

WINTER 2021

DESTINY

M A G A Z I N E

**THE BEAUTY
OF HOLINESS**

**THE SCANDAL
OF ORDINARY**

**COMMUNICATION
THAT CONNECTS**

**GOD'S ON
THE MOVE**

**DLI NOW
ENROLLING
SPRING 2022**

**THEY SHALL
BE SATISFIED**



A Word from Phil & Cathy



Welcome to this edition of the Destiny Magazine. It's our last of the 2021 season, and we are so excited about bringing it to you. In this edition, we have a great lineup of articles designed to inform, encourage and equip you to enter the new year with great anticipation.

It's also one of our favorite seasons of the year, Christmas! Cathy and I love this holiday season so much and all the things that come with it - hot chocolate, hickory fires in the fireplace, the tree all trimmed to perfection, and family gatherings, they are the best!

The challenges confronting today's ministry leaders have been many, and the work has been fierce. We have been praying for you, and God has been so faithful. We hope you are encouraged by this edition and find a heartwarming moment in Christ's presence as you read.

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In this Edition

4 THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS
DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD

7 COMMUNICATION THAT
CONNECTS MARCUS BRIGGS

8 IDA RELIEF UPDATE
MICHELLE BRAUD

9 NAME THE CAROLS

10 WHEAT IN A WINEPRESS
DAVID AYER

12 THE HOME BUTTON
ASHLEY CLINTON

14 THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED
JEFFREY KENT

16 THE SCANDAL OF ORDINARY
LANDON GALLOWAY

18 FROM PRODIGAL TO PREACHER
SHIVON WOODARD-GREEN

21 10 IDEAS FOR THE HOLIDAY
SEASON

22 I STRUGGLE
JAMES "BO" KILGORE III

25 GOD'S ON THE MOVE

26 WHY DESTINY LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE?

28 NORTHROCK CHURCH
JONATHAN MOORE

30 DESTINY NOW CONFERENCE

31 MARY MEMOIRS
DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD



IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR DESTINY MEMBERSHIP 2022

It's time to renew your Destiny Membership for the year 2022. Renewing your membership has two dimensions. First, there is the annual Certification Fee of \$75 for Ministry Ordination or \$50 for General Ministry License, and then, secondly, making your monthly financial commitment to support Destiny Ministries throughout the year.

Over the years, Destiny has relied on the faithful support of our members to serve the Christian Leaders and churches we love so much. Every day we are engaged in the efforts to provide pastoral care for five-fold ministry leaders, to provide life-giving resources for our members, missions outreaches and opportunities, support for church planting efforts, and training disciples and leaders for ministry service both here and abroad.

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The Beauty of **HOLINESS**

DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD



Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Bow down before Him. His glory proclaim: Gold of obedience and incense of lowliness. Bring and adore Him—the Lord is His Name.

These were the words of songwriter John Monsell, who was an Anglican Priest and Vicar (Pastor) of several churches in England in the 1850s and 60s. When I came across them recently, the phrase, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," caught my attention, and my mind immediately began to think of moments and experiences that I have had that might put such a phrase into context.

I am certain that we have all experienced this phrase to some degree, at one time or another, perhaps in a summer rain, a majestic sunset, or the breaking of an ocean wave on a rocky shore. These moments can be breathtaking and inspiring, to say the least, and in their unique way, reveal God's wonder. I have had that experience when a mountainside became a sanctuary, and a spectacular view of some majestic landscape ushered in the presence of God, and I was moved to worship!

And speaking of landscapes, I have always loved them. I remember the first time I saw Pike's Peak; the majestic view was absolutely amazing. Cathy and I decided to drive to the summit several years ago while attending a minister's conference in Colorado Springs. As we made the hour-long trip from the lower ranger's station to the top, it was one of those "beauty of holiness" moments for sure. And when the clutch apparently went out in her little black sports car while we were at the peak, I was sure, for a moment, that we might literally see God face-to-face on the way down. However, a kind park ranger fixed it for us, and we were on our way before we knew it. Although, he did say, "I'm going to park at "Dead Man's Bluff" and watch you drive down to make sure you make it." That statement sort of washed the wonder away for a moment. But we carefully navigated and survived the descent back down the mountain, and between hairpin turns with thousand-foot drops and the shimmering, reflecting pools of the mountain lakes that we passed on the way, we were blown away. It was a thrill ride, indeed.

