Incense

CHRISTIAN RAP ARTIST

Incense is a South African Christian Rap artist born in Soweto & bred in Pakamisa, a Township outside King Williams Town, in the Eastern Cape, who has been an activist of South Africa’s now biggest Hip Hop Sub-Genre “Christian Hip Hop” since 2011.
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### OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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As I was driving to work today dodging countless selfish drivers, I realized one thing: we are subjected to a terrible spirit of rebellion. At the heart of breaking the law lies rebellion, the refusal to submit, and a selfish heart of pride.

Reflecting a little longer I also realized that if all people were to be consciously striving to abide by the laws of our roads (and our country in general), we would literally have a Utopia. In such an environment, it would no longer be a case of living life just for myself, but living life in a way that regarded others as more important than me. This attitude of giving a 100% of myself - my effort, time, love and consideration - without expecting anything in return, reciprocated by everyone around me, would make for a wonderful world indeed.

I hear the strains of Armstrong's famous song, *I see trees of green / Red roses too / I see them bloom for me and you / And I think to myself what a wonderful world / I see skies of blue and clouds of white / The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night / And I think to myself what a wonderful world / The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky / Are also on the faces of people going by / I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do / They're really saying I love you / I hear babies crying, I watch them grow / They'll learn much more than I'll never know / And I think to myself what a wonderful world / Yes I think to myself what a wonderful world.*

It is a case of speaking with one voice and feeling with one heart. The Bible speaks about this many times over; the fact that we share the same spirit of Christ, that we are to have the same mind (thinking) as Christ, and that we are united through a spiritual re-birth with the Father of all ages. And as we acknowledge God as the Supreme Unifier, who knows, perhaps the spirit of rebellion lurking in our own hearts may just be expelled in favour of love? This being a rhetorical question, the answer is of course simple and clear - it will!
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The Greatest Spiritual Law
In this teaching we will learn how our thoughts; words; attitudes and actions all play a vital role in establishing God’s blessing in our lives. May this message inspire you to take God’s word to heart and actively apply His kingdom principles to your every day life.

Stand Strong
In this compelling message, Pastor Jenny encourages us to Stand Strong in the Lord and the power of His might! You will learn about the explosive, supernatural power that is inside every believer to withstand any attack from the enemy.

Release the Steward in You
For the most part, humanity is preoccupied with “self-service” as opposed to “selflessly serving”….. reflects a mindset influenced by society, politics, education and peer pressure, is fundamentally ignorant to the purposes of God. The truth is that there is an extraordinary life experience literally moments away, accessed by a decision to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of your life, characterized by a life of stewardship over everything that He has made available. It is about kingdom living, it is a journey where the experience is breathtaking. The best news of all is that you are exactly the right person for the position, are you interested?

Gregory Clur is a qualified Chartered Accountant (B.Com CA (S.A.)). He has practiced for 13 years as a public accountant and tax practitioner and joined the River Group in 2003, He is currently the Chief Financial Officer of the group and oversees the group’s financial and administrative affairs, which comprises 7 major divisions.

In The Beginning God...
In this inspiring teaching, you will learn through the scriptures not only what the name God means, but you will discover His will and His ways.

Living For Eternity
Do you live life with an eternal perspective? Scripture teaches that every moment we spend here on earth counts towards our eternity.

Living The Higher Life
4-part series: He has placed inside your spirit the very issues of life that will cause you to live in heavenly places whilst being here on earth!

Fear Not
In this 4-part series you will learn how to expel fear from your life and subsequently embrace the abundant victory Christ secured for you on the
The Holy Spirit is the part of us that connects us to all the power and resources of heaven, while we are on the earth! God wants the very atmosphere of heaven to touch and influence people; without the manifestation of these supernatural gifts, heaven is only going to be what they read about in the pages of the Bible.

Most importantly, we must understand that faith is what is required for us to receive healing, and operate in the gifts of healings. In Luke 8:42-48, we read how Jesus felt the healing power go out from Him when the woman with the issue of blood’s faith put a demand on that healing power. Then, after she received it, she openly declared her healing. This is very important. The Bible says we overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony! Whenever the healing power of God is manifest, we must testify of it because that testimony becomes a powerful weapon against the devil. It not only builds our faith, but builds the faith of others to believe God for their healing too.

Now, to close off this powerful letter, for those of you believing God for healing in your own body, here are three primary ways to receive healing…

To being with, we must have the Word of God as our authority to believe for our healing. We went over some powerful promises for God’s healing at the start of this message. These promises provide the concrete foundation for our faith to receive and enable us to resist the devil’s attempts to convince our minds otherwise. The devil cannot dispute the truth of God’s Word; in fact, he’s defenceless against it.

Secondly, when we pray in agreement with another believer, our faith is strengthened to receive the outcome of God’s promise. Matthew 18:19-20 says, “Again I tell you, if two of you on earth agree (harmonize together, make a symphony together) about whatever [anything and everything] they may ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by My Father in heaven. For wherever two or three are gathered (drawn together as My followers) in (into) My name, there I AM in the midst of them.”

Thirdly, the Bible does say we can go to the elders or pastors of the church so they can lay their hands on us to receive healing. This way we can combine our faith with theirs to receive healing.

Now I’ve given you more than enough material to meditate on concerning the spiritual gifts of healings. Until next week, choose to be sensitive to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and practice working in partnership with the One Who is our Healer.
When I tell people at our conferences that I’m going to teach about discipline and self-control, there is usually a negative response, like a groan or sour facial expressions. We tend to think of these terms as something bad or hard. While I agree that choosing discipline and self-control is not always easy or fun, the truth is it’s vital to having the good life Jesus wants to give us (see John 10:10). The bottom line is if you want peace, joy and fulfillment in your life, you have to exercise discipline and self-control.

**Count the Cost**
A big part of discipline is obedience. Being obedient to God, from the big stuff to the small stuff (and especially in the small stuff), is so important to having a peace-filled life. Hebrews 12:11 ESV tells us that “for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Are you at a point in your relationship with God where you feel like He’s dealing with you about something but you’re not listening to Him or obeying Him? Have you “gotten away with” something for a long time and now it feels like God is telling you He won’t put up with that particular behavior anymore?

