



JOURNEY

CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

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Light Birthed in Darkness

Light Breaks Through

William Campbell

To the Rescue

Cindi Wood

**Open Heart, Open
Home, Opens
Opportunities**

Pam & Bill Farrel

Special Issue

Tributes Honoring
the Life of Carole
Anne Hallyburton



Gifts for a King

As she blew the dust off the small chest, the memories flooded in once again. It was the last of the three—handcrafted and finely made from an exotic wood not found in their region of the world. As a young carpenter, she remembered that Joseph had noticed it right away, his rough hands carefully touching each hand-cut joint as he admired its craftsmanship. But now tears filled her eyes as she held the box close, dreading the moment when she would have to open it. It was a moment she had hoped would never come; and yet somehow, she had known better. The contents of the box were precious. Few could afford the luxury of the myrrh the wise men brought with them to Bethlehem so long ago. Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh—gifts fit for a king. She had always resented that last box and had stowed it away in a far corner of the

attic along with a few childhood toys and the cloth he was wrapped in on that first night, a few pieces of straw from the manger still entwined in its soft weaving.

She remembered that starlit night and the strange events that happened as if they were yesterday. Back then the three had seemed completely out of place. The local language was awkward on their tongues. Their finely made robes and tunics were exquisite and unusual in such a small town. The strangest thing of all was that they had seen a sign in the heavens that had brought them across the miles looking for him—for her child—and they bore precious gifts. Much like the shepherds, they arrived quietly, stepped cautiously into the dim light, and laid their gifts on the straw. Tears streaked their well-traveled fac-

es, leaving clean lines where the dust had been, as they knelt and worshiped (yes, worshiped!) the child she held at her breast.

The news had spread far and wide about that amazing night when the child was born, and she had hidden so many wondrous memories in her heart. Some had doubted the stories of “heavenly hosts” singing to “lowly shepherds”, but the story of the Magi and their gifts had been harder to discount. Their presence in the area had been noticed by many. They had even gone to the palace and met with King Herod. She smiled to herself as she thought about how people had quietly inquired over the years about what had happened to the gifts. People were always wondering.

Joseph, of course, had taken the gold and had kept it safely hidden, carefully



ABOUT JCM

Journey Christian Magazine is a ministry of Scripture Awakening. Scripture Awakening provides resources to help equip you to READ, STUDY, and LIVE God's Word, awakening you to its transformative power for your life, your community, and world.

PUBLISHER

SA Media Group, LLC

EDITOR

Dr. William P. Campbell

ART DIRECTION

Mark Lucas

WEBSITE

JourneyChristianMagazine.com

CONTACT US

512 North Grove St • Ste 202
Hendersonville, NC 28792
828-707-1469

publisher@journeychristianmagazine.com

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drawing from it for family needs over the years. Nothing extravagant, really—their small home in Galilee, a new place for his carpentry shop where the boy and his brothers learned the family trade; and at times, they had helped others who were in need or less fortunate. She had kept the frankincense; the little hardened “tear drops,” as they were called, that were made from the resin of the Boswellia tree which grew in the tropical regions of Africa and Asia. This rare and fragrant resin was often used as incense by the Temple priests as they worshiped the Most High. On a few occasions, like feast days or special celebrations, she had burned some in their home allowing the rich fragrance to gratefully cover the smell of boys and the pungent odor of the animals they kept in the yard.

She would admit that each gift, but one, was a perfect celebration for a newborn King. Gold, of course, was the symbol of divinity and a fitting gift for a king. Frankincense was an appropriate offering for lavish worship and symbolized holiness and righteousness. The myrrh, however, had troubled her heart, and she had hidden the small chest away and tried to forget that it, too, was a part of the gifts the Magi brought. Myrrh mixed

with wine made a bitter drink that relieved pain. It was also used during burial rights, wrapped with other spices around the body of the dead—an image her mind could never shake. Myrrh was a symbol of bitterness, suffering, and affliction.

She held the small chest close and reluctantly released the latch, the rich aroma filling the small attic as her eyes filled again with tears.

Her precious son was dead. She had watched as he was turned over by the Sanhedrin and cruelly executed by the Roman occupiers. She would never forget the horror of that afternoon—the hours of agony as her boy hung on a cross struggling to breathe. And then, crying out, as if in victory, “It is finished!” It is finished? As if this was it? In her mind, he was just getting started. The miracles, the crowds, his message of love—all had come to an abrupt and cruel end. And now, after all these years, she was pulling the chest of myrrh out of the attic to

be used with spices to wrap his body for burial—the body of her son, Jesus.

Things did not turn out, as Mary had thought they would. In the years that followed, the chest may have sat in a prominent place in the house of Joseph and Mary. Perhaps Mary loved to show it off and to tell the story of why it wasn’t needed after all. You see, Nicodemus, the disciple of Christ who visited him in the night, brought seventy-five pounds of “perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes” (John 19:39), and he and Joseph of Arimathea carefully wrapped Jesus’ body for burial and placed him in a nearby tomb.

But the Good News we all know is that the story doesn’t end there. In fact, the real story was just beginning because on the third day, just as Jesus had spoken, they found the empty tomb with the linen he was wrapped in neatly folded and left behind—the aroma of myrrh, no doubt, lingering in the air. That’s why we celebrate his birth, life, death, AND resurrection.



TIM BRYANT
Tim is the Vice President of
The Daniels Group. www.itwasonmymind.blog

Understanding REVELATION

• COMING SOON TO YOUTUBE •



The Light Breaks Through

The Lord of the Universe came into our world in what seemed the darkest of circumstances. His birth, though predicted, was almost completely ignored by His own people. Nevertheless, religious gurus traveled from the East to honor the Lord. Jesus' parents were warned in a dream that King Herod was scheming to remove the Messiah; they fled to Egypt. The enraged king then slaughtered innocent babies under two years of age in the vicinity of Bethlehem.

Nearly thirty years later, Jesus announced His mission publicly and His neighbors sought to kill Him. His ministry, though filled with miracles, became a source of increasing opposition until He was killed ruthlessly on a cross, suffering the death of a runaway criminal. And then He arose, piercing the darkness with the light of eternity, providing hope to all who believe.

As this glorious Lord continues His work through us, the same basic pattern emerges again and again. The simple, the lowly, the faithful follow in His steps through many difficulties and are rewarded greatly in the end. Think, for example, about His ser-

vant Carole Anne Hallyburton. Hers was a life of obstacles and challenges; still, she pursued God's call with a relentless passion. As an editor for Scripture Awakening and writer for Journey Christian Magazine, for example, Carole Anne used her pen to inspire us with truth and insight. When the managing editor position for the magazine opened up several months ago, she joyously stepped into the gap, volunteering her time to advance the cause.

Carole Anne was a fighter of the best kind. She sought every means at her disposal to help others know the joy of salvation and the love of God that had long filled her life.

Journey Christian Magazine became a major platform for doing so. She brought in writers, edited articles, gave keen advice about the magazine itself. She was just beginning to do renovations on the website when the Lord called her home, leaving us all in a state of shock.

How could God use her to bring so much of grace into the world and then suddenly remove her? We on the Scripture Awakening team had come to deeply appreciate her deep passion for God, her love for writing, her indomitable spirit, and the kindness that filled her heart. Yet, even as we mourned our loss, we came to see more fully what a gift she has been to the world.

I reached out to Carole Anne's parents, Carole and Pete, and quickly perceived one of the main reasons Carole Anne had become a champion over her personal challenges and so successful in life. Her parents believed in her, supported her, and most of all loved her to the end. On October 13, Carole Anne slumped into her mother's arms with a smile...and death was overcome by life. She was embraced by the Lord she had served so faithfully. The hope of eternity and the light of God had, once again, been birthed in the darkness.