But I am certain that with all due respect given to the incredible beauty and majesty of the landscapes of this world and awe inspiring visions that life and nature can provide, there was one moment in time throughout all of human history that stands alone in wonder, unparalleled in majesty and splendor. It was a moment so grand that Tyndale would say, when he spoke of it, that the Knighthood of Heaven itself stood at attention. And it happened at one of the most unexpected places and times imaginable.

Luke records it for us... Luke 2:4-7

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called

Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The season was probably early Fall, after the harvest was completed, a time when farmers would have had the money and time to comply with a Roman census for taxation that required them to return to the areas of their family's nativity (Luke 2:1). Further, it would have been before the cold rains of winter began when shepherds would have brought their sheep out of the fields (Luke 2:8). It was, perhaps, during the Feast of Trumpets that would have certainly filled the accommodations and inns in and around Jerusalem (Bethlehem is only six miles from Jerusalem) that Joseph and Mary (who was great with child) made the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They likely traveled with a caravan of other pilgrims, perhaps with others returning for the census or to the Feast. Traveling with a group would have offered some form of safety and companionship during the long and difficult walk. We don't know exactly what route they took. Two options were available - one shorter, but more strenuous along the trade route through the center of the region; the other, a longer, but an easier (flatter) walk through the Jordan River Valley. Regardless of the route, the approximately 100-mile trip would have taken them eight to ten long days of walking. It must have been an incredibly difficult trip for a young, expectant mother and her betrothed.

Bethlehem, at this time, would normally have been an extremely small village of only a few hundred inhabitants, but with the census, and perhaps the feast, it would have been bulging with people. When they arrived, Mary had already gone into labor. There was no hospitality space or rooms for rent available, and the baby was coming! So, after what I'm sure would have been a frantic search for suitable shelter, they settled for the only available space - most likely, a cave where shepherds would take shelter, while the sheep were still out in the fields. No doubt, it would have been a dirty, smelly place, and not exactly sterile. But it was here where one of the most majestic moments in all of history would take place, the birth of a baby, a very special baby, The Lord Jesus Christ. Here in this simple place, He would receive His first formal worship as King.

Luke tells us that in the same area, there were shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. According to Mishnaic sources (Shek. vii. 4), these shepherds were keepers of the Temple Flock. This flock was special



and set apart from all the other flocks of Israel. These sheep were born and groomed to die as sacrifices for the sins of the people in the Jerusalem Temple nearby. How fitting it was for the announcement of the Messiah's birth (the Lamb of God) to come to these shepherds first. As a matter of fact, a Jewish prophet had foretold it. An interesting detail from a prophecy in the Old Testament declares that the announcement of the Messiah's arrival (His revealing) would come at the Migdal Eder, meaning the Tower of the Flock.

And you, **O tower of the flock**, hill of daughter Zion, to you it shall come, the former dominion shall come, the sovereignty of daughter Jerusalem (Micah 4:8 NRSV).

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth... (Micah 5:2-3 NRSV)

Imagine with me a night of majesty and splendor as a royal delegation is dispatched from the presence of the Lord in Heaven to announce to the World that the Messiah has come. This announcement is to be made at the most fitting place in the world if the mission of the Messiah is to become the Lamb of God and die for the sins of the world. To the lowly shepherds who guard the temple flock, the sky was suddenly lit with the Light of God's glory, and the messengers of God made the announcement. All of Heaven and Earth stand to attention as the decree is made!

Luke 2:9-20

9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the

sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

The shepherds, following the Angel's decree, quickly head toward the city and the place of Christ's birth. When they arrive and locate the holy family, they find the Christ Child with His mother and earthly father. Then, there in that most humble of places, they, without gold or precious stones, open the treasure of their hearts and "worship in the beauty of holiness." In a way, their worship released and fulfilled hundreds, even thousands, of years of Messianic anticipation and prophetic expectation. The adoration must have flowed like a river.