In my opinion, there’s nothing worse than going to bed or waking up with a guilty conscience or trying to pray when you know there’s something between you and God that’s not settled.

I remember a time when God spoke to my heart that I needed to be more respectful of my husband, Dave, and not have an attitude when he asked me to do something for him. This was so hard for me because I had issues with submitting to people, and especially men, because of the abuse I had experienced for years when I was growing up. But as I put my trust in God and followed His direction, He gave me the grace to do the right thing. And I firmly believe that if I hadn’t obeyed Him in this area of my life, I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing today in ministry.

**Delight in Discipline**
Operating in discipline and self-control to be obedient to God brings peace, which leads to joy. When we don’t obey, we often feel guilty, especially if we knowingly are ignoring God on an issue. That kind of guilty thinking breeds condemnation and can make you think wrongly about everything in your life, including yourself. And that’s miserable way to live!

I’ve discovered that when God shows me something in my life that needs to change, it’s actually a really good thing. Because everything He tells us to do is for our good! So now, instead of feeling bad when He corrects me, I choose to rejoice and thank Him for loving me and helping me have a better life.

I realize that rejoicing might seem like the complete opposite of what you want to do when you’re being disciplined by God, but it’s really the best way to respond. Even though it doesn’t feel good at the time, it’s necessary to produce what we say we want.
We all have dreams for our lives, whether it’s a closer walk with Jesus, better physical health, a different career, healthier relationships, or any other goal in life. But we can’t get there without discipline and self-control. You’ve probably heard the phrase “no pain, no gain.” I like to say, you can’t have “the perks without the works.”

Many years ago, when God put it on my heart to teach His Word all over the world, there were a lot of things that needed to change in my attitudes, mindsets, and behavior. As I got serious about my relationship with Jesus and studying the Bible, I began to grow and develop the character of God in my life. It wasn’t easy, but it was more than worth the pain I experienced in the process.

**Your Action Plan**

It’s important to understand that discipline is more than just willpower. You can’t do the things God is showing you to do unless you lean on Him. Jesus says in John 15:5 that we must remain in Him because “apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing” (AMP).

Spending quiet time with God in prayer and Bible study is how you abide in Christ. Start small by sitting still and listening for God to speak to your heart. Ask Him to show you what He wants you to do, and trust Him to do the work in you that needs to be done.

Be patient with yourself because it won’t all happen overnight. Second Corinthians 3:18 says we “are being transformed into the same image [of Christ] from one degree of glory to another” (ESV). Pray for Him to change you little by little, one day at a time, and know that something good is happening on the inside of you!
If we look at the Gospel of John 2:1-2 (NKJV), we see that Jesus was invited with His mother and His disciples to a wedding in Cana. They ran out of wine and so, the mother of Jesus said to Him: “they have no wine” and Jesus said to His mother, “it is not My time”. Then Jesus’s mother said to the servants, “do whatever He tells you to do”. Now we know how the story goes: there were six water pots of stone and Jesus said to the servants to fill the pots with water; then of course He prayed and the miracle took place. The finest wine in the entire meeting was made available to the guests of the wedding.

God has shown me that He is not only the God of the miraculous, the huge miraculous deeds, but He is also the God of the day-to-day miracles. So often we are looking for the miracles like the parting of the Red Sea or the raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days, and yet there are miracles that are taking place every moment of our lives.

We need to be aware of them and we need to thank God for each and every one of them. Every day is a gift from God; we need to appreciate every moment we have on earth. We need to love our families, we need to love our fellow man, we need to do good where we can, we need to avoid confrontation and needless arguing, and we need to sow love and that in itself is a wonderful miracle. When everybody else is running around like chickens with their heads chopped off, we need to be focused and we need to give the Lord Jesus Christ all the honour, praise and glory. We need to pray at all times.

Angus Buchan

There are miracles that are taking place every moment

A while ago, I was praying with a man who was going to do the Duzi canoe marathon. As he was walking out from our meeting I said, “can we please pray for you?” He was deeply touched as we laid our hands upon him and prayed for a safe journey down the DuziRiver with no problems. Let us use every opportunity that we have to be obedient to the Lord; and when He speaks to us, to act just like Jesus did. Changing the water into wine, praying for the sick in the workplace, taking care of the poor and the needy, having patience and compassion on those who are struggling, and God will do the rest.

Like never before in South Africa, we need God’s people to perform miracles daily; not just the big ones, but the day-to-day ones like turning water into wine.

By the way the canoe paddler told us after the race that it was one of the smoothest, most pleasant races He has ever done - and he’s done twenty Duzi marathons!
BEYOND ADVENTURE

Xtreme Gap year

THE MOST EXTREME LEADERSHIP GAP YEAR OF YOUR LIFE

FULL & HALF YEAR OPTIONS NOW AVAILABLE!

JANUARY - JUNE | JULY - NOVEMBER

THE CONCEPT OF 'EXTREME EDUCATION' WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DISCOVER AND DEVELOP THEIR LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL
What makes your programme extreme and adventurous?
We offer students a wide range of extreme activities to participate in such as: sky diving, bungee jumping, scuba diving, mountain biking, abseiling, kayaking etc.

What is the value of a gap year programme?
A gap year gives young people time to reflect on what they think would be the college/varsity or career choice best suited to their needs. It allows them to clarify their interests and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

We also believe a gap year allows them to take advantage of learning that takes place outside the classroom and apply these skills in real life situations, within a protected environment. It is imperative that youth’s experience life in communities different from those in which they have been living and our extreme gap year programme offers them this experience. We further believe that gap years allow students to learn about a variety of careers before making a critical decision and to gain maturity, initiative and resourcefulness, all valuable life skills.

What outcome do you hope is achieved in every student’s life once completing your programme?
Our programme is designed to meet, challenge and grow the complete individual, body, soul and spirit, as we train tomorrow’s leaders today. Our desire is for the young person to have fun and ‘discover themselves’ as they are developed into a person with vision and purpose. We endeavour to take boys and girls and to mould them into young men and women that will have a positive influence on our society and the world.