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



Using the Holidays to Share Hope

The holidays are a wonderful time to thank God for His many blessings and celebrate what Jesus did for us on the cross. But it is also the perfect time of the year to share that hope and love with others.

After a difficult year, some may be struggling to be thankful or unable to find joy during a time of usual celebration. Perhaps they have lost jobs, been sick, or even lost family members to COVID-19. Even believers around us may feel disconnected from the Church and are discouraged.

Reminding others that Jesus is the reason we celebrate may not be enough. They need hope.

We know that true hope is only found in having a relationship with Jesus Christ and putting our trust in Him alone. We can let those around us who are hurting know that they can have that hope right here, right now, in the midst of difficult times.

1 Send a message of hope. If you send out Christmas cards, send a message of hope that points to Jesus as the reason for our hope. Include

encouraging Scripture verses. Write a personal message or special prayer. Let them know that you are praying for them—and do it. Ask God to open a door to share His love with each person you send a card to. Then be ready to share when that opportunity comes.

2 Reach out to someone who is hurting this season. Go the extra mile for someone who has experienced extra hardship this year. Offer to shop for a widow who can't get to the store or who can't afford it. Take a friend out to dinner or coffee and listen to their concerns. Cook a meal or offer to babysit for a parent who has not had an evening off. Share your God story with them or offer to pray before you leave.

3 Include others in your holiday celebrations. Invite a neighbor or a single friend to join your family for a holiday meal or offer to meet them at a special holiday service at your church. After being stuck at home for most of the year, many people are looking forward to getting out and socializing again, but in a safe way. Do as much as possible to ensure that the those around you feel comfortable and secure before engaging in spiritual conversations.

4 Don't forget those who serve. Begin a conversation with your hairdresser, waitress, or cashier about what they are doing over the holidays. Ask if there is anything that you can pray with them about. Offer a word of encouragement or invite them to your church for a celebration or prayer service. If appropriate, offer a tract with a generous tip. They may be struggling financially this year as well. Show them that you care about them.

5 Give the ultimate gift. In the season of gift-giving, remember that the best gift that we can give anyone is the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Demonstrating God's love is good, but it falls short if we don't follow through and tell people the reason for the hope that we have and ask if they want to receive it. Most people won't object to hearing the Gospel message if we ask permission first.

Let's not be afraid to share the greatest hope we have this holiday season.



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

Scripture Lights a Fire: Jesus, the Word, the Light of the World

Some fires begin with just a spark. In the mid-1940s, in Waco, Texas—during the fear and unrest of World War II—one such spark ignited a movement out of the Baylor University campus, and its effect can still be seen on the spiritual landscape in Waco today.

In 1945, at prayer services held before classes began, a group of student leaders cried out to God for a spiritual revival on Baylor's campus. During their times of prayer, the Holy Spirit laid it on their hearts to begin holding revival meetings where they preached the truth of Scripture. The meetings caught fire.

A group of students—unproven in ministry and unproven in life—may seem an unlikely bunch to begin a revival movement, but that's just what happened. These "unlikely" revivalists carried a passion to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Because of their commitment to be bold and not shrink back, God used them to ignite a fire.

We see another example of revival in the book of Nehemiah when the people gathered, and Ezra read from the book of the Law.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people

stood up. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen!' while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground...all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law (Nehemiah 8:5-6, 9b NKJV).

What we see here is the beginning of revival in the land of Israel, and it was sparked by the Word of God! Likewise, we have got to get back to the basics of worship and the Word if we are going to see revival in our land.

The first-century Christians showed how powerful the basics can be. They were known as "uneducated and untrained men," yet they rocked the world! How did this happen? Because "they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13 The Living Word).

We will never live in victory by only memorizing a few favorite Bible verses. We must consistently take time to saturate ourselves with God's presence and His Word. His Word must be written on our hearts, and we must be commit-

ted to applying it in every area of our life (see Psalm 40:6-8; Ezra 7:10).

Just as in the mid-1940s, our nation today faces uncertain times. But this provides a ripe harvest field for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So many are searching for answers, for peace, and for hope. These are found only in one place—the Cross of Christ.

I believe God is looking for a new generation of leaders who will respond to the call of the Holy Spirit and usher in a new revival movement—unlikely leaders who will not shrink back from the challenges they face.

Jesus came into this world as our Light of the World and as the Living Word. It is only in Him that men receive the law (truth) and the restoration of relationship (grace) that enables us to walk faithfully with God in the richness of our callings.

Let's get to know the God of the commandments and be renewed in our hearts and minds by Him. And let's begin a new revival for the history books!



DOUG STRINGER
Founder and President of
Somebody Cares America.
www.somebodycares.org

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— B90 Intern Michael Shotwell

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What's Spilling Forth from Your Life? The Benefit of 'Bumps'



Have you ever caught a glimpse of yourself in the rear-view mirror of your circumstances? I recently caught a glimpse of myself, and what I saw was a case of the uglies staring back at me. Angst robbed me of peace, while my attitude permeated a pit perspective. My actions, and outgoing verbal dribble, were ugly and undeniably displeasing to the Lord. Maybe you've seen the uglies spill out of you as life brought a divinely appointed bump or two your way.

When we see our less than best coming to life, it's important to pause and recognize our need for a heart adjustment and spiritual realignment; not defeat or condemnation, but realization that something is in need of spiritual attention. Life is too short to get sidelined by *stinkin' thinkin'* and pit dwelling. As someone once said, "*Get over yourself!*" As a Christian, this is a delightful invitation; bringing the realization that it is Christ who lives in us (Galatians 2:20); and He desires to spill forth from us throughout the bumps and blessings that life brings.

Lamentations 3:22-24 reminds us that God's mercies are new every morning; daily He invites us to begin again with Him lovingly leading the way through hearts surrendered to Him. Proverbs 12:28 states; "In the way of

righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality." God lovingly allows us to be bumped by life; inviting us to consider where our hearts are in regard to our relationship with Him. Psalm 119:30 states, "I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set my heart on your laws."

This is where spiritual, relational, and emotional wellbeing, as well as peace, are found: surrendered in heart, yielded in will, and attentive to God's leading through prayer and the personal application of His Word. In turn, His light shines forth from our lives; far more attractive than the uglies of self-absorption!

Matthew 5:14-17 proclaims, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." This world needs God's transformational touch—His light that is illuminated through those who walk out life according to His Word—touching hearts, healing hurts, and extending hope to those who are searching, lost, gripped by darkness.

Life will bump each of us and something will spill out—often the uglies! It can be tempting to cry foul, fight back, fret, express entitlement, and cultivate resentment. To what end?

May it be that Philippians 1:27a grips our hearts and yields blessings when we're bumped; "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." Oh, may it be that others see Christ shine forth from us as we walk out our lives in the light of His Truth!

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere (2 Corinthians 2:14).



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

Get on Your Feet

Medical scientists tell us the human foot consists of 26 bones, and every one of them are vital to balancing your body and giving your body the ability to walk. Feet are so important to help you get where you're going but have you ever stopped to consider how important your feet are to God?

God's Word tells that your feet are not just important to God, but if they take you where you should go, they are beautiful to God! Read what Isaiah says about your feet:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns" (Isaiah 52:7 ESV).

Look down at your feet right now. Think about what those feet can do for God and where those feet can take you for God. As you ponder where God wants you to go, consider these three important points from the prophet Isaiah.

