

JAN/FEB 2020

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CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE



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WORD are You?



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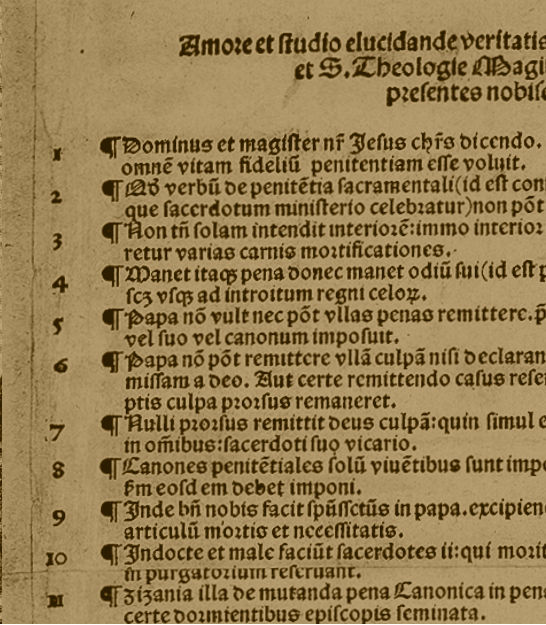
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You Can Make History

History inspires. When we look back, we find hope and vision for what lies ahead. Think, for example, about an Augustinian monk and a German professor of theology who lived 500 years ago. This man, Martin Luther, inspired a revolution around Scripture, known today as *The Reformation*. Luther embraced three simple ideas. If we embrace them, we could spark a similar revolution:

1 Luther believed **Scripture is central** to Christian faith. The Church and culture of his day made Scripture marginal. We understand; it is happening again today. Rather than use the Bible as our operator's manual, we prefer a user-friendly approach to God that avoids the hard work of reading the Word and learning God's will. We have sidelined Scripture and surrendered to the culture.

2 Luther showed us how to **be bold about what we believe**. In April of 1521, he stood before the imperial assembly of the Holy Roman Empire held at Worms, Germany. Johann Eck, assistant of the Archbishop of Trier, pointed to a table on which were stacked copies of the renegade priest's writings and asked if he was ready to revoke all. Luther's life was on the line. Nevertheless, he famously responded:

"...my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against

conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."

Five days of private conferences were held to determine his fate. Before the Catholic officials had reached a decision, Luther fled. In seclusion, he translated the Bible into German—the common language of his people—and did everything in his power to make it accessible to the common person.

3 Luther believed we should **use every means, including technology, to promote God's Word**. In his day, a most influential technological innovation was the printing press. Established in Europe 50 years prior, this invention would spread Scripture and the ideas of the Reformers everywhere. When Gutenberg first began printing the Bible, there were less than 30,000 books in all of Europe. By the time Luther was ordained as a priest, in 1507, there were an estimated 9 to 20 million books. Fifty years after Luther died, there were 150 to 200 million books in print. Luther utilized cutting-edge technology with a fervor. From 1517 until his death in 1546, he rolled out new publications every year. Between 1518 and 1520, he was able to distribute 300,000 printed copies of his tracts across Germany and into Italy and England.

The modern-day corollary to the printing press is the Internet. Through electronic media and social networking, information is spreading worldwide at a rate and vol-

ume that was until now unimaginable. As a result, we need to guard our children from misguided input; but at the same time, maximize its output to spread God's life-giving Word. If Luther were alive today, we can be sure he would do so.

Let us then recommit ourselves to the centrality of Scripture: to read, study, and live God's Word, to use every means at our disposal to proclaim that Word to the world, and in so doing make history for our day and generation.

To this end, I invite you to be part of the Alpha team that will read the entire Bible in just 90 days beginning in mid-January 2020, with the aid of the Internet. Whether you choose to read our *Bible in 90 Days* Bible, another version, electronic or hardcover, we will send you a daily email to encourage you on your journey and to help network you with other readers. It will take you about 30-45 minutes a day for three months and will strengthen the foundations in your life for a Scripture awakening. To learn more, email: mlucas@scriptureawakening.com.



WILLIAM P. CAMPBELL
Author, President, and Executive Director of Scripture Awakening.
Host of Beyond Words Radio.



It's Our Circuit for the Riding!

Many of us have a rich Christian heritage as we follow our genealogies back for many generations. I am thankful for my grandparents and their faith; I know good and well that without their influence I would definitely not be a Christian today. I owe them so much for forming my character into the person I am today. And I know I can learn so much from their lives lived in a different time from mine.

One such person is my great-great-grandfather Garner. He was a preacher in the Christian Church and was sent to minister to Native Americans on the Trail of Tears as they were forced to leave everything they had behind and walk to Oklahoma for resettlement. Imagine the hardships of working with people whose culture and language were far removed from your own; my great-great-grandfather was truly an early missionary. I am sure that he had to endure much of what the displaced natives endured: surely hunger, exposure to the elements, and disease not to mention a pervasive anger at the situation the Native Americans had been forced into. Not only did he have to deal with this himself, but he also had to minister to those who were suffering. Many, many people died on that

trek, and he would be the one there to help in their time of grief.

Arriving in Oklahoma before the Civil War, there were no towns or much of anything, I imagine, as Oklahoma/Indian Territory wasn't opened up to white settlers until 1889. But this didn't stop him from becoming a circuit rider preacher—travelling from one camp to the next to preach the Gospel. The hardship and sacrifice did not stop there. He settled his family in Oklahoma and would leave his wife and passel of kids for great lengths of time in order to carry out his God-ordained work—not knowing what he would find when he returned: his family could be lost to famine, disease, or hostile natives at any time. Yet he rode on.