Describe how the programme works - when is your intake, how long does it last and how much does it cost?
The Beyond Adventure Extreme Leadership Gap Year Programme was launched in 2001. We are located 100 kilometres north east of Port Elizabeth in Alicedale. We are situated close to some of the great game reserves such as Addo Elephant Park and Shamwari. Our programme runs from the last week in January till the middle of November. The students are accommodated in rooms where they will learn to live with three other students. Cost enquiries and further info can be obtained from our offices as well as our website www.beyondadventure.co.za, under the download section.

What makes your programme unique as opposed to other Gap year courses?
We believe the Beyond Adventure concept to be unique in South Africa. The concept of ‘Extreme Education’ was designed to provide a challenging environment for young people to discover and develop their leadership potential. Leadership deals with direction, vision, purpose and principles and our leadership programme focuses on building the students up, making them aware of other cultures, helping them with emotional bank account building and strengthening them as individuals functioning in a group context.

Most importantly, we run a programme that is founded on Biblical principles with Jesus Christ as the foundation stone.
“Just as you’ll never understand the mystery of life forming in a pregnant woman, so you’ll never understand the mystery at work in all that God does.”
(Ecclesiastes 11:5 MSG)

Solomon parallels how God works with the mystery of a child growing in the womb. Although science has given us much insight, most of what happens within the womb is still a mystery. From the moment of conception to the moment of birth, the child is made in secret. Despite the facts we presently have, we still cannot fully fathom the creative genius behind all that God does.

Pondering the wonder of these phenomena, David wrote, “You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside, and wove them all together in my mother’s womb. I thank You, God, for making me so mysteriously complex! Everything You do is marvelously breathtaking. It simply amazes me to think about it! How thoroughly You know me, Lord! You even formed every bone in my body when

You created me in the secret place, carefully, skillfully shaping me from nothing to something. You saw who You created me to be before I became me! Before I’d ever seen the light of day, the number of days You planned for me were already recorded in Your book”
(Psalm 139:13–16 TPT).

God’s secret work is not exclusive to the time in our mother’s womb. There are many occasions where God has us in seasons of anonymity in which great growth occurs. What is often celebrated and applauded in the spotlight is the result of what was developed in the dark.

It’s easy to be in awe of an athlete’s performance on the big stage and lose sight of all the blood, sweat, and tears behind the scenes. God does His biggest work in us privately so that He can powerfully work through us publicly. This is why we should embrace those seasons where God has us hidden - not that we are isolated from society or withholding ourselves from others until we reach perfection. Rather, we are not actively seeking a visible platform for what we are called to do. If you love the spotlight more than the secret place, you’ll gravitate toward self-promotion and move ahead of God’s timing.
Embrace the hidden place. God has you strategically positioned while He prepares you for future promotion. Refuse to be in a hurry. Just as a baby who is birthed prematurely is weak and underdeveloped; so too are those who act prematurely. Allow God to bring you forth His way at the appointed time, not deficient in any way.

Listen to what Isaiah said about being hidden: “He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden me and made me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden me” (Isaiah 49:2 NKJV).

As you are hidden in God’s quiver, you’re not only being polished but also prepared to be released forth, propelled into your destiny.

Lisa Bevere’s authentic, passionate, and witty teachings weave profound biblical truths with practical application. A New York Times best-selling author, her books are in the hands of millions worldwide. Lisa and her husband John, who’s also a best-selling author and teacher, are the founders of Messenger International.
“Lord, increase our faith!”

That was the cry of Jesus’ first 12 disciples…and it’s been the heart cry of untold millions of believers ever since. And why shouldn’t it be?

Again and again in the New Testament we see people receive miracles from God…according to their faith. We hear Jesus say, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed…nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20). We read the words of the apostle John who wrote, “…this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

The Bible makes it absolutely clear: Faith can overcome anything in this world order. There is literally no limit to what faith can do.

Why then aren’t more Christians enjoying the limitless blessings that faith can produce in their lives? Primarily because we’ve limited ourselves to this natural realm. We’ve spent most of our time looking at the things we can see with our physical eyes, and believing what our natural senses tell us. We haven’t cultivated the vast field of faith that’s available to us.

You might say we’ve fenced ourselves in by unbelief.

Faith Gets the Job Done

Jesus left no doubt about that. In Luke 17, when the disciples asked Him to increase their faith, He said, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this mulberry tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (verse 6).

In other words, if you have just a little bit of faith, use it like a seed. Plant it in a situation with the words of your mouth. Then keep believing and that faith will grow and work in that ground until it becomes great enough to get the job done.

That’s not a message Jesus preached just once. He preached it again and again. It’s so vital that in Mark 4, where He taught it in the greatest depth through the parable of the sower, He said that if we don’t understand that message we won’t be able to understand anything about the way the kingdom of God works on the earth. Then He added: “Where unto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it” (verses 30-32).

What’s more, Jesus didn’t just say that faith, once sown, grows up and becomes greater; He demonstrated it. When He cursed the fruitless fig tree by saying, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever” (Mark 11:14), He planted His faith by speaking words to that tree.

To the natural eye, it looked like nothing happened right away. But Jesus’ faith went to work immediately in the roots of that tree and it kept working until the whole tree withered - leaves and all. When He and His disciples passed by that tree 24 hours later, it had dried up from the roots. It took a day to finish the job but, in the end, faith got it done!
Don’t Just Scatter the Seed…Plant It

“Yeah, but that was Jesus,” somebody might say. “Nobody else can operate in that kind of faith.”

On the contrary, Jesus commanded us all to operate in it. He said, “Have faith in God.” (Or as some translations put it, Have the God kind of faith.) “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith” (Mark 11:22-23).

According to Jesus, if you’re a whosoever (and that covers just about everybody) you can and should have the mountain-moving faith of God.

How do you grow that kind of faith?

You start by planting God’s Word in your heart because “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

You can’t just casually scatter the seed of the Word on the top of the ground where the devil can steal it from you, either. You must plant it deeply and securely in your spirit. The best way to do that is by obeying the instructions in Proverbs 4:20-24: “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.”

It’s Not Always Easy

If you truly want to obey those instructions, you must decide - once and for all - to make God’s Word the final authority in your life. You must determine that regardless of what happens in your life, you will live by the Word.

