But courage rooted in faith, order guided by wisdom, and love strong enough to pray even for those who disturb the peace.

WHAT DOES PSALM 23 "LORD, MY SHEPHERD" MEAN?

A Psalm of Trust, drawn from the story of God's rescue, guidance, and eternal love.



"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack."

PSALM 23:1

GOD IS OUR SHEPHERD-KING

God is both a gentle Shepherd who cares for us and a powerful King who protects and leads.

We can fully trust Him.

PSALM 23 FOLLOWS THE EXODUS JOURNEY

Like Israel's story, our lives follow a pattern:

OUT (God rescues) → THROUGH (God guides) → INTO (God brings into rest)

Psalm 23 speaks to God's faithfulness through life's wilderness and into His peace.

HE PROVIDES

"Green pastures & still waters"



God gives us rest, strength, and renewal—just as He provided manna and water for Israel.

→ We will not lack what we truly need.

HE PROTECTS

"Valley of the shadow of death"



Even in dark, dangerous seasons, God's presence removes fear. His rod and staff defend and guide us.

→ We will not fear evil.

HE HONORS & BLESSES

God as our Host



Before our enemies, God prepares a table, anoints with oil, and overflows our cup with blessings, peace, and victory—

→ We are deeply loved and honored.

HIS LOVE PURSUES US

"Goodness and mercy shall follow me"



God's love doesn't just follow—it actively chases after us, all the days of our lives.

→ We are pursued by His love.

HE DWELLS WITH US



The promise is not just help in hard times, but a forever home in God's presence—now and for eternity.

→ We are never alone.

THE HEART OF PSALM 23

I WILL NOT LACK
God provides.

I WILL NOT FEAR
God protects.

I WILL DWELL
God stays forever.

Our confidence rests in who God is and what He has done.

✝ JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus perfectly fulfills Psalm 23, laying down His life and rising again to lead us from sin, through life, and into eternal life with Him.