I have seen some sights, some of the most magnificent this world has to offer, but nothing to be compared with the Shepherds who were the first on this earth to worship the Messiah, Jesus Christ. During this holiday season, relive the moment, and make it a point to find your way to the feet of the Messiah, and join with all of Heaven and earth, as together we "worship in the beauty of Holiness!"

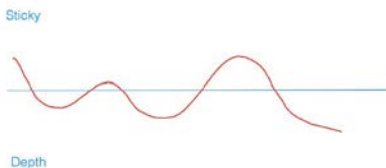
COMMUNICATION THAT CONNECTS



MARCUS BRIGGS

Several months ago, a friend of mine and I were discussing how difficult it is in our present time to train up new communicators. Remember old-school church... You had at least four different platforms to allow new communicators to get reps. Sunday School, Sunday morning service, Sunday night service, Wednesday night service, and if that wasn't enough, you still had the youth group available for them to get their heresy out of the way. Today, however, most of us only have one type of service, and we wouldn't dare let an amateur take the stage there. It left me thinking... Where is the batting cage where I can get these men and women ready for the game? How can we help communicators connect with their audience and connect the audience with God's word? We are still working on this problem, but one promising visualization is allowing us to present a technique that transcends style and grows our communicators. Without destroying their individuality, we want to help amateur communicators take giant strides without giant risks.

After looking at some of our favorite speakers, we were able to see a pattern emerge in their communication. They were able to go seamlessly from depth to what we call stickiness and back again without much effort, and they went back and forth many times during their talks. Attached is a chart we created to help explain this method to new communicators.



On the top end of this graph is stickiness. Sticky elements of a sermon are the elements that people remember. For all you funny guys out there, this is your go to area. Hilarious stories, visuals, surprises... You get the idea.

Jesus did this a lot. He'd say, "The kingdom of heaven is like a _____." This was sticky because it related an unseen

kingdom to a seen world. Stickiness matters in a sermon because it connects the dots for the audience. I try to keep in mind that if a teenager can't follow this train of thought, then I need to rework it.

The bottom part of this graph has a very creative name, "depth." Depth would be not just a Bible verse, but a contextual explanation. It would be an exposition about the passage that you would only know if you had memorized the full Matthew Henry Commentary and could read Biblical Hebrew. Of course, I'm kidding (because my default is stickiness), but depth would require more nerding out on a topic. Think of depth like free diving. You take a deep breath and then go deep into the waters, and just hang out. The trouble is that not everyone can hold their breath as long as you can, so you must surface or drown your audience. However, the answer is not to just skip going deep. The answer is to take deep dives, but come up for air often. Your audience needs depth, but they also need to connect it to their lives.

Here's the trouble with nearly all of us; we have a tendency, as I just proved with my writing. We tend to go one way or the other. Think about your leaning; we all have a preference. I love hanging out on the sticky side; it's just a preference. However, I must also connect the sticky to the depth. **Stickiness might grow our crowd, but our crowd won't grow.** I want both. I want the amount of people I reach to grow, but big deal if I don't help the people I reach grow. I need both, and I need both every Sunday. I read recently that the average "consistent church-goer" attends once every six weeks.

If that is true, I can't dedicate an entire day to just one side of this graph.

Please don't hear me wrong... We very well might have a series designed to reach new people, (sticky) but we'll still throw in some shallow dives into the bottom part of that graph. On the other hand, if we run a series intended to draw people deeper into their relationship with the Lord, we still must come up for air occasionally into the sticky zone.

Every communicator should take their audience back and forth into different heights and depths of these two halves. We want our communicators to move seamlessly back and forth multiple times in a service, helping people understand the mysteries of God and clearly communicating what God has placed in them to be said.