I’ll never forget the day Gloria and I did that. It was back in 1967 when we first started out in the ministry. We were attending some of Brother Kenneth Hagin’s meetings and we heard him talk about the commitment he’d made years before to honour God’s Word as the ultimate authority in his life. He had determined early in his ministry that he would make whatever adjustments necessary to make his lifestyle fit the Word.

Gloria and I went home that day and said, “That’s what we’re going to do, too.” So we sat down at our little table, took Communion and said to the Lord, “From now on, we’ll believe whatever Your Word says. We’ll do whatever it says to do.” And we’ve done that ever since.

It hasn’t always been easy. There have been times when I’ve been hurting…or mad…or disappointed about something and Gloria would remind me that the Word says in those situations we should praise the Lord. There have been times when I felt sick and somebody would remind me that the Word says that by Jesus’ stripes we were healed.

I knew the Bible said those things but I didn’t feel like acting on it right then. I felt like saying, “Hey, get out of my face with that! Stop telling me what I should do!” But then I’d remember the commitment we made back in 1967 and I’d make my flesh get in line.

The decision I made back then would take over and I’d say to myself, “Look here, flesh, I’m going to do what the Word of God says to do whether you like it or not. I am going to praise God. And I’m not allowing that ‘I’m sick,’ ‘I’m tired,’ ‘I’m broke,’ ‘I don’t know what we’re going to do’ junk to come out of my mouth again.”

Once you make that kind of quality decision, the door is open for you to go on to greater things. You’ll be in position to put your flesh where it belongs, under the authority of the Word. You’ll be ready to bust through the natural limitations that have kept you from enjoying the abundant blessings of God.

Your heavenly Father is sure to be well pleased. (VICTORY)
Incense is a South African Christian Rap artist born in Soweto & bred in Pakamisa a Township outside King Williams Town, in the Eastern Cape, who has been an activist of South Africa’s now biggest Hip Hop Sub-Genre “Christian Hip Hop” since 2011, the year he pioneered TAKE TAKE THE MOVEMENT together with his friends.

The movement reached more than 2000 young people who were transformed by the gospel carried in the God-inspired lyrics from poets and rappers.

In 2013 he released his debut rap album, Classified. The album gave him leverage to travel across the country sharing his music with various audiences.

In September 2014, he released his sophomore album, Dedications for free downloads online. His eagerly anticipated latest album The Process debuted number 1 on Google Play & number 2 on iTunes Hip Hop Albums Charts on April 16, 2018, without any backing of big business or major labels, simply independent; an amazing achievement for a Christian Hip Hop artist in a music industry that tends to embrace a more mainstream narrative of Hip Hop. He has just completed his national tour with his brand new album The Process, with shows in Cape Town, East London & Johannesburg.

He ended 2018 with his birthday release VOICENOTE on 23 December, which became his first single to chart as it debuted on number 17 on the GooglePlay Hip Hop Songs Charts.

ACHIEVEMENTS
- His sophomore album DEDICATIONS received a nomination at the inaugural 2015 MZANSI GOSPEL AWARDS in the HIP HOP ALBUM OF THE YEAR Category.
- Latest album THE PROCESS debuted at number 1 on Google Play & number 2 on iTunes Hip Hop Albums Charts on 16 April 2018.
- His latest album THE PROCESS got nominated at the 5th Independent National Gospel Music Awards (INGOMAs) 2018, in the BEST GOSPEL HIP HOP ALBUM CATEGORY.
- His single off his latest album THE PROCESS, the title track of the album has been nominated in the BEST GOSPEL RAP CATEGORY at the SABC CROWN GOSPEL MUSIC AWARDS to be held at ICC DURBAN on 25 November 2018.
- Appeared on South Africa’s premier TV Breakfast Show, EXPRESSO BREAKFAST SHOW on SABC 3, for an extensive interview and a performance of 3 of his hit singles from THE PROCESS on July 12, 2018.
MUSIC VIDEOS

• In September 2014 he released his debut music video off his sophomore album Dedications for the single Feminine Cries which enjoyed extensive air play on both FAITH, DSTV channel 341, and Bay TV.
• In March 2015 he released a follow up music video for another single Cloudy Days that also enjoyed extensive play on FAITH, DSTV channel 341, and One Gospel.
• In July 2015 his music video Cloudy Days was aired on South Africa’s oldest and premier Gospel music TV show GOSPEL GOLD on SABC 1.
• He further released a music video for his single Hopeful, off his latest album The Process on 5 December 2016.
• He has recently released his second music video off his latest album The Process in March 2019.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

• Link FM Annual Gospel Show 2010, 2011 and 2012.
• Ark Youth Army Truth Conference 2010, 2011 and 2012
• Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality Summer Carnival 2014 in King Williams Town
• LORD I’M ALMOST 30 COMEDY SHOW by NAPSTA the KING OF CHRISTIAN COMEDY in 2015
• EXPRESSO BREAKFAST SHOW on SABC 3 on July 12, 2018

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One of my earliest memories of hearing the voice of God was as a four-year-old frantically looking for my Lego policeman and his motorcycle.

“Mom!” I cried as I ran into her room. “Have you seen him?”

“Seen who?” she replied.

“My Lego policeman. Have you seen him?” I responded back after carefully scanning my bedroom and the rest of the house.

Aware of my frustration, mom offered the best advice she could: “Why don’t you pray and ask God to show you where he is?”

I paused and thought, “Will God actually speak to me? Does he even care about my Legos as much as I do?”

So I prayed, “God, where is my Lego policeman and his motorcycle?”

Suddenly, I saw a picture in my mind of my Lego policeman and his motorcycle behind the couch—all alone and scared, waiting expectantly for me to rescue them. Initially, I thought it was my Jedi intuition kicking in, but then I realized God was speaking to me and giving me the answer to my prayer. I bolted to the couch and lo and behold - there was my Lego policeman and his motorcycle! Once again, everything was awesome!

So often, God is speaking to us more than we realize. Our responsibility is to become aware and recognize the way in which He is speaking to us. God speaks at various times and in a variety of ways. He is constantly trying to communicate with us because He loves us. Job shared:

_For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it._ (Job 33:14 NKJV)

One of the ways I've learned to hear God’s voice is by discerning the way in which He speaks to me personally.
I’ve noticed that God speaks differently to my dad than He does to me. My father hears God in a more authoritative tone while I hear Him more in a soft and kind tone. Also, God’s voice is a lot more optimistic and affirming than my own thoughts are toward myself.