JOHN 10:11 • ISAIAH 53 • 1 PETER 2:25

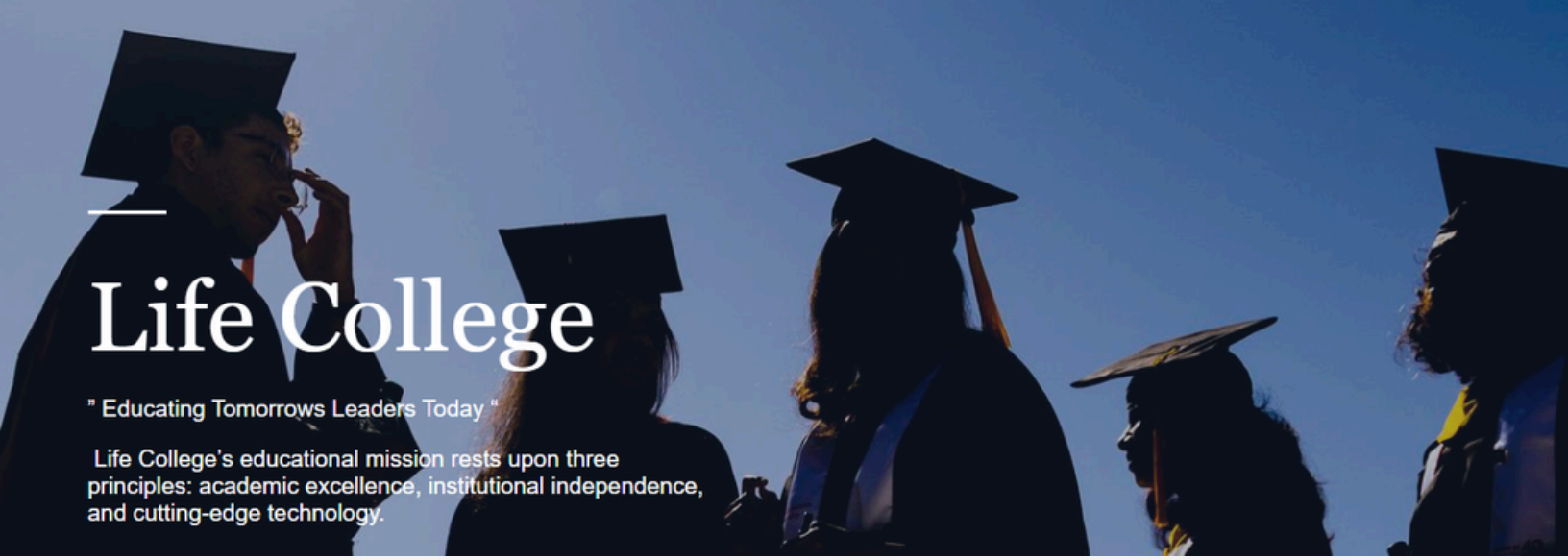
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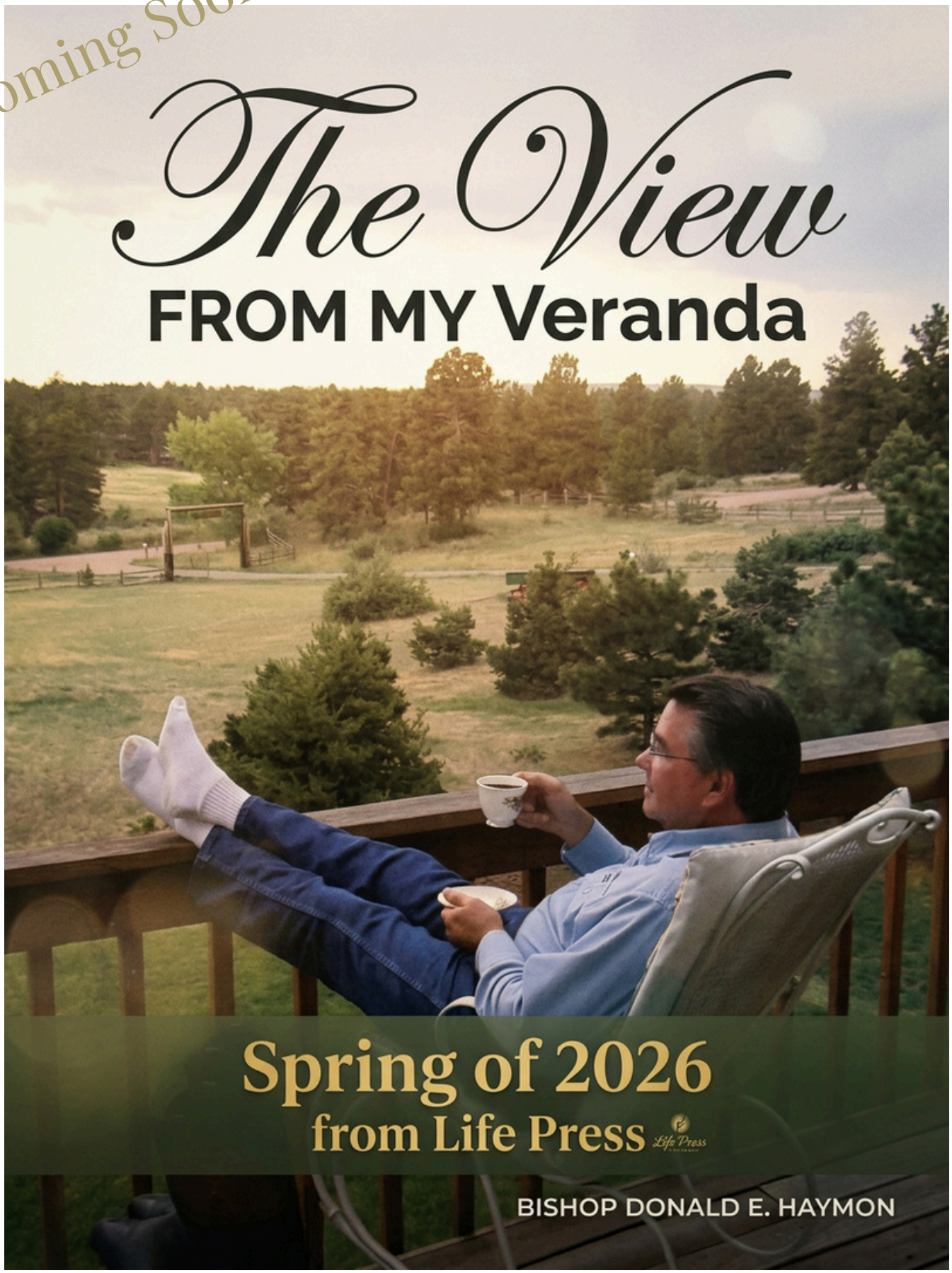
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Bernie L. Wade, PhD — Chancellor



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Spring of 2026
from Life Press
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May 2026 Calendar