Paul, when he is giving instruction on communion, says in 1 Corinthians 11:23, "For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself..." The main thing every communicator should know is that we must receive before we can communicate God's message. However, by God's beautiful design, **He allows "The Way" to be communicated in a variety of ways.** God uses each of our giftings, experiences, styles, current circumstances, and platforms to share the same word in unique ways. One of our greatest challenges as communicators is not allowing our tendencies to monopolize our communication. We need both sides of this coin no matter our tendency. I hope this simple chart helps you, and as you become "all things to all men," I pray your church grows in every way.



Marcus & Chelsea Briggs are the lead pastors of Riverpark Church. They work hard to present Jesus to the world around them in a passionate and authentic way. They believe that church should be a place where everyone is welcome, and they seek to make Riverpark that place. Marcus and Chelsea desire to further the influence of Jesus in the Shreveport-Bossier area by fostering community both within and outside of Riverpark. Their life's goal is to make a difference in others' lives by helping them know and love God. Marcus and Chelsea enjoy spending time with their three children, playing tennis, and building community with friends and family.



IDA relief

HURRICANE UPDATE

MICHELLE BRAUD | The Harbor Church, LA

I grew up in South Louisiana hearing the names Betsy and Camille. I didn't live through those storms, but they were such significant, historical hurricanes that stories of survival and recovery continue to be passed on. From a young age, we were taught that if you live here, you'll need to prepare for that "once in a lifetime" storm. Years later, we felt the effects of Katrina by helping New Orleans and the Northshore pick up the pieces. Coincidentally, on the 16th anniversary of Katrina, Hurricane Ida made landfall with a direct hit to our city, Hammond, Louisiana, and the surrounding region. We found ourselves now being the ones that needed help.

It's difficult to understand the magnitude of Hurricane Ida. For starters, 30,000 electric poles were damaged in Ida - almost twice as many as Katrina. Most people didn't have electricity for three to four weeks, which meant they couldn't wash clothes and could only heat food on a grill. Cell phone service was down, making it difficult to contact loved ones to see if they were safe, and the internet was non-existent for over a month. With many people running homes off generators, hours-long lines were created at the gas stations, resulting in gasoline shortages. As I write this, there are still piles of debris lining many roadsides, houses that have been completely gutted, and blue tarps covering damaged roofs.

During the critical phase of the aftermath, we experienced the beauty of the Ekklesia being who she was created to be by being "boots on the ground" and bringing light in the darkness. From Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge showing up with an army of volunteers to help with debris removal and gutting houses to someone from Chicago loading up a U-Haul of diapers, wipes and formula to drop off for distribution, hope came from so many different places. Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank delivered 336 emergency food boxes, and Convoy of Hope delivered an 18-wheeler

load of food and cleaning supplies that we distributed. Several churches sent funds used to keep generators running in the 104° heat index. An incredible team from Texas, Lord Send Me Ministry, came in their RV with food, griddles and smokers. Together, as they provided two hot meals a day and an army of volunteers distributed them, we served over 10,000 meals to our hurting community.

A few things we learned in the midst of the storm:

1. God always provides!
2. Before any organization or government could show up, the Church was already in place.
3. Our kids and youth are not the Church of tomorrow; they are the Church of today. Without them, we could not have served 10,000 meals to our community.
4. Joy is not for after the battle, but joy is our strength in the battle.
5. We were created for hard things!

In the midst of the storm, we saw God come close. We saw Him send us incredible people and resources to help. We saw how a pack of diapers, some cleaning supplies, or a hot meal could change someone's demeanor. We saw how the broken-hearted would now open up and allow us to pray for them. And we saw first-hand how "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

To see the miracles of God with a front row seat, we had to say YES to the inconvenience and to the hard work, and we had to show up. It was not convenient being a distribution center when we did not have electricity and most of our homes and property had damage. We were created for hard things; our reward is that we get an up-close and personal view of Him making beauty from ashes.