God speaks to each of us the way we need to hear it. My father needs to hear God in a more firm and direct way while I am different. Therefore, God speaks to me the way I can receive it. This is because I am wired differently than my dad. Just as there are a variety of different personality types and each personality type has a best suited method of communication - likewise, each of us has a unique way of hearing God that is best suited for each of us personally.

God is speaking. He wants to lead you and guide you. He wants to provide the answers you’re needing. He even wants to speak into those areas that you may think are insignificant because He delights in every detail of our life - like locating a Lego policeman and his motorcycle!

Let’s be aware that God is communicating, and let’s discern and recognize the way in which He is speaking.
A former drug addict-turned-pastor, I was arrested 35 times and sentenced to prison five times for eight felony convictions. I’ve opened up about the series of events that led me to Christ and why my mission is to tell others that abundant life is possible, even in prison.

Behind the Wire is an expression used by inmates doing time in prison. But you don’t have to be physically incarcerated to be a prisoner. Freedom isn’t just about a physical location; it’s a spiritual condition. There’s an invisible prison that holds many in its grip, and Jesus is the way out.

For the prisoners of both physical and invisible prisons, Behind the Wire is an invitation to discover the path to true freedom. It’s the story of Scott Highberger’s journey from the prison yard to the pulpit. Highberger shares how selfish decisions lock us up and how acts of obedience to biblical principles can set us free. Highberger’s story is raw and real.

Thirty-five arrests, eight felony convictions, and five prison sentences set the stage for Jesus to teach Highberger to live beyond the wire of selfishness, criminal activity, and failure. Join him on his journey from prisoner to pulpit. After years of struggle and failure, he was receptive to God’s call on his life. Desperate, he turned to Jesus Christ while incarcerated. He said yes to Jesus and everything changed. First, all hell broke loose and Scott went down before he came up. He had to fight for his God-planned destiny. Decades trapped in the system as a prisoner to drugs, alcohol, violence, and incarceration gave way to a pastoral calling. Scott now serves as the Outreach/Prison Pastor at Road to Life Church in Michigan City, Indiana. He ministers to thousands of prisoners and leads them to freedom through Jesus Christ.
For more than ten years Faith Cares (formerly known as Siyanceda Africa) has been devoted to providing food, clothing, shelter, medicine and other daily necessities to the economically disadvantaged and victims of disasters on this continent. Faith Cares cuts across cultural barriers, travelling to rural areas, spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Be a part of what God is doing through this Relief ministry.

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How Education Affects Your Worldview

Have you ever thought of how we develop a worldview? And, have you ever thought of how much time is needed to establish a strong worldview?

To have a worldview is to have a lens through which we see the world at large. It acts like a filter - for most of the time we are unaware of these filters - through which we frame our world. It is the ultimate motivator of our lives; it is the way through which we understand and make sense of the world around us.

"For as he [man] thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7) For the most part, our culture is shaped by distorted worldviews and we make our judgements by our worldviews. Governments determine their decisions based on a particular worldview. When we go along with worldviews shaped by human philosophies and reasonings, we have no basis for morality or stability; stability is only provided by the ways of God, which are absolute. God wants us to see the world as He intended for it to be; God gave us the framed truth to live in this world.

Everybody has a worldview, which can either be biblical or humanistic. In a humanistic worldview men and women decide for themself what is best for mankind. Every culture is shaped by the actions of the community, or society. We see the consequences of the actions we take daily. Our one-sided ideas of what is good for mankind is catching up with us, specifically with regards to the morality and safety in our nation and the education system. It is through the education we provide (and receive) that a worldview is established.

We place our children in school for 12 years, during which time their personal worldview is shaped, in many instances by a humanistic worldview. Children do not learn to govern themselves, but to be governed by somebody looking over their shoulders.

“As we look at the final reality of humanism taught in our schools and which provides much of the framework of the thinking and the writing of our day – we find that is thought of as material or energy. It is impersonal, totally neutral to any value system or any interest in man as man. It has existed in some form forever and has its present configuration by pure chance. This view of final reality offers no absolute value system, no fixed basis for law, and no basis for viewing man as unique and important in the eyes of a loving Creator.

In a Biblical worldview, the final reality is the infinite personal God who truly is there objectively whether we think He is there or not. He is the Creator of everything else. We must never forget that one of the distinguishing marks of the Judeo-Christian God is that not everything is the same to Him. He as a character, and some things agree with His character and some things offers conflict with that character. Therefore, there are absolutes, right and wrongs in the world” (Francis Schaeffer, 1982, The Secular Humanist World view versus The Christian World View.)

The answer to the dilemmas of this world is self-government; self-government is synonymous with self-control. A self-governed individual is someone who
can regulate his attitudes and actions without the need for external coercion. “Those who cannot govern themselves cannot govern others” (1 Timothy 3:5). A self-governed individual obeys the law of God from the heart, while someone who lacks self-control must be forced to obey. Those who are not self-governed need to be controlled by an external governor. This is why Scripture tells us “that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:9-10).

An ungoverned citizen reverts to crime to satisfy his uncontrolled desires. He might steal, vandalize, murder, or rape. His failure to govern himself means that others must govern him (taught for 12 years in school), protecting the larger society from his destructiveness and rebellion. Essentially men fail in self-governance because they are in rebellion against God… a society without a proper perspective of God and no Biblical worldview.

Only the renewing work of the Holy Spirit can affect such a change. We should not expect any long-term change in society without a radical change in the belief pattern of the community. Societal change without personal restoration is a myth and impossibility. The Bible is the only handbook to change the worldview of people in a positive way. Any law without the Bible leads to anarchy.

Family, church and civil government reflects the self-government of people, whether good or bad. The essence of this article is to call upon parents and churches to take an effort to establish a strong biblical worldview in their families and churches. Parents are the sovereign rulers in the family. Authority has been delegated to parents from God, and parents ought to reflect the image of God as “our Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). God instigated the family - it is His design. The family is the building block of civilization. Family government should be our first government. We need to constantly remind ourselves that before the Church family government had already been established (Genesis 2:21-25), and before there was a State the family existed (Genesis 4:1-2).