Full 2026 Welcome Booklet

MAY

May 3

1 PM FIRST SUNDAY – MC Bishop Wade

- **Opening Prayer –** Tina Burke
- **Scripture Reading –** Daisy Wade
- **Worship –** Hands of Praise
- **Special –** Loidy Zacarias
- **This is my Bible**
- **Exhortation –** Bishop Wade
- **Speaker –** Barney Phillips
- **Lord's Supper**
- **Prayer/Giving-** Ministry Team
- **Announcements**

May 9 Quarterly Women's Meeting – TBA

May 10 – Youth & Children Classes 11:30 AM

1 PM – MOTHER'S DAY - MC – Rebecca Goins

- **Opening Prayer –** Elizabeth Goins
- **Scripture Reading –** Isabella Goins
- **Worship –** Life Worship
- **Special –** Elijah Wade
- **This is my Bible**
- **Speaker –** Bernie & Blanca Wade
- **Mother's Day Presentation –** R. Goins
- **Prayer/Giving –** Ministry Team
- **Announcements**
- **Dinner in Life Center**

May 17 1 PM DISCIPLESHIP SUNDAY – MC Daisy Wade

- **Opening Prayer –** Beth Beasley
- **Scripture Reading –** Edith Swinford
- **Worship –** Life Worship
- **Special –** Elijah Wade
- **This is my Bible**
- **Exhortation –** Hans Reynolds
- **Speaker –** Keith Fanza
- **Prayer/Giving –** Ministry Team
- **Announcements**

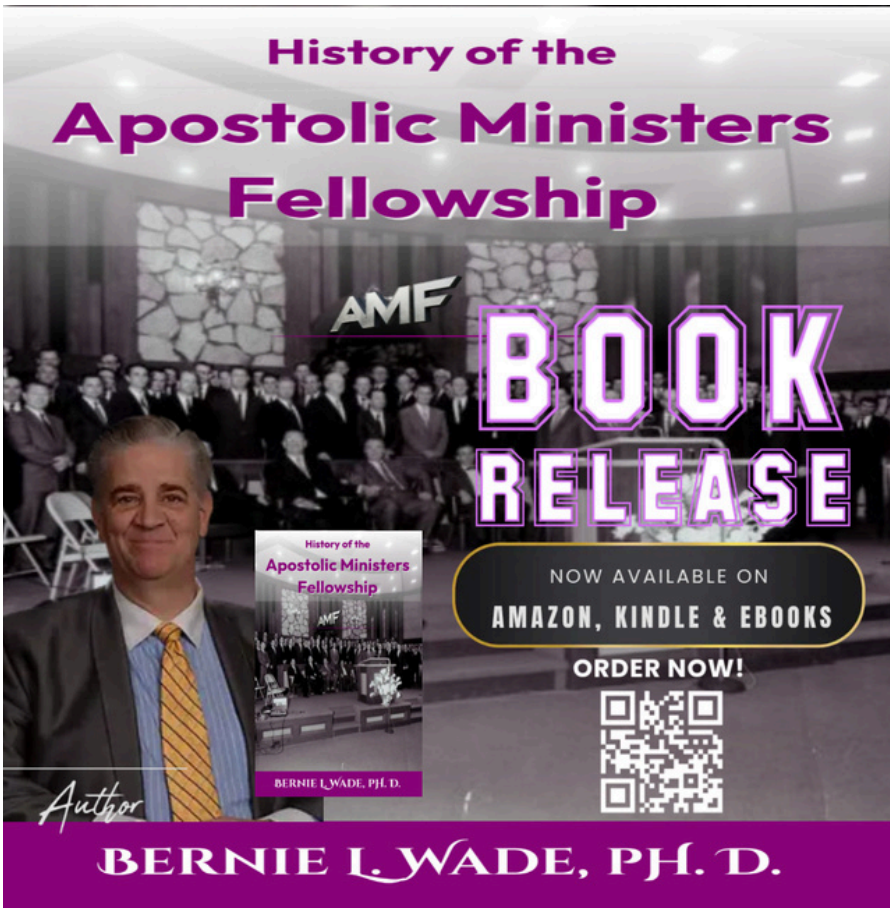
May 24 – Youth & Children Classes 11:30 AM

1 PM YOUTH & CHILDREN SUNDAY – MC Blanca Wade

- **Opening Prayer –** Elizabeth Goins
- **Scripture Reading –** Nevaeh Zacharias
- **Worship –** Life Worship
- **Special –** Reynolds Trio
- **This is my Bible**
- **Exhortation –** Colton Reynolds
- **Speaker –** Carmen Wade
- **Prayer/Giving -** Youth
- **Announcements**

May 31 1 PM WORSHIP SUNDAY (MC Josh Phillips)

- **Opening Prayer –** Daisy Wade
- **Scripture Reading –** William Goins
- **Worship –** Life Worship
- **Special –** Hans Reynolds
- **Prayer/Giving –** Ministry Team
- **Announcements**


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The Cosmic Ego:

Are We Really the Point of It All?

by M. Alexander Kaine

SHOWCASING



'It tells us that we are the reason for everything.'