NAME THE CAROLS

*Below are alternative names for well known Christmas Carols. Can you name their real title?
Play this fun word game at your family gatherings or small group Christmas party.*

1. Small male child that can keep a beat.
2. Decorate the Entryways.
3. Sir Lancelot with Laryngitis.
4. Wanted in December: Both forward Incisors.
5. The middle of the evening has arrived, not a cloud in sight.
6. Jubilation to this Planet.
7. Two Hundred Eighty Eight Yuletide hours.
8. Frozen Precipitation Commence.
9. Far back in a hay bin.
10. Leave and broadcast from an elevated rock.
11. All of Us: Saul, David, Solomon.
12. Listen, the winged heavenly messengers are proclaiming tunefully.
13. Assemble everyone who believes.
14. Oh, Member of the Roundtable with missing areas.
15. Oh small Israel urban center.
16. Hither Thee Arrives Kringle.
17. Back and Forth Circling Ornamented Evergreen.
18. Everyone hopes for you a joyful December holiday.
19. Fantasies of a colorless December 25th.
20. It's fixin' to appear extremely similar to December 25th.

1. Little Drummer Boy, 2. Deck the Halls, 3. Silent Night, 4. All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth, 5. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, 6. Joy to the World, 7. The 12 Days of Christmas, 8. Let it Snow, 9. Away in a Manger, 10. Go Tell it On the Mountain, 11. We Three Kings, 12. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, 13. O Come All Ye Faithful, 14. O Holy Night, 15. O Little Town of Bethlehem, 16. Here Comes Santa Claus, 17. Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, 18. We Wish You a Merry Christmas, 19. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas, 20. It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas.



Wheat in a WINEPRESS

DAVID AYER

So many times in 2020-21 people have felt like they are just trying to survive. Some of those people are in your church. You know them. There's the struggling single mother, trying to keep food on the table. Then you have the widowed grandfather on a fixed income who was just diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Then there's those two teenage boys and their beautiful sister who never quite got over their Dad leaving, and you can see the trouble on the horizon. Pastor, what you can't tell them, what they can never know as they lean on you for support, is that you are barely holding on because you are in survival mode too.

The story of Gideon begins in survival mode. We all know the story. He was God's leader in one of the greatest battles in Israel's history, destroying a Midianite army of thousands with only 300 men. It's all true, but that's not how the story started. Before the epic battle, Israel was being ravaged by the Midianites. Everything of any value had already been eaten or taken away, and the people of Israel were desperate to keep what little they had left. Gideon was one of them, so, in Judges 6, we find our hero threshing wheat in a winepress. The problem is,

wheat does not belong in a winepress. Grapes do.

Gideon was doing a good thing. He was taking care of his family. Gideon had gone out and harvested some of the wheat that the Midianites had missed. He's taken it back to his family estate to thresh it so that he can make some bread. He's just trying to survive. This is the point; sometimes circumstances can force us into survival mode where we are just trying to keep what we have left, and pastors are not immune.

Barna Group reported that 29% of pastors seriously considered quitting last year. In fact, Vanderbloemen, a church consulting company in Houston, Texas, estimates that after the turmoil of 2020-21, over 25% of pastors are one crisis away from quitting. This kind of stress often leads people (yes, pastors are people too) to kick into survival mode and guard what little they feel they have left. The problem with survival mode is that it causes you to forget who you really are to meet the needs of the moment. The thing is, if you just pick up your head from what you thought was going to be your life, God sends you a Messenger.

While Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress, the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the Terebinth Tree. Look at the contrast here. Gideon is working hard to survive while the Angel is there, lounging under a tree, but the Angel is not there to take a nap. He had come to deliver a message. He came to remind Gideon who he is.

Judges 6:12

And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

Gideon doesn't believe it and asks, "Then why has all this happened, and where are His miracles?" (v.13). Notice that the Angel didn't answer his questions. Instead, He brings him back to the ONLY answer that matters, which is "You are God's answer."

The Angel called him "a mighty man of valor." Valor is great courage in the face of danger, especially battle. The problem is, Gideon is NOT a man of valor. He is threshing wheat in a winepress, hiding from the Midianites, knowing that if he's found, the little wheat he has will be taken, so in verse 15, Gideon asks, "How can I save Israel?" The answer is simple. Be who you ARE, NOT who your circumstances are trying to make you. That is, Gideon,



to do this, you need to step into your prophetic identity. Gideon was focused on who his circumstances had made him but look at what the Lord says to him, "Go in this great victory, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" (v. 14) "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." (v. 16)

As you read this, you need to remember that you are NOT responsible for the victory. Why? Because you are not the source of your calling. God is.