- Parents are to feed their children the Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Psalm 78:1-8).
- Parents should not exasperate and provoking their children (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).
- Parents should constantly be teaching the sacred writings which are able to give their children wisdom, leading to salvation through faith which is Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).
- Parents should provide their children with Godly discipline to deliver their souls from Sheol (Proverbs 23:14).

Obedience brings life (continuity and inheritance), while disobedience brings death (discontinuity and disinheritance). Jesus was faithful to His Father, and in the same way children gain an inheritance through faithfulness: "Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6: 1-3).

“When the moral backbone of a nation is removed, a nation will surely collapse." The public schools have abandoned the absolute moral values and biblical morality and have replaced them with the religion of humanism, where man is the measure of all things and values are determined by the individual. In America, 1982 the top discipline offenses had become rape, robbery, assault, burglary, drug abuse, abortion and sexual diseases. (It is nothing different in South Africa) Violence is the order of the day. "Will your child be the next victim?" (Christopher Klicka, 1995, The Right Choice).

The solution is for parents to be intentional about training their children in a strong biblical worldview, and for churches to train parents to establish a strong worldview; to teach the truth about who God is and how we ought to live. In some instances, the only way parents can truly bring change is to bring their children home for the critical years of their education.

Dynamis is a ministry to support and inform families and home educators. The goal is to serve and equip parents to take up their responsibility and authority for their child’s education.
http://www.dynamislearning.co.za
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082 57 414 33
Who holds your future? This is a confronting question that each of us must answer honestly. As a believer, it’s easy to confess that your future is in God’s hands; yet, how many of us actually believe that? How many of us have entrusted ourselves to Him? Do we really believe that God is directing our steps and working out His plans for our life? If so, why do we even worry about tomorrow? Frankly, it’s easy to trust God when things are unfolding according to plan; but what about when they are not?

Let’s consider Joseph. As a young man, Joseph received dreams of becoming an influential leader to whom even his father and brothers would submit. However, through a series of unforeseen events, Joseph finds himself sold as a slave, then falsely accused of a crime he never committed, and then locked in prison to rot. In the still of the night, he was left wondering, “What am I doing here?”

Joseph was right where he needed to be. Despite the unexpected, he was able to perceive the divinely orchestrated chain of events that culminated with the fulfilment of promise. Divine positioning led to divine promotion. Through hindsight, this is simple to comprehend. However, when you’re somewhere between a promise and its fulfilment - when what is presently in your hand does not look like what you envision in your heart - confusion sets in, leaving you asking, “God, what am I doing here? Am I where I’m supposed to be? Have I missed You somehow?”

Like Joseph, it’s in these moments when we must trust that God has strategically positioned us according to His plan and purpose. While your future rests in God’s hands, your present is yours to steward. Today is the bridge between your past and your future. For this reason, Jesus taught:

Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes. (Matthew 6:34 MSG)
Your present requires your full attention, because where you are is critical to where you are going. When you grasp this truth, you’ll understand that the decisions you make today will shape your future. Jesus was advising us not to become so worked up about the future that we miss the importance of today. When we harness the power of the “here and now,” we’ll align with our destined “there and then.”

Giving your attention to the present will require evaluating the decisions you’ve made. Have you obeyed God and followed Him fully? If not, repent and make the necessary adjustments. If you have been obedient, perhaps your discomfort is a divine disruption preparing you for change.

Please realize that today is all you have. It’s today’s obedience which will open the way for tomorrow’s reward. It’s the seed you sow today which will determine the harvest you reap tomorrow.

Your future begins here and now.
Christians became so comfortable in 20th century America that we began feeling “persecuted” simply by people who didn’t agree with us. Granted, over the last 50 years things have changed significantly, but nothing like what’s happening in so many countries around the world where Christians literally fight for their lives. As a result, far too often we tilt at windmills, and lash out that things that don’t really pose a threat, but make us feel like we’re standing up for “Christian culture” (whatever that is.)

But boycotting companies that say “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas” hasn’t changed anything. Picketing outside movies studios that make films we don’t like just made them more successful. Sending mass mailings to TV networks hasn’t changed their programming.

As a result of years fighting battles that raise money but don’t really accomplish much, most believers aren’t actually equipped or ready for the real battles with a hostile culture as other generations of Christians have been.

In our book “The Way Back: How Christians Blew Our Credibility and How We Get It Back,” Jonathan Bock and I outline many of the poor ideas we Christians have attempted for impacting a culture that’s been constantly changing. But it’s not about just doing battle; it’s about being smart and strategic. Remember Matthew 10:16 – “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” Jesus Himself was brilliant at completely dumbfounding the hypocritical leaders of His day.

In the 21st Century, Christians need to be smarter than the antagonistic culture we face. We need to stop looking at everything and everyone as “the enemy,” and start recognizing who the enemy really is and act appropriately. In the meantime, we also need to start thinking more deeply.

Instead of spending so much money and effort to criticize everyone else, let’s raise up a generation of Christians who are artists, filmmakers, politicians, journalists, leaders, and others who can work from the inside. Being successful at that approach will take much more than anger - it will take brains and it will take time.

But the results could be far greater than simply standing on the outside being critical.
As social media continues to grow, it’s worth reminding everyone on your team that today, “public relations” isn’t just for the PR Department. Today, everyone is a PR person. Now, anyone has the ability to influence his or her followers, and it’s time we realized the responsibility that involves.

We live in a world where a housewife in Oklahoma can bring down a major corporation just through the momentum of social media. Everyone today has a megaphone that reaches enormous numbers of people - it just looks like a mobile device.

That’s why you need to remind everyone on your team that the messages they send out can have an enormous impact - for good or bad - when it comes to your business, church, or non-profit.

The simplest inappropriate tweet can create a public relations crisis, and likewise, positive social media messages can turn around a negative story. That’s why you need:

1. A strategy for how to use social media effectively.
2. A meeting (or series of meetings) with your leadership and influencers to teach them the importance of what they share via social media.
3. A vision for how social media can impact your business, church, or non-profit.