There's a quiet arrogance woven into the human story—a whisper that's followed us from cave paintings to cathedrals, from ancient myths to modern manifestos. It tells us that we are the reason for everything.

That the unfathomable expanse of existence, the spiral galaxies and the single-celled organisms, the forests and the depths of unnamed oceans—all of it was staged for us.

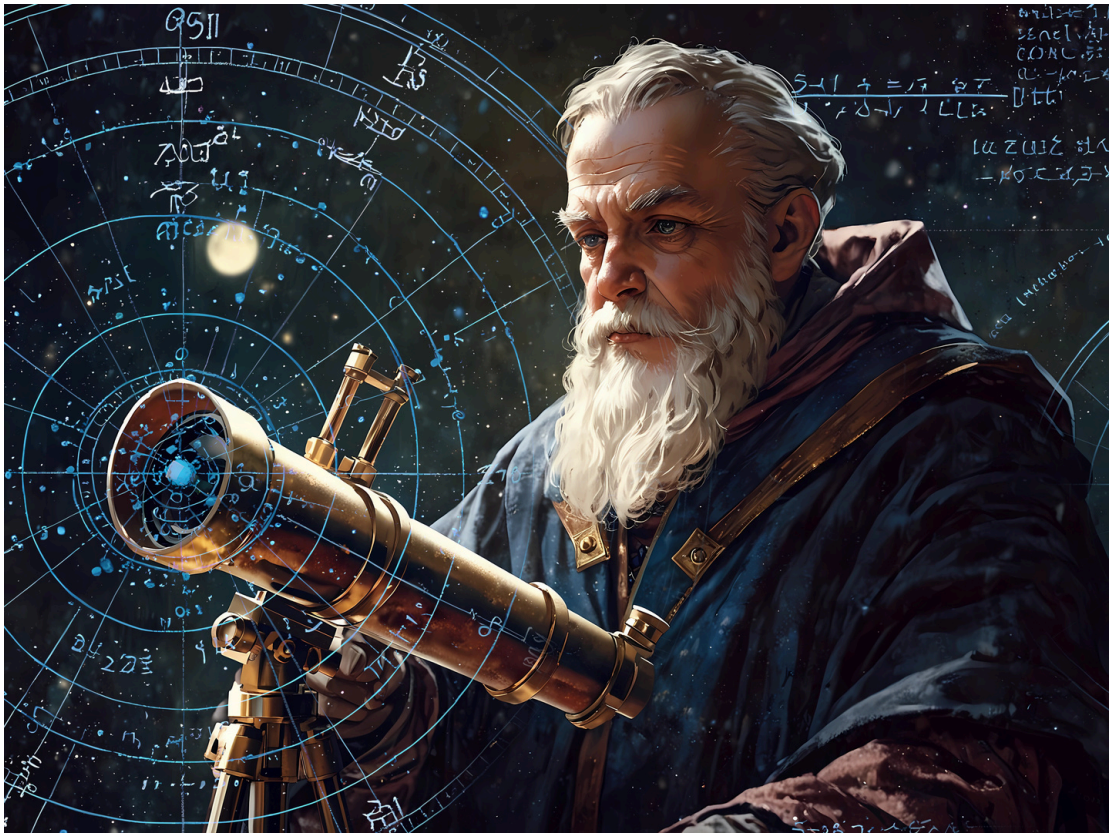
The universe as theater, humanity as the sole audience, and the star.

But what if that story is wrong? What if it's not just wrong, but spiritually dangerous?

The Narcissism We Inherited

For centuries, Western thought placed Earth at the literal center of the cosmos. When Copernicus and Galileo dismantled that

illusion, you'd think we might have also questioned our spiritual centrality. We didn't. We simply traded one form of self-importance for another. The Earth may orbit the sun, we conceded, but surely God's eyes are fixed on us.