This brings me to present day, my life and the lives of other Christians. For the most part, we are such a fragile bunch and thereby the Gospel suffers. How often do I hear Christians say they can't witness to someone because it might offend them in their current lifestyle? Or they don't have the time to spend reading their Bible every day? Or they won't go to church because they didn't get a warm welcome? Mission trips are out of the question be-

cause it is too hot, too primitive, too disease pervasive...I think you know what I mean.

We need to check ourselves! My great-great-grandfather rode a horse from place to place in the Oklahoma heat and freezing winters to talk about the One he loved most, Jesus. He had only his Bible in hand. How much more can we do with our ease of transportation and so much material at our fingertips, yes, just a phone screen away?

I want to become a modern-day circuit riding preacher, spreading the Gospel everywhere I go regardless of any hardship it might invoke. Join me in this quest!



SUSIE SHIELDS

JCM Executive Editor, Program Director Beyond Words Radio Administrator AWAKE! WNC.



Revival: A Realistic Hope

But as for me, the nearness of God is my good.

These words in Psalm 73:28 (NASB) beautifully express the greatest issue in revival—the nearness of God. In American revival history, some of the great movements have been described as plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit. They have certainly been that! It is much simpler, however, to think of the two wondrous things that happen in revival:

1. God draws near; and
2. The Word of God spreads like a mighty tidal wave of blessing.

From Scripture, it is even more than clear that there is a significant tie in revival between man and God. We read in James 4:8 (NASB), “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Isaiah 58:2 speaks of delighting in the nearness of God. When taken in context, these are vital passages relating to revival. They clearly demonstrate the relationship between seeking God and experiencing revival.

Just think of this incredible truth. When you and others become overwhelmingly concerned about God’s nearness, you begin to pour out your heart in prayer that He will draw near

to His people, and you do all else that God requires of you, He may Himself draw near in a true revival of gigantic proportions that is more wonderful and God-glorifying than anything you imagine.

A great many times in the past, God has drawn near in revival; and this revival has touched vast numbers that never previously sought Him.

Think soberly of this: what if you could set your heart, with a handful of friends, to seek His face in true revival and vast numbers around you could be wonderfully influenced as God responds? Just think of what happens when God draws near.

Conduct that appears perfectly acceptable to the masses now is no longer acceptable to them when Christ is near. Things that they never thought of doing before, they earnestly do now that His presence is manifested. The evil and stupidity that seems to have overtaken the nations in recent days will be seen in retreat when God is near.

Think of what happened in Wales in 1904-05. Many of the police forces organized themselves into Gospel music groups because the crime rate had fallen, so much so that their major work was in keeping church buildings from collapsing because of the vast numbers seeking to attend services. Day after day, judges laid white gloves on the podium indicating there were no crimes to try. Even the mules and ponies in the deep earth coal mines had to learn to respond to the transformed miners, who instead of driving them with kicks and curses, put their arms around them saying, “Pony dear, let us first sing a hymn and pray, for we are here today to serve the Lord Christ.”

Revival can happen! Revival must happen! Seek God’s face! The “nearness of God” is still our good!



RICHARD OWEN ROBERTS
Founding Director of International Awakening Ministries and author of numerous books on revival.



AWAKEN

A NORTH CAROLINA PRAYER GATHERING

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...”

JAMES 4:8 NKJV



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What the Past Can Teach Us About Teaching Scripture

Teaching Scripture to our children is important to their success in the world today. It is what will comfort them, guide them, and strengthen them for the trials of life. As we seek ways to teach our children about the Bible and what it says, we can't help but to examine how families of days gone by accomplished this task.

As a homeschool mom, I incorporate the Bible into our school days. If we take a moment and investigate the past, we will find that the Bible was an important part of the school day for all children. Dating back to the 1600s, the Puritans brought the Bible to America and incorporated it into every minute of their day.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we can find evidence that the Bible was used as a textbook and devotional in all types of schools. Home-schools, private, and public schools referenced the Bible in all subjects. Children learned their ABC's using A is for Adam, B is for Boaz, and C is for Caleb. Their days always started with the Lord's Prayer. Reading primers used catechisms to teach children to read as well as how to live an upright and moral life.

In the home, children were required to read and practice catechisms and recite Scripture verses. Parents felt it important to teach their children using the Bible. Prayer was given a place of honor at the dinner table and children were found on their knees before bed. Sundays were set aside for wor-

ship and rest. It was a way of life that is unfortunately a fleeting memory.

Parents today, myself included, find our days so full that we often forget where the Bible should be in our daily lives. We are just trying to get the kids to school on time and dropped off at the right place for extracurricular activities. Sometimes it can feel like we are just trying to survive instead of thriving.

Our children are no longer carrying Bibles to school or practicing catechisms each evening. They are learning A is for apple and B is for banana. Reading books no longer mention stories from the Bible; therefore, it has become crucial to get our children into the Word at home. We must take the time to read the Bible with our children, pray with them each day, and challenge them to memorize Scripture.

Teaching the Bible is no less important to the lives of twenty-first century families. It is just as essential today as it was then. Gather your family and dive into the most important book your children will ever read. Use a family devotion for learning on a deeper level. Challenge your family to memorize Scripture. The Bible may have been phased out of schools, but it cannot be phased out of our homes.



ASHLEY HOOKER

Freelance writer, stay-at-home mom, and supportive wife of her husband studying to be a pastor.

A Preacher and a President

James Garfield, 20th President of the United States, was a Gospel minister and clearly contradicts today's errant notion that religious leaders are not to be involved with civil government. Sadly, few know much about Garfield, partly because of the deliberate secularization of American history but also because of his short presidency.