And don’t get me wrong. Working with professional PR experts is more important than ever. But also, your team’s understanding of the role they play in getting your story out there can make an incredibly important (and positive) difference. Because of social media, I actually know organizations where a secretary has more influence than the CEO, a guy on the loading dock has more influence than his boss, or an intern with more influence than her supervisor.
So, here’s the thing.

Over the past few months I have been meditating and wrestling with one very important question, the answer of which primarily drives the worldview of everyone on earth.

If you have made out for yourself that there is a Higher Power, or as we like to refer to: God, the other most important question that you need to find an answer for is: How does He want to be known?

As in … if it is possible to know God, (something I believe Jesus made clear in John 17) - how? What has He given humanity through which He would like to be known?

I believe that Jesus lived on earth a few years ago, and He came to make His (and our) Father - God - known to us. He lived sinless and righteous, according to God’s precepts. He was condemned to death through false accusations coming from His own (religious) people, with an unfair trial. He died as a criminal, even though innocent. He currently lives, having dealt with sin and death as the perfect sacrifice God desired, on the cross. He restored relationship with God by becoming sin for us. If we get that, and accept that, we are born again, of the Spirit. By grace we have been saved, through faith. Who so ever believes that Jesus is who He is, and did what He did, and accepts it for their own souls - saved. He is coming back, and His Spirit is with us as a seal of our inheritance.

Most Christians I know pretty much agree on the above, and most people that have been saved by Christ have a real testimony of how they met Him, and how that encounter has radically and drastically changed their lives for the better. Even when the suffering and persecution (read … carry the cross of Christ …) etc gets added.

What I have come to realize is that we pretty much disagree on everything else. So… I have been asking myself this question: If I believe that He is (which I have sort, through years of pilgrimage, decided that I do), how can I get to know Him better?

Firstly, who do I refer to when I say Him? The God, who sent His Son because He loved the world that He created, has many names. I don’t know all of them, and the ones I know I don’t really always know the meaning of.

Elohim. The Name of God as the Creator and Judge of the universe.

So, not going into too much depth, since I’m out of my depth when it comes to the Hebrew language and Jewish customs, but pretty much just saying - that’s Who I mean when I say… Him. I also mean Yeshua Hammashiach and Ruach Hakkodesh.

When I pray, I know who I’m talking to. Pray to the Father, through the Son, the things the Spirit reveals. Point being … I think we can get to know God by getting to know His Name. The handy thing is that He arranged for His Name to be written down, in different glorious expressions, in something that we refer to as His Word.

So, in my innocence, growing up as a church girl, I thought we were all pretty much in agreement over the validity of the Bible. Seems like this is not the case, looking at doctoral thesis in theology departments around the world.
Some believe the Jewish Torah to be the true Word of God. Some believe that the entire book, from Genesis to Revelation, is the Word of God. Some believe Jesus to be the only Word of God, ditching the Bible.

I’m still a bit stuck on this one.

All that I know is that countless saints, throughout the ages, have died protecting the words that I get to read so freely in the comfort of my own bed. Some spent their lives translating it into languages for others to know - and some think that some of them didn’t do such a great job. Be that as it may, they must have thought it worth it. I also know that those very words, whether written by Moses or David or Isaiah or Paul or some Divinely inspired scribe or overwhelmed prophet or Christ-witness, testifying of things that they have seen, have moved my heart to repentance and have provided me with comfort and have encouraged me on to love others with good works, by faith.

I am not about to ditch the Bible. I need to spend more time reflecting on Wisdom that has survived every war and flood and plague, up until this day. I’m pretty convinced that the Bible is legit.

I’m thinking thus that we can know also God through the entire cannon of recorded scripture. Happy reading. Happy knowing.

But wait, there’s more …

Before Jesus gave Himself as our sacrifice, He told His disciples that He would not leave them alone as orphans. He would send His Spirit to teach them and comfort them. Us.

I don’t think there is anyone as misunderstood and as misrepresented as the Holy Spirit. I am also not about to try and define Him. I just know that I sometimes understand things that I could not have possibly known, and I dream things that are true, and I sometimes speak the words that I hear in my inside that help people see Jesus. I also sometimes feel like there is a massive waterfall gushing inside of me, and I want to burst with joy. I sometimes have a different light in my eyes. Some of my friends have had physical gold on their hands. People have been healed of actual sicknesses, and I have seen inexpressible joy on people’s faces because of Him. I am also accompanied by a persistent peace that doesn’t even leave when I stand next to my father’s bed in ICU, a few minutes after he passed away.

So, however you want to theologically define Him, I’m not about to try. I just know that He is.

So – the Spirit of God is my most intimate friend, and when I speak to Him, I feel like I’m speaking to Jesus. Which makes sense, if you think about it doctrinally. To me, He is like the captain of my ship, navigating the ocean of God. Sometimes I can pick up which way the wind is blowing, but mostly, I just rest in His guidance.

Point being. We know God by His Spirit who reveals Him.

Anyway. We haven’t even gotten to how we can see Him in His creation, or how He wants us to show Him by loving one another. In church. In marriage. In friendship. In sacrificing for strangers.

I’m pretty much just trying to highlight that we should probably not just emphasis the one way we prefer to know God, and ditch the rest as religion.

There are two key scriptures that have been a caution to me in this journey of figuring out how God wants to be known …

First one is from John 1:14:_... and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth._ Jesus is both grace and truth. We can’t pick one. People tend to do that - and then we get church splits.

The second one is from Mathew 13:52: … He said to them, _“Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”_ We have to spend time with the Holy Scriptures, as well as the Holy Spirit if we want to know God. Interesting parallel scripture to that last one is from Song of Songs: The mandrakes send out their fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, both new and old, that I have stored up for you, my lover.

Which would lead us into a whole new journey, having to do with why Jesus is coming back …

Because all of this knowing business has very much to do with one desire: Intimacy with God.

The eternal thirst of humanity.

Selah.
I was on the phone with a good friend the other day. After covering important topics, like disparaging each other’s mothers and retelling semi-factual tales from our college days, our conversation turned to the mundane. “So, how’s work going?” he asked.