FIRST: your feet have a message to share. God thinks your feet are beautiful because they are the feet who "...brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of hap-

piness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'"

In other words, the message your feet bring is the message of the Bible. That message is the message of Jesus. That message is the message of Christmas. That message is the message of Easter. That message is the message called "The Gospel."

SECOND: your feet have a mission to fulfill. God does not ascribe beauty to your eyes, lips, or face, but rather, He speaks of the beauty of your feet. Your eyes can look upon a world that needs God, your ears can hear about a world that needs God, and your lips can even talk about a world that needs God; however, none of that matters if your feet do not take you out into the world so lost people can hear the Good News of Jesus.

FINALLY: your feet have a master to serve. The message we are to share as

our feet takes us into the world is very specific: "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7, ESV) The message is short, only three words, but every word is vitally important.

It is not that any god reigns, but rather it is your God that reigns. It is not just that your God is around, or your God shows up occasionally. The message is "Your God reigns!" He rules, is in charge, and in complete control. The destiny of every single human being who has ever lived or ever will live is in His hands. It is this God that we serve, and this God that we are to proclaim, and this God that we are to share with others.

Look down at your feet one more time. There are many miles to walk, many places to go, many people to tell, and many stories to share. The world needs every foot available to go across the street, down the road, and around the world so that others can hear the Good News of peace and salvation that only comes through Jesus. Now is the time to get on your feet!



DR. JAMES MERRITT
Pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, GA; hosts worldwide broadcast *Touching Lives*.



CAROLE ANNE HALLYBURTON

1970-2020

Soul Sister

After becoming a Christian, many of us have experienced meeting someone for the first time, yet it seems like we have known them forever. The closest analogy is that of a “Soul Mate” —they are, so to speak, our “Soul Brother” or “Soul Sister.” That is who Carole Anne was to me.

About a year and a half ago, Carole Anne approached me about writing for Journey Christian Magazine. I asked if we could speak on the phone and her response was that voice communication was difficult due to her cerebral palsy. Our communication occurred via text and email. But through that, we became close friends. Later, I actually drove to Charlotte to have lunch with her and discuss the magazine and our lives.

After that meeting, I told Carole Anne that if I lived closer, we would be best buddies and hang out together all the time. We thought alike, had the same motivations, and shared many Christian passions. When I had to step

down from managing the magazine earlier this year, she was a natural choice to replace me—and she took on the magazine with gusto!

All her writing and everything she did was with unparalleled passion! All was truly a labor of love; and I, to this day, do not know how she did all she accomplished in her life with her disability trying to hold her back. You would never know she was hampered by cerebral palsy unless she told you.

Carole Anne is a bright and shining example for all of us on how to walk out our Christian lives and to not let anything thrown at us hinder us in what God has called us to do. She has shown us that no matter what, we are called to promote the Kingdom passionately—no matter what our circumstances.

I’m so thankful for our sisterhood, but I miss her dearly. My solace is that I can see her dancing in Heaven now without hindrance and cannot wait until that day we will be reunited.

— **Susie Shields**

A Tribute

Although Carole Anne Hallyburton had physical disabilities that were clearly visible, you would never have known by anything she said about herself or expected in the way of treatment. Her silence about cerebral palsy wasn't because she was uncomfortable with it. On the contrary, she had accepted it long ago. And she normalized it as a form of gentle leadership for the rest of us. Carole Anne assumed that everyone could get used to her labored enunciation or, if not, we could communicate by text on a digital device.

Carole Anne was appointed Student Council president when I was dean at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. During our meetings someone would hold a laptop to zoom in anyone not there. Someone else would take notes. And when Carole Anne wanted to say something, we all listened as best we could and asked her to confirm what we thought she was saying. That became our normal. And it was a beautiful picture of mutual respect for God's gifting. The same kind of dynamic took place when we pulled together a team for the Bible Journey project. I might simply mention in passing that talking on the phone wouldn't be a good option or that I would be "translating" for Carole Anne during discussion. She assumed we'd all catch on—and we did.

I actually never asked Carole Anne about her disabilities until well into our relationship as professor and student. She never mentioned it. It never came up in conversation, in her papers or in our council meetings. Then in February 2016, she represented the student body at the annual trustee meeting. This involved an introduction. She would have given a standard bio, but I suggested they might be interested in some of the challenges in her journey. She agreed. Carole Anne supplied me with a two-page summary of her life, beginning with her birth. It was a complicated beginning that kept Carole Anne from needed oxygen for ten minutes! The doctors thought she wouldn't survive, or, if she would, "it" would be a mindless vegetable. They were recommending that the family avoid the inevitable hardships of allowing "it" to live.

I couldn't read that word "it" without choking up. I was sitting next to a stellar student from Carolina and Gordon-Conwell, president of our student body, and a woman gifted to serve the Church in Christian education. The trustees were visibly moved as I read her piece.

Later, Carole Anne was selected by the faculty to give one of the student speeches as an exemplary graduate. I offered to read it for her, but she chose to read it instead. This audience was also visibly moved, as you can imagine. After you listened for a while, you could understand most of her words...and all of her heart.

On October 13, Carole Anne made a sudden departure from the life and ministry she had on earth. Her parents witnessed an immediate and surprising look of utter peace on her face. The medical professionals did what they were trained to do this time; they tried to keep her alive. But just as Carole Anne gently insisted on living 50 years earlier, she now gently insisted on leaving. We had talked often about taking Carole Anne to Israel. It turns out, she took a short cut to the Heavenly City.

In the Bible Carole Anne knew so well, 50 is a Jubilee year. It is a year of freedom and release, a Sabbath of Sabbaths when God's people would taste the restoration of all things to their original design. Not surprisingly, Carole Anne's exit was during her 50th year. It was time for heaven.

We honor Carole Anne and her parents, Carol and Pete Hallyburton. No one can know the challenges they weathered together over these five decades. The three of them courageously and without complaining accepted their respective assignments and lived them out with grace and gratitude. All of us think of Carole Anne in her new normal now, finally free to run and dance and sing. She has already heard the precious words from the One she served: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

— **Dr. Tim Laniak**
Senior Professor
Co-creator of Bible Journey
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Memorial Gifts

If you wish to make a gift in memory of Carole Anne, her parents requested that such gifts be directed to Journey Christian Magazine to help advance the cause. You may do so by going to ScriptureAwakening.com and clicking on the "Donate" link at the top of the home page. Under "Designate Donation" select "Journey Magazine." Scripture Awakening is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Donations are fully tax-deductible. Thank you!

A Shining Example

Carole Anne Hallyburton was one of my students at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, including Hebrew I and II, which she took as *electives* because she loved God's word, and wanted to read and study it in the original languages. What people don't know, however, is that I consider Carole Anne to have been one of *my* greatest teachers. What did I learn from her? Here are just a few things:

1 *Quit complaining and be filled instead with the joy of the LORD.* Carole Anne embodied this Biblical imperative in my classes. I never heard a single complaint from her (even when it would have been justified)! Whenever I am tempted to complain, Carole Anne, by her example, taught me instead to be grateful.

2 *If someone has a physical disability it does not mean that they necessarily have a cognitive disability.* This statement should be self-evident. I only realized my own implicit bias when I first met Carole Anne. I spoke slowly and loudly, revealing (much to my shame) my false assumptions. Carole Anne would have been perfectly justified in rebuking me (Hey, I have cerebral palsy, but I'm not deaf!), but she did not. Instead, over time, she allowed me to come to the realization of what I was doing, for the Holy Spirit to convict me and for me to change. I don't need to tell anyone who knew Carole Anne that she was smart. She maintained one of the highest averages in Hebrew I and II for that entire academic year and submitted first rate work in my "Interpreting the Bible" course.