Garfield was born in Ohio in 1831—the last president to be born in a log cabin. He grew up working on the family farm before going to work on a canal boat at age 16. An 1881 biography recounts an occasion when he unexpectedly fell into the river:

James was awakened out of a very sound sleep...He began to uncoil a rope to steady the boat through a lock it was approaching. The rope caught somehow on the edge of the deck and resisted several pulls that he made to extricate it. At last it yielded but, in the rebound, sent him headlong over the bow into the water...Death seemed inevitable. Fortunately his hand seized the rope in the darkness...and he drew himself, hand over hand, upon deck. He saw that he had been saved as by a miracle...What saved me that time? It must have been God. I could not have saved myself...During the time that he was thus reflecting he was trying to throw the rope so that it would catch in the crevice. Again and again he coiled the rope and threw it; but it would neither kink nor catch...It was but a few weeks after...the last immersion before James was quite severely attacked by ague, a disease that prevailed somewhat in that region... The captain settled with James... and James started for home...As he drew near the house, he could see the light of the fire through the

window...Looking in at the window, he beheld her [his mother] kneeling in the corner, with a book open in the chair before her...her eyes were turned heavenward; she was praying. He listened and he distinctly heard, "Oh, turn unto me, and have mercy upon me! Give Thy strength unto Thy servant and save the son of Thine handmaid!"

His mother's statement struck his heart, but it was two years later in 1850 before he became a Christian.

Throughout his life, Garfield was involved in multiple career fields. He was self-taught in law, served as a Union military general in the Civil War, and was a member of the House of Representatives—where he was a key leader in passing numerous civil rights bills to secure racial equality. He also served as an ordained minister during the Second Great Awakening of the American Church.

Garfield was inaugurated President on March 4, 1881, and later that year on July 2, he was shot by an assassin. The doctors were unable to find and remove the bullet, and on September 19, 1881, he finally succumbed to complications related to medical treatment. (Interestingly, Alexander Graham Bell attempted unsuccessfully to find the bullet using a metal detector.)

Garfield reminded citizens of the important role they played in keeping American government healthy and



strong, telling Americans:

[N]ow more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature...[I]f the next centennial does not find us a great nation...it will be because those who represent the enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation do not aid in controlling the political forces.

The life of President James A. Garfield should be an inspiration to Americans today, especially to Christians and Americans of faith.

<https://wallbuilders.com/a-preacher-and-the-president/>



DAVID BARTON

Founder of WallBuilders.com focusing on America's moral, religious & constitutional heritage.



The Bible: The Power of God, Yesterday and Today

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to live in the first century? To hear the Gospel accounts as they happened from someone who was there? The excitement must have been contagious. The Savior had come!

This wasn't just good news—it was GREAT news! People had been waiting centuries for this day, and now it had come. Before He left earth, Jesus gave those who believed in Him one command: Share the Gospel. Even though it cost many their lives, Christians in the first century couldn't wait to tell others.

The letters and eyewitness accounts of these first-century believers isn't just a record of historic events. There's power in the message they tell: God loves us and created a way for us to be with Him for all eternity—through Jesus Christ. That message changed the world.

For centuries, missionaries traveled to foreign countries to share the Good News. People needed to hear that they could have eternal life! Like the early believers, they put their lives in danger to tell others what Jesus Christ did for them. God's Word transcended language and cultural barriers to transform lives for eternity.

Today, the Bible still contains that power. It has traveled around the world and been translated into many languages, but the message of God's love and redemption hasn't changed. Paul calls the Word of God "alive and powerful... it exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12 NLT). Only God can use words written hundreds of years ago to speak to hearts in the twenty-first century and change people from the inside out.

As believers, we have been transformed by that power. We no longer live like we did before we knew Christ. God's Word teaches us how to live a new life. Our words and actions change. We have a higher purpose—to glorify God. That transformation goes with us wherever we go.

We especially take that power with us when we share God's love with others. The need is just as great as it was in the first century. People need to hear that they can have new life through Jesus Christ. It's still GREAT news! But we need to share it. Isn't it wonderful that God does not abandon us when we do? He goes with us as we step out in faith.

James 1:22 encourages us, "Do not merely listen to the Word...Do what it says." Obeying God's Word includes following the last command Jesus left with us on earth: to share it with others.

If that is your goal for this year, I have good news for you. You can start today. If you don't know how or where to even begin, we can help. Don't let another year go by without taking that step of faith and sharing the greatest news you've ever received. May God bless you as you do.



REV. JOHN B. SORENSEN, D.D.
President/CEO of Evangelism Explosion International.
www.evangelismexplosion.org



20-20 Vision: Seeing God Afresh

As a new year begins, we are often inclined to set our sights on new beginnings and purposeful pursuits. As you begin 2020, set your sights on the purposeful pursuit of fresh encounters with God; encounters in which God is invited to reveal Himself to you in ways you may have dismissed, overlooked, or never even considered. Psalm 119:18 is a wonderful verse to pray each day; “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” This invitation, expressed to God, can tender our hearts to truths God desires to reveal. Three areas to invite God to enhance your spiritual vision might include the desires *to see Him more fully as:*

1 The Creator of all that has ever been created.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

Awe-inspiring! God has always been. Our finite minds cannot comprehend such an infinite reality; yet it is true. As

we invite God to help us see Him more fully as the Creator of all, our perspective shifts regarding His magnitude.

2 A loving God who wants you to know Him.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Even though God created all that ever has been, He was overlooked by those in the world. His remedy was to manifest Himself in flesh in the person of Jesus. God desires for mankind to know Him, to trust Him, to love Him, and to be in a personal relationship with Him. Knowing our inclination to be “sight” oriented, rather than inclined towards faith in what is unseen, God put Himself in the midst of mankind as a man; Jesus.