For those of you who don’t know, I make money by teaching leadership skills and helping people learn to get along in corporate America. My wife says it’s all a clever disguise so I can get up in front of large groups and tell stories. I plead the fifth. I answered my buddy’s question with, “Definitely feeling blessed. Last year was the best year yet for my business. And it looks like this year will be just as busy.”

The words rolled off my tongue without a second thought. Like reciting the Pledge of Allegiance or placing my usual lunch order at McDonald’s. But it was a lie.

For those of you who don’t know, I make money by teaching leadership skills and helping people learn to get along in corporate America. My wife says it’s all a clever disguise so I can get up in front of large groups and tell stories. I plead the fifth. I answered my buddy’s question with, “Definitely feeling blessed. Last year was the best year yet for my business. And it looks like this year will be just as busy.”

Now, before you start taking up a collection for the “Feed the Dannemillers” fund, allow me to explain. Based on last year’s quest to go twelve months without buying anything, you may have the impression that our family is subsisting on Ramen noodles and free chips and salsa at the local Mexican restaurant. Not to worry, we are not in dire straits. Last year was the best year yet for my business. Things are looking busy in 2014. But that is not a blessing.

I’ve noticed a trend among Christians, myself included, and it troubles me. Our rote response to material windfalls is to call ourselves blessed. Like the “amen” at the end of a prayer.

“This new car is such a blessing.”
“Finally closed on the house. Feeling blessed.”
“Just got back from a mission trip. Realizing how blessed we are here in this country.”

On the surface, the phrase seems harmless. Faithful even. Why wouldn’t I want to give God the glory for everything I have? Isn’t that the right thing to do? No.

As I reflected on my “feeling blessed” comment, two thoughts came to mind. I realize I’m splitting hairs here, creating an argument over semantics. But bear with me, because I believe it is critically important. It’s one of those things we can’t see because it’s so culturally engrained that it has become normal.

But it has to stop. And here’s why.

First, when I say that my material fortune is the result of God’s blessing, it reduces The Almighty to some sort
of sky-bound, wish-granting fairy who spends his days randomly bestowing cars and cash upon his followers. I can’t help but draw parallels to how I handed out M&M’s to my own kids when they followed my directions and chose to poop in the toilet rather than in their pants. Sure, God wants us to continually seek His will, and it’s for our own good. But positive reinforcement? God is not a behavioral psychologist.

Second, and more importantly, calling myself blessed because of material good fortune is just plain wrong. For starters, it can be offensive to the hundreds of millions of Christians in the world who live on less than $10 per day. You read that right. Hundreds of millions who receive a single-digit dollar “blessing” per day.

During our year in Guatemala, Gabby and I witnessed first-hand the damage done by the theology of prosperity, where faithful people scraping by to feed their families were simply told they must not be faithful enough. If they were, God would pull them out of their nightmare. Just try harder, and God will show favor.

The problem? Nowhere in scripture are we promised worldly ease in return for our pledge of faith. In fact, the most devout saints from the Bible usually died penniless, receiving a one-way ticket to prison or death by torture. I’ll take door number three, please. If we’re looking for the definition of blessing, Jesus spells it out clearly (Matthew 5: 1-12).

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, And He began to teach them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

I have a sneaking suspicion verses 12a 12b and 12c were omitted from the text. That’s where the disciples responded by saying: 12a Waitest thou for one second, Lord. What about “blessed art thou comfortable,” or 12b “blessed art thou which havest good jobs, a modest house in the suburbs, and a yearly vacation to the Florida Gulf Coast?” 12c And Jesus said unto them, “Apologies, my brothers, but those did not maketh the cut.”

So there it is. Written in red. Plain as day. Even still, we ignore it all when we hijack the word “blessed” to make it fit neatly into our modern American ideals, creating a cosmic lottery where every sincere prayer buys us another scratch-off ticket. In the process, we stand the risk of alienating those we are hoping to bring to the faith.

And we have to stop playing that game.

The truth is, I have no idea why I was born where I was or why I have the opportunity I have. It’s beyond comprehension. But I certainly don’t believe God has chosen me above others because of the veracity of my prayers or the depth of my faith. Still, if I take advantage of the opportunities set before me, a comfortable life may come my way. It’s not guaranteed. But if it does happen, I don’t believe Jesus will call me blessed.

He will call me “burdened.”
He will ask, "What will you do with it?"
"Will you use it for yourself?"
"Will you use it to help?"
"Will you hold it close for comfort?"
"Will you share it?"

So many hard choices. So few easy answers. So my prayer today is that I understand my true blessing. It’s not my house. Or my job. Or my standard of living. No.

My blessing is this. I know a God who gives hope to the hopeless. I know a God who loves the unlovable. I know a God who comforts the sorrowful. And I know a God who has planted this same power within me. Within all of us. And for this blessing, may our response always be, "Use me." Since I had this conversation, my new response is simply, "I’m grateful." Would love to hear your thoughts.

Scott Dannemiller is a writer, blogger, worship leader and former missionary with the Presbyterian Church. He writes the blog The Accidental Missionary, where this post first appeared. Reprinted with permission.
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Crossword

Across
2: In what way or manner
5: Any of the feelings of joy, sorrow, fear, hate, love, etc.
7: Conjunction, used in correlation
8: Worship leader and CEO of Integrity
13: Speak or pronounce
13: A way of speaking, mode of expression
14: Skilled in music
16: South African worship leader originally from Cape Town; write of "Our God Rocks" (7,5)
19: A devout petition to God
22: To reverse
23: Not law
24: Only one in number
25: Make musical sounds with the voice
26: Anything done
27: The first and lowest whole number
28: Weep
29: A loud cry

Down
1: A noise, vocal utterance, musical tone
3: Loving; affectionate
4: The sound uttered through human beings in speaking
9: Preposition, to indicate inclusion
10: To regard favourably
11: The performance of musical parts at the same pitch
11: The unlimited three-dimensional realm in which all material objects are located
12: Worship leader from Arizona USA; writer of "Open The Eyes" (4,7)
13: A visible image
15: Praise
16: To utter words
17: To praise, to recognise as great
18: The art of sound
20: A state of great splendour and magnificence
21: To pay divine honour to
COLOR BY NUMBER

1 - red
2 - yellow
3 - light brown
4 - purple
5 - green
6 - blue

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time:
Ecclesiastes 3:11

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