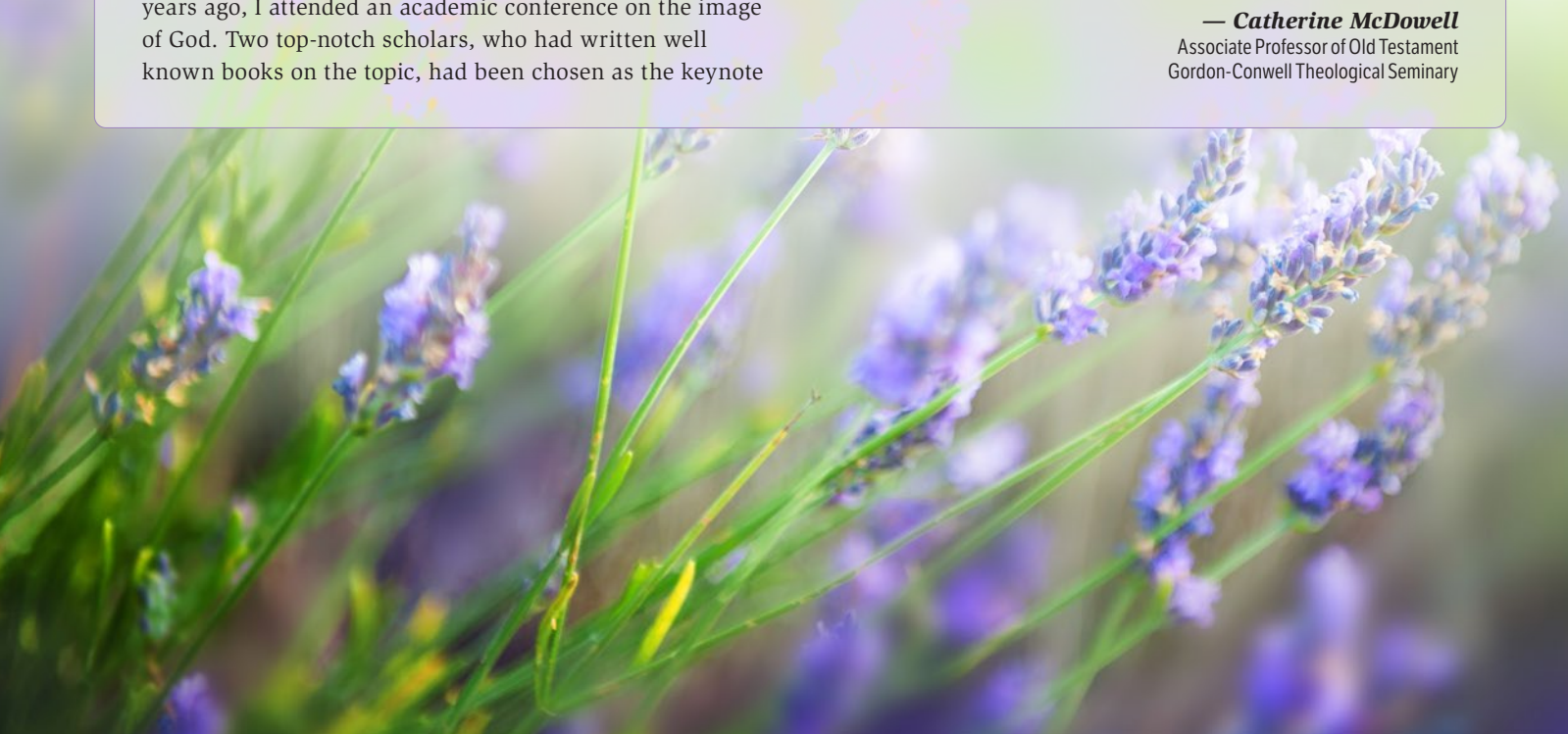
3 *People with disabilities are, without question, created in the image and likeness of God.* This I already knew, but meeting Carole Anne prompted me to make a point of the following when I teach on the *imago dei*. Several years ago, I attended an academic conference on the image of God. Two top-notch scholars, who had written well known books on the topic, had been chosen as the keynote

speakers. Both defined being created in God's image in terms of *function*—ruling over God's creatures, being fruitful, and multiplying, etc. During the Q&A, a man told a heartbreaking story about his severely disabled niece, who was unable to walk or speak. He said, "She will never be able to 'rule and subdue', nor will she be able 'to be fruitful and multiply'. Is she made in God's image?" The room fell silent for a moment. The speakers looked alarmed and began to back pedal as quickly as they could. "Well, of course she is...I mean...." At that moment it was clear to everyone in the room that *to be created in God's image could not be reduced to one's function*. Through the research I had been doing, I learned that the image and likeness language in Genesis 1:26-27 is, first and foremost, about sonship (and daughtership; cf. Gen 5:3). To be created in the image of God is a phrase that defines us *ontologically*. We are God's children *because He created us*. Period. That identity is not dependent on our abilities to carry out the creation mandate. Instead, the mandated functions are *derived* from being the children of the Creator-King. We are his children, whether we or not we are able to rule, subdue, and procreate.

Despite her physical disabilities, Carole Anne, however, *did* rule and subdue. Through her witness, her involvement in church planting, serving the church, her writing, and editing, she cultivated the gifts God gave her in order to advance his kingdom. So although Carole Anne was quite competent, she served as a reminder to me that limited physical function in no way impinges on our identity as children of God and as an inspiration to include this message in my own writing and teaching.

I will miss this dear student, teacher, sister in Christ, fellow worker, and true blue Tarheel (at some point Carole Anne and I figured out that we overlapped at UNC for 2 years!)—but only for a time, until we are reunited in the New Jerusalem! *Until then, my dear friend.*

— **Catherine McDowell**
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary



Thriving in the Darkness

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5 (ESV)

A light that thrives in the depths of darkness, blazes through murky bottoms. It cannot and will not be quenched. John 1:5 (The Voice)

Light shines best and brightest against the darkest backdrop.

For 50 years, Carole Anne Hallyburton lived among the darkness of cerebral palsy. For 50 years, she walked very slowly and only with the assistance of a walker. For 50 years, Carole Anne needed someone to cut her food. For 50 years, she fought to help people understand her slurred speech. In her high school, college, and adult years, Carole Anne struggled to type, taking more than one hour to type a simple paragraph of 50 words. For 50 years, Carole Anne lived among the darkness of cerebral palsy.

Yet, darkness never defined or defeated Carole Anne. Instead, Carole Anne thrived in the darkness because of her faith. Carole Anne talked and wrote frequently about her love for Jesus Christ and how He gave her the strength to persevere. Her faith in Christ and belief in His promise to never leave her or forsake her inspired her to graduate from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill while living by herself on campus. Carole Anne's commitment to teach

the Bible led her to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary-Charlotte, where she served as the student body president and graduated with highest honors. Carole Anne lived her life knowing that the darkness of cerebral palsy would never, ever overcome Christ's light and love in her life.