This belief—that creation exists primarily for humanity—has had consequences. It severed us from the living world. Animals became resources. Forests became lumber. Rivers became power. If nothing else possesses inherent sacred value, then nothing else demands reverence. We could extract, exploit, and discard without moral weight. The natural world became a stage set to be struck after we finished our performance.

“When Copernicus and Galileo dismantled that illusion, you'd think we might have also questioned our spiritual centrality.’

Thomas Aquinas, the 13th-century theologian, saw this differently. ***"The whole universe in its wholeness,"*** he wrote, ***"more perfectly shares in and represents the divine goodness than any one creature by itself."***

Not humanity alone. The whole. The beetle and the redwood. The plankton and the thunderstorm. Each participates in something sacred, something that doesn't require human witness to matter.



St. Francis of Assisi called the sun "Brother" and the moon "Sister."



What Makes Us Think We're Special?

The honest answer? Our minds. We are the only species (that we know of) capable of asking whether we're special, which feels, in itself, like evidence of specialness. We compose symphonies, build telescopes, and write poetry about our own mortality. We name the stars and mourn our dead.

But this capacity for reflection doesn't necessarily mean centrality. A mirror can reflect light without being the source of it.

St. Francis of Assisi called the sun "Brother" and the moon "Sister." He addressed animals as kin. This wasn't poetic whimsy—it was a theological statement. If all creation flows from the same Source, then all creation shares a kind of family resemblance. We are not the parents of this cosmic household. At best, we're siblings. At worst, we're the siblings who forgot everyone else existed.

Grace Doesn't Conquer Nature—It Reveals It

Aquinas offered another insight that often goes overlooked: "Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it." Grace doesn't come on the scene to replace the natural world with something holier. It awakens us to the holiness already present.

always there—in the ordinary sunrise, in the starling on a power line, in the tree rooted in cracked concrete. We simply stopped seeing it.

Paul of Tarsus wrote that God's invisible nature has been visible since creation itself—"there for the mind to see in the things that God has made." Not in temples alone. Not only in scriptures. In things. In the material, the living, the wild.

This is a spirituality that doesn't require a degree or a denomination. It requires presence. The capacity to stand before a river without calculating its hydroelectric potential. To watch a hawk circle without reaching for a metaphor. To simply be with the world, and in that being, encounter something that feels unmistakably sacred.

Reconnection as Spiritual Practice

We live in an age of profound alienation—from each other, from ourselves, and from the earth beneath our feet. We've built environments designed to minimize our encounters with anything wild or unpredictable. And in doing so, we've cut ourselves off from one of the oldest pathways to transcendence.



Every day offers small invitations: the light shifting through a window, the sound of rain, the stubborn weed pushing through asphalt. These are not lesser revelations. They are not appetizers before the main course of human drama. They are the drama. They are expressions of the same creative force that sparked the universe into being.

What if our role isn't to be the point of creation, but to be witnesses to it? What if our gift—consciousness, reflection, language—is meant not for self-glorification, but for praise? For noticing. For saying, "Look at this. Look at all of this."

The Humility We Need

To release our grip on cosmic centrality isn't to diminish human dignity. It's to right-size it. We are remarkable—but so is the octopus, with its distributed intelligence. So is the mycorrhizal network beneath a forest floor, transferring nutrients between trees in a kind of underground generosity. So is the hummingbird's heart, beating 1,200 times a minute. We are part of something vast and interconnected and, yes, holy. Not the center. Not the purpose. A participant.

And perhaps that's enough. Perhaps that's more than enough.

The universe doesn't need us to justify its existence. But we might need its beauty, its strangeness, its relentless creativity—to remember what we've forgotten: that we belong here. That we always did. And that belonging doesn't require being the main event.

It just requires showing up, with open eyes, and paying attention.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Montgomery Alexander Kaine, known professionally as M. Alex Kaine, is a reclusive and camera-shy author whose writing spans marketing, leadership, wellness, and political activism. Though he rarely steps into public view, he occasionally lends his insight to selected works.

At the publisher’s request, he contributed his expertise to this article.


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Change in Your Church:
The Only Constant

At the close of every season, wise church leaders pause.
They do not pause because the mission has changed. They pause because ministry happens in real time, among real people, in real communities, under real pressures. The gospel remains steadfast, but the soil in which it is planted keeps shifting. Families change. Neighborhoods change. Communication habits change. Generational expectations change. The questions people bring through the church doors change.

'The gospel does not need improvement, but the church's methods often need examination.'