3 A merciful God who made a way for you to be forgiven and reconciled to Him.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that

whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

This truth can transform the way we see God, ourselves, and the fresh beginning 2020 offers. God LOVES you and made a way for you to be reconciled to Him in a redeemed (right) relationship through His Son, Jesus Christ. Sin separates us from God; Jesus took our sin upon Himself, took it to the grave, and left it there—forever! (Romans 3:23 and 6:23). When we invite Jesus into our hearts, our separation from God no longer exists; a truth worth focusing upon.

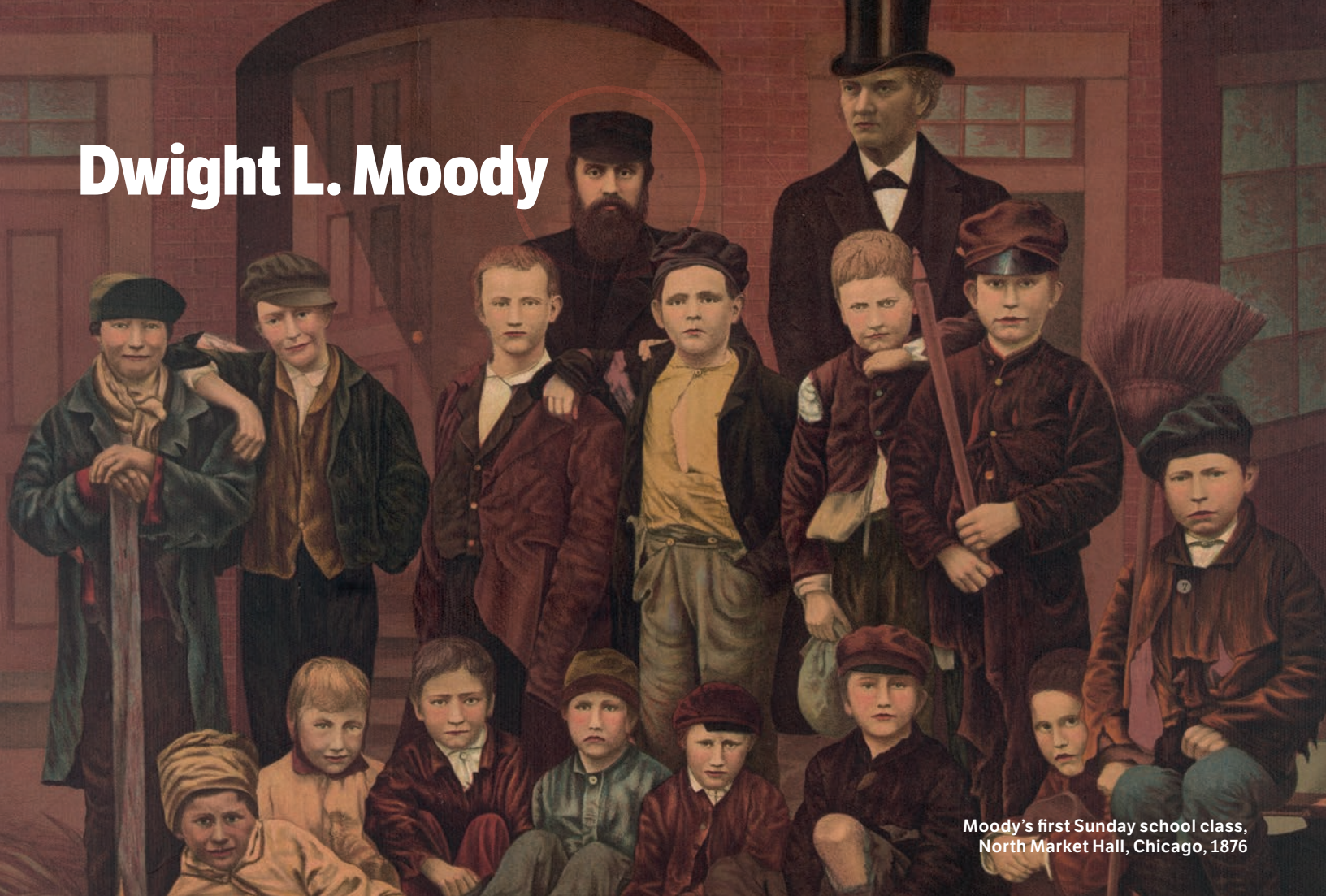
May 2020 launch a fresh start for your heart to encounter God as never before as you see His magnitude, manifested love through Christ and His tender mercy.



PATTY STUMP

Licensed Christian counselor, author, and speaker for women's events.

Dwight L. Moody



Moody's first Sunday school class, North Market Hall, Chicago, 1876

He was born in poverty but destined to enrich souls for eternity. He dropped out of school at 13; yet, he would establish a school, church, and publishing company, each of which still impacts the world. He was limited by his broken grammar and felt he should only work with children. Nevertheless, the Lord guided him to become one of the most persuasive orators and evangelists of the 1800s. His name was Dwight L. Moody. And his life reminds us that God will use any average person who depends not on his or her own abilities but on God's.