What about you? As you face the darkness of isolation, loneliness, disease, grief, national unrest, and natural disasters, to what or whom are you clinging? The Advent season points to the promise of a Savior, the Light of the world who offers love, peace, joy and hope beyond our wildest dreams. Do you believe that Jesus can do the same for you as He did for Carole Anne, shining His love and light among your dark circumstances and giving you the strength not only to persevere but to thrive? If that's a hard question to answer right now, that's ok. Ask Jesus to help you believe. Ask Him to help you mourn...grieve...heal. Ask Jesus to make Himself real to you so that His light and love forever dispel the darkness around you. For you see, the reality of Advent is not darkness; the reality of Advent is the defeat of darkness forever through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we praise You as the God who has defeated sin, death and darkness. We confess that, especially during 2020, we feel that death and darkness have won. As we watch the glimmer of each Advent candle, breathe Your hope and life in us and remind us that darkness never has...or never will...overcome Your light, life, and love. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

— **Rev. Deana A. Nail**

Colleagues and Friends

Carole Anne and I were high school classmates. We were back in touch in the last few months. "Encouraging. Bright. Determined. Inspirational. Passionate about God and the Bible." That is what Carole Anne is to me.

— **Kim Quantz**

Carole Anne and I met like friends of an earlier age—through the exchange of notes, quips and other bits of writing. Pen pals only in the age of technology and the world of the limitations of pain. I was astonished by her

story—what a whole and warrior soul! Her love for Jesus, her passion for His Kingdom as well as laughter created an immediate fellowship. We loved C.S. Lewis' world of Narnia and Aslan: the fierce, the tender, the untamed, the sacrificed, the great and golden Lion who got bigger as we got older. We shared pictures of lions standing alongside women in battle, in conversation, in watchfulness. Our favorite scene was in PRINCE CASPIAN, when Lucy meets Aslan again in the forest and she rushes to him in joy, hugging his mane and landing in a heap between his front paws. When I heard of her initial collapse, that picture formed in every detail in my heart. Carole Anne, called out of this world, rushed unencumbered into the arms of the One she loved best.

— **Rese Hood, M.Div.**

Campfire Cousin and Friend

Carole Anne is my first cousin. We grew up in a farming community in Western Rowan County, NC. We nicknamed our little piece of heaven "Painter Hill." Our grandparents' surname would live on forever in our family community. Our moms were sisters.

Being 13 years older than Carole Anne, I remember our first touch. Her mom was pregnant. I remember Aunt Carole placed my hand gently on her tummy so I could feel her soon to be precious child kick. And that is the life story of Carole Anne. She was about to enter a world where she had to fight. NOT *someone*...but the physical disabilities of cerebral palsy.

Determined, she was to let nothing stop her. Every inch of the way, her parents fought. They fought on her behalf to get her what she needed to survive in our sometimes-cruel world. She was brilliant despite being unable to breathe for 10 minutes following birth. God gave her what she needed to make it! Jesus, wonderful parents, and a personality no one could ever forget—compassionate, loving, and angelic, but a spunky side that was just so cute. To know her was to love her.

Life and age difference separated our relationship until about 4 years ago. A small Bible study group I was in met locally and I invited Carole Anne to join us one evening. Well the rest is history. Carole Anne loved the group! And of course, she became the shining light. She was a leader, prayer warrior, but so humble about her "smarts." "She's the smart cuz!" I remind her only to hear a faint chuckle of, "No, I am not."

Carole Anne became Editor of Journey Christian Magazine while our group was still meeting just before COVID 19 swept our world. Tragically our group stopped meeting. This was crushing to all...^obut especially to her! COVID 19 didn't stop my cuz! She would ride her four-wheeler through the woods behind our houses so we could visit outdoors. And I'd do the same. We'd settle all the world's problems. She called it "our office."

Our office is empty now. Drinking Cheerwine and eating Mac & Cheese will never be the same without you. No more text messages to brighten our days. The "I love yous" will continue only in our prayers. Shutting my eyes, I still see that sassy little walk that you did as you traveled gently with your walker through this world. NO more cuz! Dance high now with Jesus! I miss you.

— Myra Ireland

Daring. Deliberate. Devotion.

Listening to a heart tuned to the heart of God

I got to know Carole Anne Hallyburton through her involvement with Bible Journey and a whirlwind trip to the Museum of the Bible with Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

Later I got to know Carole Anne's heart when she asked me to help her update her website, His Own Heart Ministries. For Carole Anne, it was 'all about the heart.' Her weekly devotional blog was a brilliant and 'heartly' exhortation to all believers on prayer, fellowship, love, worship, and uplifting soul-care. You can know a lot about a person by what they write, and for Carole Anne, this was no exception. Her blogs were a window into her heart and soul. While she wrote on a variety of topics, it was evident her real love was the Bible. Her posts demonstrated over and over again her insight and wisdom on Biblical topics and how they related to issues that touched our lives. She helped us understand ourselves better and more

importantly to know God better. She helped us to better reflect and to navigate life well.

The byline for Carole Anne's blog is 'Daring, Deliberate and Devotion.' These statements beautifully identified her and her approach to the world. Carole Anne was daring. Without reserve, full of courage, yet winsome, she would open up about controversial topics. She often got some push back, but that never stopped her from speaking her mind about critical topics Christians need to wrestle with. Secondly, she was deliberate in the witness of her faith and her love for Jesus. Carole Anne had passionate Biblical convictions and her blog gave her a place to share those deep held beliefs with the world. Thirdly, her life was one of devotion. Not only was she a devoted daughter, sister, friend, and co-worker, but she was a deeply devoted follower of Christ. She was in love with her Savior and her love was contagious. If you had the privilege of knowing Carole Anne you knew that her deep faith and devotion to Jesus was the fuel for her blog. It was a powerful witness to the world whose mission was one to make a difference in the lives of many people.

— Maureen Laniak

Finding Joy Amid Grief

When the ball dropped welcoming in the year 2020, none of us imagined what we have now experienced. Joy and celebration turned to fear and isolation. Plans made with so many expectations were quickly laid aside as we replaced adventure filled trips with trips to find masks, gloves, and sanitizing wipes. This past year has seen hopes and dreams turned into loss and grief.

Life as we knew it quickly came to a halt. Loss of jobs, income, face to face conversations, lack of community events all impacted our lives in ways we each only know. The most difficult however, was and will most always be the loss of a loved one. An empty chair, lost conversations, and knowledge that there is a place in our hearts that cannot be filled changes our lives forever.

With the holidays coming quickly, it is important to recognize this year may be quite different. The losses we have encountered may change how we celebrate. Even so, it is possible amid hurt

and grief to find joy. In the pain of loss, we can make new memories, and through days of darkness, hope and peace can emerge. The wonder of grief is that we do heal—not completely, but enough to live with joy, experience new journeys, and celebrate our loved one—and the gift of God among us, Emmanuel.

There are so many ways to navigate grief and loss. It is possible to create new traditions out of old ones while we honor and celebrate the life and legacy of those we love. Below are a few suggestions.*

- Decide what decorations you want to put up. If you are alone, invite a friend to help you. Turn a task into a new treasured tradition.
- If your loved one always did something, give that honor to another family member to carry on the tradition.
- Do something that will honor your loved one. Volunteer at a place they supported. Help someone in need in your loved one's honor. Take something your loved one liked to a family gathering.

- Ask friends to do a random act of kindness in honor of your loved one. Have them tell you about it and celebrate it.
- Turn pieces of your loved one's clothing into pillows or ornaments.
- Have others write down a special memory. Talk about it. Celebrate the legacy that was left. Create a memory jar and put the papers in it. When you are feeling down, read a few and give thanks for the memories and the ways in which your loved one touched the lives of others.

Acknowledging our losses and our emotions while celebrating life and love—and the gift of eternal life, enables us to honor our loved one knowing the separation is not forever and one day we will see those we love again.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. Revelation 21:4

— **Janet K. Johnson**

*From my soon to be released book, *Surviving the Holidays While Grieving, Practical Tools for Experiencing Joy When Facing Grief and Loss*, Redemption Press, ISBN #978-1-64645-277-4. Expected release is mid-November 2020.