So, every healthy church must eventually ask a brave question:
What needs to change for us to bear better fruit?

Not everything needs to change. That is important. Some churches change too quickly, chasing trends, preferences, aesthetics, or novelty. Other churches refuse to change at all, confusing tradition with faithfulness and familiarity with fruitfulness. The wisdom is in knowing the difference.

A mature church understands this: the biblical message does not change, but the methods by which that message is communicated, embodied, and delivered may need to.

The Courage to Ask What Is Working

The first step is honest reflection. Is the church growing spiritually, relationally, and missionally? Are people being discipled? Are visitors returning? Are members engaged? Are volunteers energized or exhausted? Are ministries producing life, or simply preserving activity?

A church can be busy and still be stuck. It can have a full calendar and an unclear mission. It can maintain programs without producing transformation.



That is why leaders must be willing to look at both stories and numbers. Attendance matters. Engagement matters. Giving patterns matter. Volunteer participation matters. Small group involvement matters. Community connection matters. None of these measurements tells the whole story, but together they can reveal whether the church is moving forward or merely maintaining motion.



Good change begins with listening. Talk with the congregation. Ask what helps them grow. Ask what confuses them. Ask what feels missing. Ask where they are finding connection and where they feel unseen. Then look beyond the walls. What does the surrounding community need? What burdens are people carrying? What would make them feel welcome, understood, and spiritually invited?

Sometimes the church is answering questions the community is no longer asking. Sometimes it uses language people no longer understand. Sometimes it is offering programs that once served a purpose but no longer meet the moment.

That does not mean the church has failed. It means the church has an opportunity to become more attentive.

The Danger of Changing What Is Working

But there is another danger. Some leaders change too much, too often. Pastors, staff members, and ministry leaders live close to the work. They hear the announcements repeatedly. They review the sermon series, discuss the events, read the emails, attend the meetings, and rehearse the vision so often that it may begin to feel stale to them.

But the average member is not living inside the church's planning cycle. Many attend two or three times a month. They may miss key announcements. They may not read every email. They may not know the mission statement, the annual theme, or the leadership language as well as the leaders assume.

So, when leaders become bored with repetition, the congregation may just be beginning to understand.

This is where churches often make unnecessary mistakes. They change the slogan. They change the emphasis. They change the branding. They change the ministry language. They change the theme before it has had time to take root.

Consistency is not laziness when it is purposeful. Repetition is not weakness when it is forming memory. A clear vision must be heard many times before it becomes shared language.

Find the Thread and Hold It

Every church needs a simple communication thread. This is the short, clear, memorable idea that helps people understand why the church matters in their lives.

It may be something like:
"Helping Families Follow Christ."
"Faith, Hope, and Community."
"Where Grace Builds People."
"Growing Disciples, Serving Neighbors."
"Rooted in Christ, Reaching in Love."

The exact words must fit the church's identity, but the purpose is the same. A strong thread answers the quiet question people are always asking: ***Why should I belong here?***

That thread should appear in sermons, welcome language, website copy, social media, signage, small group materials, outreach efforts, and member conversations. It should not be a decorative slogan. It should become the organizing promise of the church.



'If leaders are tired of repeating the vision, the congregation may finally be ready to remember it.'



Change the tools when they are no longer serving the mission. Change the schedule when it no longer fits the people. Change the communication when no one is hearing it. Change the process when it creates confusion. Change the program when it no longer produces fruit.

But do not change the core message. Do not change the mission every season. Do not change the church's identity because leaders are restless.

Faithful Change Is Audience-Aware

Church change should never begin with the leader's boredom. It should begin with the people's needs and the Spirit's direction.

That means churches must ask better questions. Whom are we called to serve? What are they experiencing? How do they receive information? What obstacles keep them from connecting? What ministries are bearing fruit? What practices are draining energy without deep impact? What do we need to stop, start, strengthen, or simplify?



Faithful change is not trend-chasing. It is stewardship.

The church is not called to preserve methods that no longer serve the mission. Neither is it called to abandon what is working because leaders crave something new. The task is discernment.

Change what needs to change. Strengthen what needs to remain. Repeat what must be remembered. Listen before deciding—measure before assuming. Pray before moving.

The only constant in church life may be change, but the purpose of change is not novelty. The purpose of change is faithfulness.

A church ready for healthy change is not asking, “How do we become impressive?”

It is asking, ***“How do we become more fruitful, more faithful, more welcoming, and more useful to the people God has called us to serve?”***

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