Born in 1837, Moody seemed to be the least likely person God would use to win a million souls in a 40-year span. His father, a small farmer and stonemason, died when Moody was four, and creditors swooped in to take all they could

from the struggling family. Moody dropped out of school after fifth grade to help support his family. When he was 17, after many job rejections, Moody traveled to Boston to sell shoes at the invitation of his uncle, Samuel Holton. He had no religious education, and his uncle required that he attend church. There, Moody trusted Christ but knew so little of the Bible that he was required to wait a year before he could join the church. In the words of his teacher, Edward Kimball,

I can truly say, and in saying it I magnify the infinite grace of God as bestowed upon him, that I have seen few persons whose minds were spiritually darker than was his when he came into my Sunday School class; and I think that the committee of the Mount Vernon Church seldom met an applicant for membership more unlikely ever to become a Christian of clear and decided views of Gospel truth, still less to fill any extended sphere of public usefulness.²

At the age of nineteen, Moody moved to Chicago to sell shoes with another uncle. There he set the goal of earning

\$100,000, which would be more like a million dollars in our day. He also got involved in a church on Plymouth Avenue, where he was told, “You can’t teach, but you can bring children.” Indeed, Moody could hardly read, much less teach. He rented four pews and filled them with kids from the streets. They were rowdy and smelly, and the church members became troubled. So Moody looked for another place to meet. He rented a saloon and invited kids from the worst part of town. With his offer of candy and pennies, 300 children gathered. Moody didn’t care how they came, as long as they were being reached.

When Moody’s Sunday School gatherings outgrew the saloon, he rented North Market Hall. He recruited teachers from surrounding churches. Eventually up to 1,500 children were attending his meetings. President-elect Abraham Lincoln visited one of Moody’s inner-city classes, and Moody’s reputation improved. The title *Crazy Moody* was replaced by *Brother Moody*.

When the Civil War began, Moody became involved with the United States Christian Commission of the YMCA and visited the battlefield nine times. Ministering among wounded soldiers, he learned to lead adults to Christ. Moody’s Sunday School gatherings needed a permanent home, so he started a church in Chicago—the Illinois Street Church.

In 1871, Moody met a gospel singer named Ira D. Sankey at an international Sunday School Convention in Indianapolis. The two would eventually collaborate in ministry. In October of 1871, the Great Chicago Fire broke out. Moody and his family fled for their lives. His church and home were lost, along with the homes of many of his parishio-

ners. Moody realized he had nothing left but his reputation and his Bible. He traveled to New York to raise funds; and within three months, the church was rebuilt.

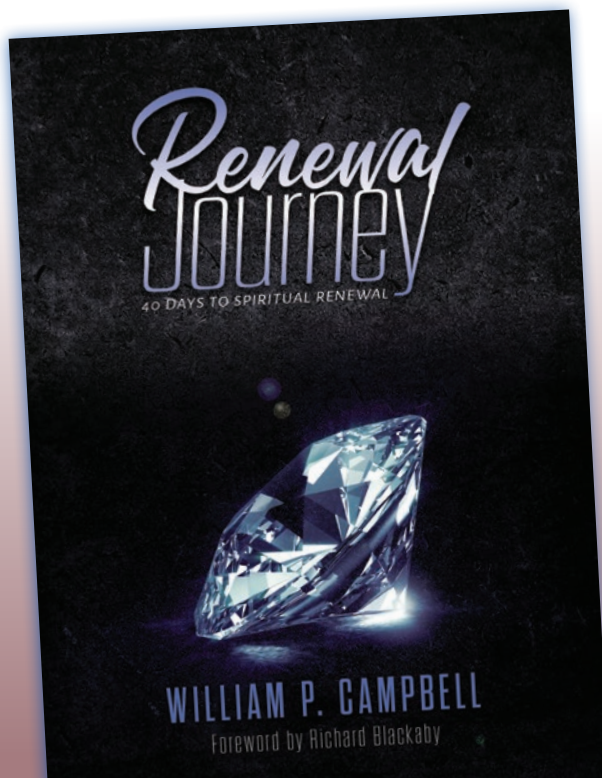
In the Spring of 1872, Moody traveled to London to conduct evangelistic rallies. The response in England was encouraging. He took a second trip there in June of 1873, bringing Ira Sankey with him. Over a two-year span, Moody’s direct and simple preaching coupled with Ira’s stirring singing drew thousands from around Great Britain. News traveled to America. When Moody returned to the United States, his meetings often drew crowds of 12,000 to 20,000. Even President Ulysses S. Grant and some of his cabinet officials attended a meeting in January of 1876. Moody conducted evangelistic rallies from Boston to New York and from Vancouver to San Diego.

One may ponder how God could so impact the world through such an uneducated and simple man. Proverbs 3:5-6 gives us the key: “Trust in the LORD with all of your heart...and he will make straight your paths.” If we hope to be guided and used by God, we must be fully surrendered to God. Moody once heard his friend Henry Varley say, “It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him.” Moody thought to himself, “Well, I will be that man.”³

¹ R.A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Pensacola, FL: Christian Life Books, 2008), 22.

² George D Johnson, *What Will A Man Give In Exchange For His Soul?* (Harrisburg, PA: Light of the Savior Ministries, 2011), 114.

³ R.A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Pensacola, FL: Christian Life Books, 2008), 22.



The above article about Dwight L. Moody is an excerpted chapter from an upcoming book authored by William P. Campbell, Founder & President of Scripture Awakening.

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The Fear that Stunts Spiritual Growth

We were seven years old—inseparable playmates—when Grandmother saw our pouty faces from the porch.

“What if,” she wondered conversationally, “Jesus came back right now and found those looks on your faces?” Whatever the reason for the little-girl tiff, it ended abruptly. We didn’t fear wrath as much at that age as we feared disappointing God.

Admittedly, both incidents bring a sheepish grin these decades later, but they also draw a stark contrast between the culture of that Western Christianity and the current culture that’s evolved since.