Carole Anne was a blessing to everybody that got to know her including myself. She was the sassiest, spunkiest, look on the bright side, always trying to be the bigger person that I have ever known. I feel truly honored to have known her and loved her. I miss her every day; but as I told my mama, she's up in heaven dancing now and rejoicing. I absolutely without a doubt know that she is in the presence of God strutting her beautiful wings. I'm sure they have a pink shimmer to them. She liked her pink.

— **Summer Earnhardt**
Cousin

Carole Anne loved Jesus, her family, and friends. She also loved animals. She was spunky, funny, sassy, quick witted, and determined. Not to mention, she was also very intelligent and quite a character.

— **Bernie Barber**
Friend & Bible study co-member

When she was in middle school, I was privileged to be Carole Anne's Math teacher. What a pleasure it was to have her in my class. She was ALWAYS a light in my class. Her cheerfulness and brilliance combined with her positive attitude always made my day brighter since she was not like most middle school students. Even though we lived in the same community, I lost contact with Carole Anne for many years. Much later, I was blessed to be in a Bible study group with her for several years. What a Godly woman she had become. The vast knowledge of the Bible she had acquired was evident; but as she shared her faith, it was humble and insightful. Her presence in our Bible study will be sorely missed by our entire group. I am so thankful that God blessed us with letting us spend time with her. She was special in all of our lives. She was a personal inspiration to me, and I am a better person having known her.

— **Diane W. Howard**
Friend & former teacher



Your Business, God's Business

I was greatly influenced by the testimony of George Mueller in my early years of ministry. This humble servant depended totally upon God to provide the resources for his orphanages, and God did. When I left my position at Talbot School of Theology to launch Freedom in Christ Ministries, I vowed to do the same. I have made no effort to raise money to keep the ministry afloat, nor have we spent any money advertising our products or services. There is no better advertisement than a satisfied customer. I have never gone where I haven't been invited, and I have never charged anyone for helping them find their identity and freedom in Christ. I wanted to make sure my motives were pure.

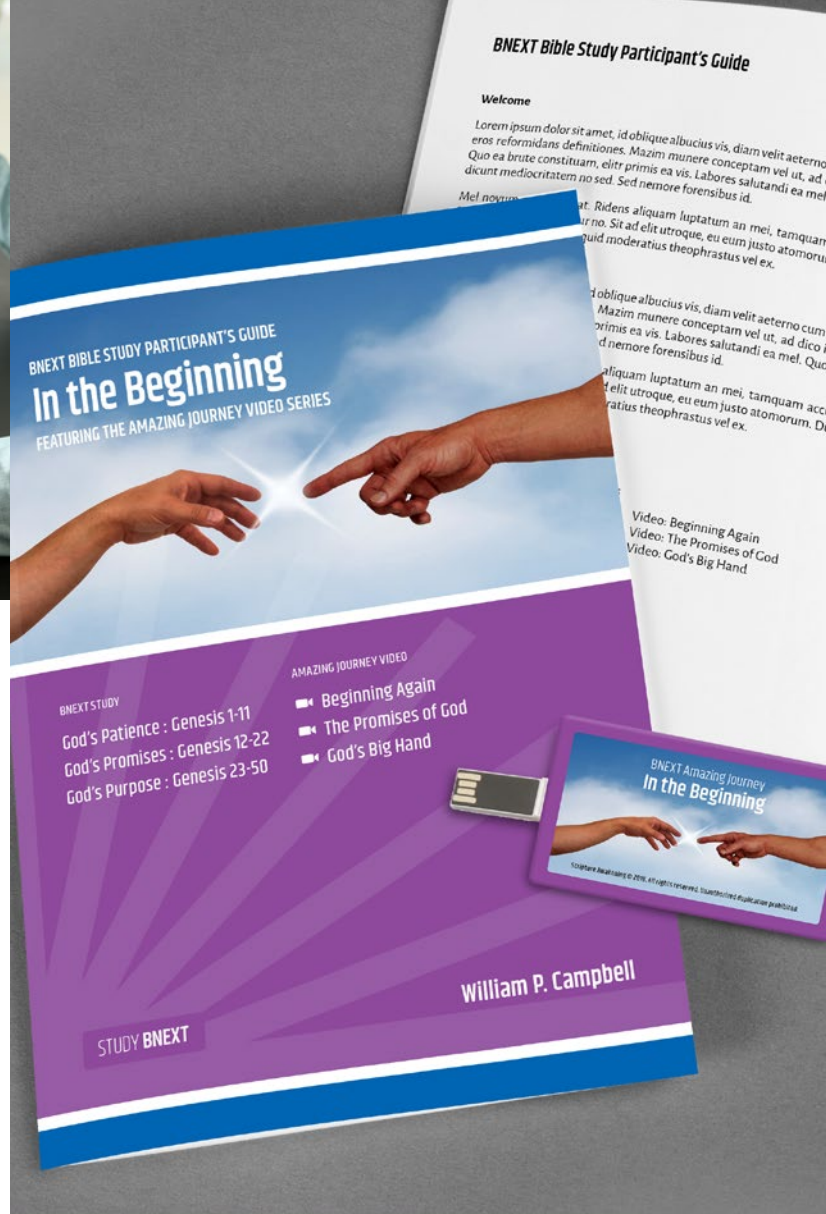
As of today, we have offices in 35 countries and representatives in many more. None of them are financially dependent upon our International office. It is a ministry suited for the pandemic since all our staff around the world work out of their homes. We have very little overhead expenses, no fancy offices, and no debt. I believe that God's ministry, done God's way, will never lack God's support.

If I could account for all we have accomplished by hard work and human ingenuity, then where is God? The only time God is glorified is when we bear fruit, which can only happen if we abide in Christ. How we conduct our work doesn't make any difference whether it is a for-profit business or a non-profit ministry.

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve (Colossians 3:23,24 NASB).



DR. NEIL T. ANDERSON
Best-selling author, Founder and President Emeritus of Freedom in Christ Ministries. FICM.org



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Children: Future World Changers

When you were a young child, did you ever think about what you were going to do to change the world? Was there something you became passionate about as you got older? My answer to this question is no. As a child, I never thought about what I would do to change the world. Today, I am a parent and I often think about what my children can do to make the world a better place.

For most parents, we think our children will only change the world when they are grown. This idea that our children cannot be a positive influence until they reach adulthood is where we go wrong. Our children are future world-changers, and the future is as close as the next minute.

Recently, my family moved to a little coal town in West Virginia where my husband is the pastor of a small church. The population in our town is about 900. Of those 900, there are many children. These children are living in homes with one parent or have a stepparent. Some of these children have experienced foster care because a parent was addicted to drugs. The saddest part is that some of these chil-

dren have watched their parent die from a plethora of bad choices.

My children would often come in from playing with other kids and say things like, “They need some Jesus.” When I first heard those words, I realized that my children could be a witness to others. Through their actions, words, and friendships, they could change the way other children feel about life.

I share this experience to say that we should not discount what our children can do in the present and the future. The simple faith of a child can bring a smile to another’s face. It can show another person how beautiful the love of God is. It can even bring hope into a life that has been filled with disappointments.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 22:6 (NET) to “Train a child in the way

that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” This Scripture is an encouragement to parents. It tells us that if we teach our children about God, pray with them, read Scripture with them, and take them to church, they will become equipped to change the world because the world will not change them.

Raising children to love Jesus is what makes them world changers. They are living in a world where evil is at every corner. The family unit is being attacked and a decline in morals is evident. Our children are not immune to the attacks of Satan. As parents, we need to recognize this and be the example of grace and hope that only comes from Jesus.

Your child could change the path of another person with a simple expression of their faith. One life changed will change the world.



ASHLEY HOOKER

Freelance writer, stay-at-home mom, and supportive wife of her pastor husband in West Virginia.



To the Rescue

And the Lord will rescue me from all evil and take me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

2 Timothy 4:18 GNT

The four of us sat at the kitchen table staring at the materials spread before us. I had purchased a bracelet making kit with hopes of sending my grandchildren back to their Tennessee home with a special memory-making moment with Gigi. And that moment included four bracelets to go on their little wrists to remind them of my huge love! With ropes, beads, and fasteners ready to be assembled I made my way down the list of EASY directions to make the bracelets. Soon realizing there was nothing easy about this project (with several steps of directions obviously missing) I called in the reserves—Lexi and Carly, my young teenaged neighborhood friends. Suspecting they knew the art of bracelet-making, I called them over. In a flash, they rescued us from this project gone awry.

Here's what impressed me about my young instructors. They didn't hesitate one second about running over and helping the children. They immediately engaged in conversation and made the whole project fun and memorable.

They also had difficulty with the directions (that made me feel better), so they improvised. With their creativity, this was not a foiled project at all but ushered in an experience in kindness and helpfulness. **How like Jesus!**

Did you know that YOU could be the rescue someone needs this holiday season?

Honestly, evil is lurking around in the shadows of loneliness, depression, sickness, fatigue, negativity, lack of fulfillment, and a variety of other heartaches. The Lord can use you to rescue someone from despair and point them to the hope of Jesus. There are no age, gender, nationality, or cultural barriers that block His love and His hope—none at all. But our willingness is required if we're going to make that huge impact on someone's life.

As those hurting are surrounding me this holiday season, I'm remembering the example of Lexi and Carly. They jumped at the opportunity to help, made it enjoyable, and in their unique approach brightened our day. Need

some ideas to jumpstart your efforts? Consider the following as personal or family projects:

- Fill zip-lock bags with snacks, gloves, socks, and water to keep in your car. Be sure to add a Scripture or two, or a small Bible to complete the contents. As you see those in need standing on the side of the road, place a "gift of hope" in their hands.
- Surprise those faithful workers at the county landfill by delivering warm ham or steak biscuits to them one morning.
- Take a care basket filled with snacks, Bible, socks, Kleenex, gum, and journals for note-taking to your local hospital's waiting room.

Be sure to ask the Holy Spirit to show you creative ways to share the love of Christ. Anywhere there are people, there's opportunity.



CINDI WOOD

Author of best selling Frazzled Female series.
www.FrazzledFemale.com



Releasing the Power of God

God has mandated that we walk in the power and authority that He gave us when we became His ambassadors in Christ. Genesis describes how God created man in His image, and tasked him with stewarding the earth realm. Genesis 1:28a (NASB) says, “God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.’”

When Jesus paid the price for our freedom from sin and death, He charged us to continue His work on the earth. Matthew 10:1 (NLT) describes this charge: “Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness.” Jesus gave believers a mandate to continue to establish His kingdom here on earth, and He gave us His authority to do so.

How do we come into agreement with this mandate? We must become a conduit of the power of God through Holy Spirit. Paul spoke about this in Romans 15:18-19: “I have won them over by the miracles done through me as signs from God—all by the power of God’s Spirit.” Paul was able to convince the gentiles of the Good News of Jesus Christ by the signs and wonders that followed him.

Jesus began to speak of this mandate before He went to the cross. He spoke over His disciples, releasing His authority to them. We see this in Luke 9:1-2 (NLT): “One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Matthew 10:8 (NLT) said, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!”

It is clear that Jesus’ power did not cease when He returned to heaven, but He gave the command to continue the work that He began and equipped us with His authority and power to do so. As believers in Jesus Christ, we can access all that He paid for us to walk in. As we extend our faith, we can connect with the power of God to see deliverance, healing and miracles.

In Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT), Paul urges us to embrace this truth. “I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.” This is resurrection power!

As we believe, it will be done according to His word. In Mark 16:20 (NLT), we see that the disciples believed Jesus and began to fulfill His mandate. “And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.”

It is God’s plan that we walk in His power and authority and bring His kingdom to manifest on earth as it is in heaven.



ISIK ABLA

Former Muslim Isik Abla proclaims the good news of Christ in 200+ nations through TV, radio and digital media.

How One Life Impacts the World

They are age-old ponderings: “How can I, as just one ordinary person, make a difference?” and “What is God’s purpose for me?” We may not all be called to be a Billy Graham, Susannah Wesley, or Martin Luther, but God does call us to impact the world. Scripture provides examples of ordinary people whose lives changed because of their faith. Just thinking about how God used these people is exciting. They help us understand when we focus our faith, God supplies.

Lydia (Acts 16, Philippians 1) was a woman who was known for dying purple cloth. One day she met Paul who told her about Jesus. Her heart was open, and she accepted Jesus as Lord. She went and told her entire family who then also believed. But she didn’t stop there. Lydia continued to sell her cloth but with a new purpose. She used her income to host missionaries and opened her home as a house church to tell the Good News of Jesus. Her ordinary life became extraordinary because of the lives she touched for the Kingdom.

Priscilla and Aquila became friends with Paul. After co-laboring with him, they established a house church in Ephesus where kindness, hospitality, and the love of Jesus were well known.

Their ethic of hard work and encouragement helped others to understand what a Christ-like life was about.

Andrew was a fisherman. He was also the first disciple to call Jesus the Messiah and the one who led his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:35). It was Andrew who found the small boy with two fish and five loaves of bread. Although the other disciples saw the impossible, Andrew considered the possibilities and believed in what Jesus could do with even a meager amount—thus, thousands witnessed a miracle.

Lydia, Priscilla, Aquila, and Andrew are examples of lives that made a difference even though none are typically considered heroes of our faith. Their open minds, strong faith, close walk with Jesus and—most importantly, their understanding that Jesus is Lord of all—changed their lives and in turn, impacted the lives of those around them.

Perhaps we might ask ourselves the question they certainly pondered:

”How can I live out the Gospel here, where I am, in this time and place?” “What does my community need?” “How can I use what I have (talents, finances, a space for fellowship or study, an ability to fix cars, my outgoing personality, my love for reading or sewing or crafting, or talking on the phone, etc.) to share God’s love?” “Where can I serve God, stand up for justice, or do random acts of kindness.”

Every time we impact (or influence) one person’s world, we start a ripple effect with the potential to improve lives for generations to come. Imagine being that young boy with the loaves and fish or a missionary needing a place to stay or like Andrew, seeing your brother find the heart of Jesus. That’s what we all are called to do—and we can do it.

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13-16). How can *you* impact the world? Be what you *are*: the light and the salt.



JANET JOHNSON

Pastor, spiritual mentor, author, and speaker, helping others experience God’s love and wholeness. joyfilledjan1@gmail.com



Open Heart, Open Home, Opens Opportunities

Sometimes simple gestures of kindness open doors to hearts, lives, deeper conversations, and the chance to share the love and Gospel of Jesus. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

At 28, we moved our young family to southern California for Bill to become a church lead pastor, so we took inventory of what we could offer to bless and build our new community. Because Bill was a quarterback in high school, I was a college athlete, and we had sons in youth sports, being a coach and team mom was a good launching point. We decided to treat our teams like families. At first, we brought barbeque to the park to share a meal after games.