As recently as the 1970s and 80s, a healthy dose of Christian fear—and *healthy* is the arguably operative word here—was recognized as necessary for the soil of good spiritual growth. So as reluctant as I am to pose the question, it has to be posed. How do we balance the Scriptural equation for Christianity and spiritual growth if we subtract that element of a healthy fear of God?

We don’t.

Many Christians avoid the issue of fear these days like it’s a plague. We avoid it in our church buildings, in our homes, along our sidewalks. Concerned with exuding warm, fuzzy vibes of peace and love to others, we just skate right around the Biblical fact that Godly fear instills a life-altering desire for growth—not in perfection—but in reflection of Christ-like

holiness. Sadly, such avoidance carries a high cost. For starters, Scripture suffers as its warnings about fear become seriously misinterpreted. As a result, Christian lifestyles suffer as well.

And here’s the proof of it: neither God’s inspired Word nor its original recorders—even for the New Testament Church—shared our avoidance of fear.

They dealt with the matter head-on, teaching the reality of God’s righteousness and judgment to believers and unbelievers alike. God provides one of many examples of this when He speaks through John to His Church:

- *Remember [Ephesus] from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent* (Revelation 2:5 ESV).
- [Pergamum]...*repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth* (2:16).
- *I gave [Thyatira] time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality...I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works* (2:21-22).
- *Remember [Sardis], what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you*

will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you (3:3)

- *I will spit you out of my mouth, [Sardis]... So be zealous and repent* (3:16,19). (Brackets mine.)

Notice the absence of warm fuzziness in these passages, then notice that John doesn’t undermine Christ’s Words by glossing over their reality, severity, or call for application. Causing his audience emotional discomfort doesn’t concern John. He’s far more interested in “waking up and shaking up” listeners as a means of stirring them to repentance, pursuit of holiness, and faith in the grace of God.

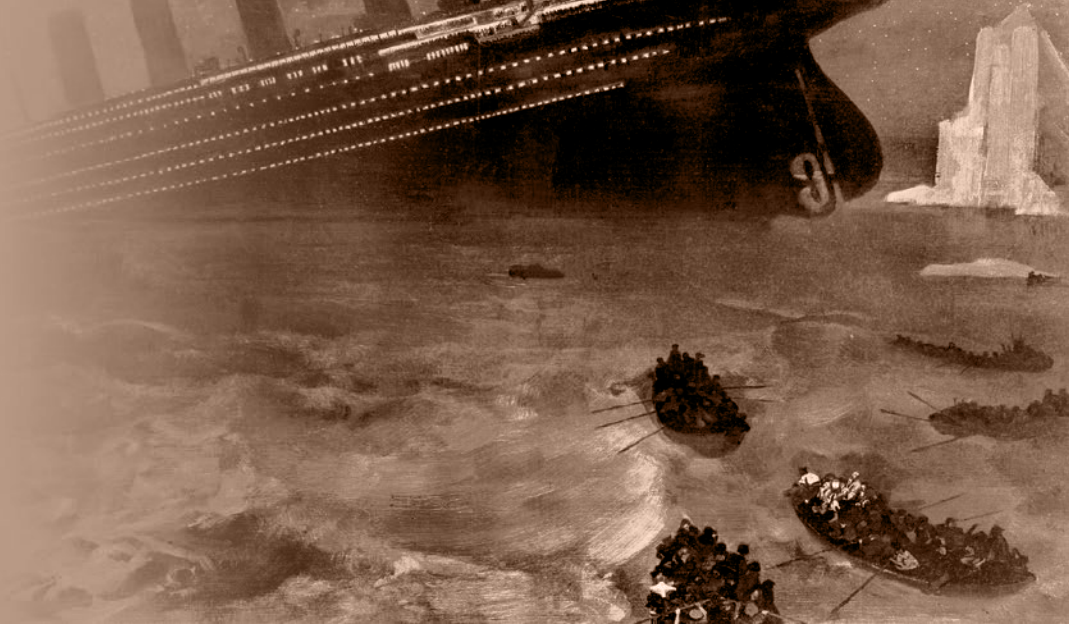
A lot of today’s theologians and Christian leaders have turned down the heat of the Message, downplayed the serious nature of God’s holiness, justice, judgment. Some even teach that, contextually, fear connotes only respect for God and never suggests that we should literally fear God. This is a grave injustice to the point of Christ’s sacrifice for us.

Is it any wonder, then, that 2020 finds us in a culture of chaos when *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight* (Proverbs 9:10)?



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Priorities: A Witness Amid the Sinking



Most of us know the story of the Titanic either from history classes we have taken or from the movies. We know many of the tragic and sometimes heroic stories from that fateful night. But for Christians, there is one story—of Scottish Pastor John Harper—that serves as a marvelous example of living one’s life to the end, all to the glory of God.

The Titanic was the largest and most opulent ocean liner of her day. She was the first to have an on-board swimming pool and her first-class accommodations could not be matched. Her passengers included many individuals of notoriety: among them were John Astor, the wealthiest man in the world, and the Straus family who owned Macy’s Department Store. But on that fateful night in 1912, she struck an iceberg and sank, killing over 1,500 people, mostly men. About 710 survived with many dying shortly after being rescued due to exposure to the elements.

In 1911, John Harper was pastor at Walworth Road Baptist Church in London and had spoken at Chicago’s Moody Memorial Church. His were the best meetings since the days of D. L. Moody. Harper had been invited back to the church to preach for three months and was supposed to

travel on the Lusitania; however, he decided to delay his trip and instead take the Titanic. He was forewarned of danger to come by Robert English who, while in prayer, had received an ominous impression of the disaster to come if Harper took this voyage. English pleaded with Harper not to go, but this did not deter Harper; he, along with his six-year-old daughter, set sail.