Later, we invited one family at a time over for a meal and play date. We invited everyone, but we especially looked for families like ours, who were new to the area or lived far from their families.

When Thanksgiving rolled around that year, we accessed our limited budget

plus our gift and talent set. We decided to host a Father-Son football game, with a mom’s “mug and muffin” on the sidelines. We invited everyone we met with kids to come join us Thanksgiving morning for a casual, fun family morning out. The week of the event, we quickly realized more than 100 people were going to be there, so we organized two games (one for the older kids and one for the little kids and their dads) as well as a tiny tot “Punt-Pass and Kick” contest. We gathered a few donations from local businesses for prizes (simple ones, like a free donut!) And people came. We didn’t have any fliers or invitations to come to church, yet, people asked us what time services happened. After the games, men stood in circles asking my husband deeper questions about God. And all through the games, I fielded questions of faith from moms from all walks of life, most whom had little if any church background.

With Christmas around the corner, we invited many of these new friends with kids over for what we called, “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” With our boys’ help, we baked and decorated a rather pathetic but tasty “Happy Birthday Jesus” cake, I asked people from our church to donate their “junk” to create a trunkful of costumes. So with random old prom dresses, tierras, bathrobes, stuffed animals, and tossed aside sunglasses, we dressed up all the children

as the characters of the Christmas nativity (sheep, camels, shepherds, wise-men, angels, Joseph, Mary—and a real baby as Jesus!) Our oldest, a brand-new reader, read (stumbled, stammered and sounded out) the Christmas story from A Charlie Brown Christmas (a Luke 2 rendition). Each family left with a tiny (and a bit scrawny) “Charlie Brown tree” with an invitation to join our family for the Christmas School play hosted by our church’s Christian school.

We followed up and took to each home a plate of homemade Christmas cookies with an invitation to join us at an early Christmas Eve dinner and candlelight service at our church—and they all came! Because we had a “we are family” heart toward our friends, if we discovered any of these families were struggling financially, we played “Secret Saint Nicholas” and brought over a holiday meal and toys as a “Gift from God’s Heart to Your Home.”

Now, years later, it is a joy to watch our now grown sons carry on many of these traditions into their homes and communities.



PAM & BILL FARREL

Marriage relationship experts and bestselling authors of over fifty books. Web: Love-Wise.com

How Scripture Shaped Western Culture

Imagine a time traveler dropping in on AD 313 when Emperor Constantine granted Christians legal status. Then he jumps to 1517 to see Martin Luther nail his 95 theses to the Wittenberg church igniting the Protestant Reformation. Later, he ventures to the year 1776 during the early days of America to sit with the founding fathers in Independence Hall. Finally, he finishes out his voyage by traveling to 1946 to go inside the First Assembly of God Church in Tupelo Mississippi to strum a few chords with Elvis Presley as he receives his first guitar lesson. Only one book, one collection of sacred writings, would be guaranteed to appear in all these historic moments. What book, you might ask? You guessed it—the Bible.

Scripture, over time, has shaped almost everything we experience as Westerners. Even Murry Rothbard, the atheistic economist, said, “Everything good in western civilization, from individual liberty to the arts, is due to Christianity.”

As Bible-believing Christians were positively shaped by the pages of Scripture, they were consequently used by God to

beneficially shape the Western world. Simply stated, everywhere the Bible goes, things change for the better—from increased literacy to the improved treatment of women, or from medical accessibility to artistic contributions, the Bible dominates the discussion on all fronts. Romans 15:4 (ESV) explains that “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Scripture is for our instruction, and Scripture has instructed Westerners more than any other document.

Second only to the Bible, *Don Quixote*, by Miguel de Cervantes, is widely recognized as the bestselling book of all time. And yet, the average Westerner would barely be able to tell you what the book was about, let alone summarize how the book was used to shape religion, family, education, government, business, the arts, and media within our culture.

The same is not so of the Bible. Even the most irreligious Westerner would recognize a “churchy” sounding song on the radio, a passage of Scripture borrowed for a political speech, or easily recount how the American school system used to display the Ten Commandments and conduct corporate prayer in public classrooms. In the Westerner’s mind, only the Bible contains truths

worthy of monumental structures from cathedrals to colleges, or from city halls to citadels. The Bible is so intertwined throughout every sector of Western culture that even a cursory glance at the external foundations of our society reveals page after page of Biblical ideals, values, and teaching.

So how did Scripture principally shape the West? Was it Westerner’s intuitive genius? Their fearless resolve? Their herculean work ethic? Maybe a little, but mostly no. The Bible shaped the west because the Bible was repeatedly unleashed and obeyed. The more the Bible was read and spread, the more God opened the hearts and minds of Westerners. Some might even go so far as to argue that the story of westernization is the story of a whole scale Biblical outbreak. Jesus said in John 8:32 (ESV), “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” In this passage of Scripture, truth and freedom are married together. The more the West surrenders to Jesus’ revolutionary teaching, the more Scripture’s transformative work will continue to occupy Western civilization and set Westerners free.



JOSHUA GILMORE

Teacher, leader, and Director of Baptist Collegiate Ministries at North Greenville University, SC.



Joy in My Heart

Earlier this year, news reports about the coronavirus covered every newspaper, television, radio, and social media outlets. Conversations between friends and strangers began focusing on the “what-ifs?” of the unknown. Churches, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, retail stores, recreation centers, beaches, and more closed. Silence filled the once busy highways. Silence also filled the local neighborhoods as most everyone stayed inside.

I noticed a pattern at the onset of this awful virus. There was more talk of doom and gloom than anything else. Tears flowed easily. Prayer requests came hourly on social media. Church prayer chains were busy making calls to check on members and visitors. People asking for prayers for healing of their loved ones and friends. Others asked for prayers for themselves, as they battled the onset of the coronavirus. The families of health-care workers requested prayers for strength, stamina, and good health for everyone.

Another issue was how to explain the change in the world to children. Our two-year-old grandson said, “Mimi, that coronavirus is bad.” His parents had explained why he couldn’t go to preschool and be with his teacher and

friends. They shared just enough to let him know that people were sick.

On social media, I asked a question: “Where are you finding joy in the midst of this awful time? Share ways you are finding joy during the coronavirus.” As I typed the last letters of the request, almost immediately responses began pouring in. People wanted and needed to share joy. They needed to be reminded of the joy God provides even in times of sadness.

As people started sharing ways they were experiencing joy during the coronavirus, I thought of how often we take God’s blessings for granted. Reading through each comment from friends and strangers, I could feel God’s presence. Our hope is in Him. From reading books to children, video chats with family, watching hummingbirds at the feeder, listening to the robins singing, writing emails

and even sending snail mail to people we haven’t seen in a while, to attending church service online, joy was being shared.

Our church held communion via chat rooms. Virtual hugs and laughter were shared after the breaking of the bread and drinking the juice. The smiles shared when church friends saw each other via the computer for the first time in a long while were priceless.

Thinking of my own ways of finding joy, I included how each morning, when my eyes open and before my feet touch the floor, I thank God.

Finding rest with Him allows us the opportunity to show His love to others. Whether sharing a smile, a simple hello, looking someone in the eyes and asking, “How are you?” or sitting quietly and reading Scripture, our faith can become stronger.

Joy is found in God.

Rejoice in the Lord, always; Again I will say Rejoice (Philippians 4:4 NRSV).



MELISSA HENDERSON

Writes inspirational articles, devotions, and more to draw people into a closer relationship with God.

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