After the ship struck the iceberg and evacuation had begun, Harper wrapped his daughter in a blanket and put her on one of the few lifeboats. He told her that she would see him again one day. Harper knew he was heaven-bound. From there he gave his life jacket to another and was heard shouting, “Women, children, and unsaved into the lifeboats!” Facing his own death, he had profound thoughts of the lost.

Harper then ran along the decks as the ship sank, pleading with people to give their hearts to Christ.

It is believed he is the one who enlisted the orchestra to play “Nearer My God to Thee” as the tragedy unfolded. He would gather all he could around him and pray. Finally, he leapt into

the 29-degree water, swimming from one person to another imploring them to give their hearts to Christ. He continued to do so until he succumbed to the icy waters and moved on to his heavenly home at the age of 39.

Several years later a young Scotsman testified:

I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a spar that awful night, the tide brought Mr. John Harper of Glasgow, also on a piece of wreck, near me. ‘Man,’ he said, ‘Are you saved?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘I am not.’ He replied, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.’ The waves bore him away; but, strange to say brought him back a little later, and he said, ‘Are you saved now?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘I cannot honestly say that I am.’ He said again, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,’ and shortly after he went down; and there, alone in the night, and with two miles of water under me, I believed. I am John Harper’s last convert. (Paul Wilkinson, *The Berean Call*, November 2010, p.8)

You can read more about Pastor John Harper in *The Titanic’s Last Hero* by Moody Adams (Ambassador International, Greenville, SC, 2012).



Apologetics: What it Is; What it Isn't

More than a few times I have had someone say to me, “Alex, I don’t *apologize* for being a Christian!” Moments before speaking recently at a major denominational seminary, one of the school’s faculty escorting me said, “I heard them say you are an apologist. What are you apologizing for?”

Since even some pastors and seminary staff are unfamiliar with the subject, let it be stated, *apologetics is not about saying “I’m sorry.”* Actually, the words “I’m sorry” are traceable to the Latin phrase “*mea culpa*.” A “*mea culpa*” is an admission of guilt, as if to say, “I am culpable; I am guilty.”

This has absolutely *nothing* to do with Christian apologetics.

No one need assume that the apologist is somehow waving the white flag of surrender on behalf of Christianity. Apologetics does not mean to say “I’m sorry” for anything about our faith; quite the opposite! The apologist is showing that we have an authentic message. But we must also make sure that we present ourselves as authentic *messengers*.

Things to Avoid as You Cultivate your Apologetics Skills: While believers are called to use good *argumentation*, those

aspiring to defend the Gospel should never be *argumentative*. There is an old saying, “An argument to be won should never be more important than a person to be loved.” The content should *at least* leave a listener willing to hear more and hopefully be drawn to the Savior.

Apologetics is not a license to treat people abrasively. Hours of apologetics preparation is no substitute for prayer (without prayer, a person may be well-read, but spiritually powerless). Apologetics is not a substitute for the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the life of unsaved people. (It has been said, “You can’t argue someone into heaven.” Of course not, but the truths presented to people may be used by the Lord in drawing a person to Himself).

My personal definition of apologetics, fleshed out during these past 25 years of ministry is this:

Apologetics refers to content and methodologies which may be used by the Holy Spirit to contribute toward the discipleship and mobilization of believers,

and the evangelization of non-believers so that Jesus Christ is exalted and His Kingdom expanded.

If all of this sounds lofty or grandiose, be encouraged by the knowledge that one of the most well-known apologetics verses was written by the Apostle Peter and has been quoted by apologists everywhere. It was penned not by Paul, the theologian and philosopher, but by plainspoken Peter, the fisherman. Just like Peter, each believer has a role to play. More than ever before, believers must rise to the challenge of Peter’s words and equip a generation of believers to “always be ready.”

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (1 Peter 3:15b)



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Live Out Our Calling

I am a pessimistic optimist. Pessimistic because I believe there's no way around the fact that our world and culture are only getting worse. Jesus said so. In the days before the Son of Man returns, He said in Matthew 24 that things will get worse, not better; there will be chaos and turmoil.

We don't stop there, however—and this is where optimism comes in. Through prophets like Daniel (and the Apostle John in Revelation), God promises that history will ultimately end well for His people. The eternal kingdom will overcome the empires of humanity. Various human empires will come and go, but the Author of history is creating an empire not made with human hands—a kingdom “that will not pass away...[and] will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14).

With this vision of the future, the people of God can face the chaos and turmoil around us without fear and without hand-wringing. We too can face it, both individually and collectively as a body, with a commitment to live out our calling to Christ-like character amidst a “crooked and perverse generation” (Philippians 2:15 NASB).

Over about a thousand-year period—from the sixth to sixteenth centuries—there was a unique efflorescence whereby the culture-shapers were primarily theistic

in outlook. The world had never seen anything like it. That period enjoyed a remarkable pursuit of beauty, goodness, and truth in a wide array of arenas from education, art, music, literature, and architecture...to charitable endeavors such as the building of hospitals, orphanages, and nurseries...to the only empirically based science the world has ever seen. By contrast, in post-Enlightenment (which I sometimes refer to as the Endarkenment), we've seen the relativizing of beauty, goodness, and truth, as well as the loss of a moral consensus. No longer do the vast majority of people believe and live according to a theistic worldview.

The good news? The Gospel of Jesus Christ can shine all the brighter in this context. People today, just like people from the dawn of time, still hunger for the same things for which they've always hungered: to live lives of meaning and purpose, of security and significance. We want to know our time on earth matters.

Additionally, in our digital age, people's desire for authentic relationships is greater than ever. As the people of God, the Church still has the only satisfying answer to these deep longings of the human soul: a relationship with God Himself, through His Son. Thus, no matter how much our culture changes, the Church retains lasting relevance.

Peter Kreeft once noted that “Harvard and Hollywood” are now the major influences in our society, rather than the Church or the State. He's right when it comes to cultural institutions. But as he also noted in an interview, “The human heart was not designed at Harvard or Hollywood... [but] in heaven.”¹ And so we can rest assured that our Father and His Church will always be relevant to human hearts, regardless of the age or culture.

¹“Peter Kreeft's Conversion to Catholicism—Q&A,” Catholic Education Resource Center, 2013, retrieved from <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/faith-and-character/faith-and-character/dr-peter-kreeft-s-conversion-to-catholicism-q-amp-a.html>.



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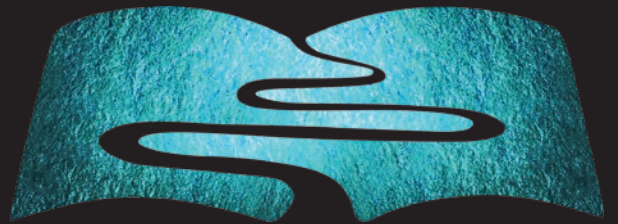
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Christianity: Then and Now

Wouldn't it be great to be able to spend some time with the first disciples and the early Church as they moved in the power of God's Spirit? They encountered not only the miraculous but knew God was both equipping and using them to bring glory to His Kingdom. We might stand in awe at all that was taking place.

There is so much we can imagine, but there is a lot we also know. In Acts 2, we learn what the early Church was like. Those believers devoted themselves to what the first disciples taught, they joined in fellowship, participating together in communion and prayer—sharing everything in common; those who had more sold it to help provide for those who were in need. They met every day and joyously praised God. These early Christians opened their homes to others, spoke the Truth of what they learned from the disciples, and trusted God for the results. And the results were abundant. Because of what others saw among the early believers, those “others” wanted to be a part of their group and were baptized into the faith.

Observers of the first believers recognized that they were committed to the

claim that Jesus Christ was the only Way to enter into a personal relationship with the Creator of the Universe. This common truth and relationship to Christ became the unifying force behind the movement. Early Christians stood apart from the world because they had been changed by the power of God. They were revolutionaries, transformed by the truths of Jesus Christ, their Savior.

If the same disciples or early believers were to visit our churches today, what might they see?

Like themselves, they would realize many believers spend time daily in prayer and devotional study, but that these now are more individualized. They might observe us coming together regularly for communion and prayer and dependence upon the church. They might find us involved in small groups as we seek God's heart through Scripture and prayer. While it is true that some church communities today focus on reaching out to help others, the visiting disciples would not find us shar-

ing everything in common. And they may find some of us being influenced by the teachings of the world rather than the teachings of Jesus Christ.

They might also realize our churches today are split into denominations; that there are beliefs that separate us rather than bring us together. They might wonder why the passion for telling others about Jesus has been so negatively influenced by the world. After all, they told about Jesus and changed the world. Perhaps the greatest difference they might find would be that there are many who doubt in *really* believing that with God, *all* things are possible (Ephesians 4:13).

While there may be differences, the message remains the same. Jesus Christ is the focus of our very being. Loving and valuing each person's worth and sharing the Gospel message is our purpose. This is our time to change the world.



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Depleted and Done!

When you're in the middle of the pile-up of daily stressors, is there anything in God's Word that will help?

Those women who lived in the time of Jesus did not face the same kinds of problems that we do today—but their souls were probably just as tattered and torn.

Let's take a look at one woman who'd tried every way possible to deal with her stressful situation and had just about lost all hope...**until she met Jesus!**

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." (Mark 5:25-28 NKJV)

Just from these few verses, can you

grab hold of all the reasons she was at her wits' end?

She'd had this stressful physical condition for a very long time, and you have to wonder about the phrase "suffered many things from many physicians." Were they disregarding her cries for help? Were they merely acknowledging her problem but offering no solution?

However it went down, we see that her physical problems were exacerbated by the response from doctors, along with the fact that she'd depleted her financial resources in pursuit of healing. On top of that, instead of getting better, she only got worse.

Although depleted and done with it all, there was something in her spirit that kept her from throwing in the towel. Somehow, she had the energy to hold on to a holy morsel of hope and reach out with a tired and weary hand.

That's the amount of energy it takes for you to do the same, my friend. Reaching toward Jesus with even a trace of hope will set you on the road to victory. If He doesn't change your circumstances, He'll change your heart with His presence to get you through them.

Maybe you're at a coffee shop right now or perhaps sitting at your kitchen table. I believe by faith, that God has drawn you to this article just as His Spirit drew this hurting woman to reach out to Him in faith that day. There is hope for living through the problems of this world and an eternal glory that awaits you in Heaven. Be encouraged!

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
(Romans 15:13)



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Dear *Journey* Readers:

Thank you for being a part of our Scripture Awakening family through the Journey Christian Magazine!

As we usher in a New Year, we have some exciting changes to help us continually improve and grow our magazine. We will be offering more articles by world-renowned Christian authors and speakers—including one longer, more in-depth feature article per issue. We will also be increasing the magazine size to 24 pages later this year.

Beginning in January, we will move to six issues annually to allow for these changes. It will be necessary to charge an annual subscription of \$19.95 for all NEW subscribers. However, current subscribers will retain their FREE subscriptions. This will allow for growth into markets all across the nation without creating a financial burden on current resources.

We look forward to what 2020 has to bring the magazine and you our readers as we *journey* through our Christian walk together!