I am speaking to people who still have victories to win for God. Maybe it is time for you to move into retirement, but that doesn't mean there aren't victories before you. If you are ready for retirement, choosing your successor is your next great victory, and Dr. Brassfield will help so that you are ready for the new victories that await in that next chapter in your life. That's part of the beauty of belonging to a network like Destiny. We are always developing young leaders through Destiny Leadership Institute (DLI). Still, the reality is, no matter where you are in life, sometimes circumstances force you into survival mode, trying to keep what you have left. If that's you, you

need to know this. Until you come away from the winepress and become who you were created to be, there will be NO VICTORY for you, your family, or the Kingdom of God. I am not saying to be unwise or irresponsible. I am saying that it's time to remember who you were created to be.

So who are you, Gideon? A WARRIOR.

The Warrior was created for battle. He was made to fight and win the battles that others could not. I am here to remind you of one thing: YOU are God's Answer!

It is God's calling on your life that is going to change your circumstances. He wants to use you to restore His Kingdom and defeat His enemies, but He can do NOTHING while you're threshing wheat in the winepress.

It is time to remember the promises God gave you when He called you into ministry and allow for nothing else to be the priority. It is time to "Go in this great victory." And when doubt or fear whispers in your ear, remember that it is the Lord who called and is with you, so go fight and win and see the harvest God will bring through you by being who He made you to be.



DAVID AYER, AND HIS BEAUTIFUL WIFE DENISE, CURRENTLY PASTOR NEW LIFE CHURCH IN CANTON, PA. BOTH HAVE TRAVELED INTERNATIONALLY AS MISSIONARY EVANGELISTS AND CONFERENCE SPEAKERS. DAVID HOLDS DEGREES FROM TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL, ASHLAND SEMINARY, AND UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AND IS THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK, WHERE ARE THE DAVID'S.



THE HOME BUTTON



ASHLEY CLINTON

I've got a question for you: Did you ever have a phone that had a home button on it? I would be willing to say that most of us did, especially if you had an iPhone back in 2007. That home button on your iPhone, as well as many

other brands, was the most pressed button on that device. Think about it - How many times do you think you would push that button on your phone during the day? If you're like me, that home button gets more "pressing time" than our favorite waffle maker. But seriously, have you ever counted the times you've pressed the home button to clear out your screen, open apps, and get you back where you needed to be?

When it comes to our screens, there can be a lot of open apps, web pages, games, music selections, and so many others to distract us from what we really could be doing, and

that home button could make all those distractions go away. With phones constantly changing, that home button has now almost become completely obsolete, but it was one of the main buttons to get things started on our phones - all you had to do was press it; it was that simple.

When it comes to children's ministry, how many times are we thinking about the real home button and what it would take to get our families to push it to get things started? And after they pick up their kids from church? Would they need more resources? Would they need better communication? Would they need the sock finder app as little Johnny and Jane always seem to lose their socks at the church? All of their needs could be summed up into one single word, *intentionality*.

When we're intentional with getting out what we're communicating for weekly programming, we can resource and empower our families to continue discipleship after the services conclude. I know you're probably thinking, "Gee, Ashley, this all sounds great, but how can we pull this off?" I'm so glad you asked. We began by making it simple for



Ashley Clinton has been serving on staff as the Children's Pastor at Christ Church in West Monroe, Louisiana since 2018. He is passionate about making an eternal impact on the next generation of Christ followers through creative programming and building and empowering teams. Ashley is a DLI alumni and has the honor of serving alongside his bride, Laura, of 16 years. Together, they have three children Jackson (20), Jacob (19) and Lexie Rae (14). Ashley and Laura love their family time, ballroom dancing and family game nights.

our families. Parents can sometimes be intimidated by formal devotions or may even feel inadequate about disciplining their children and will often tell their children to listen to their leaders at church, and that is completely normal. As children's leaders, it's our duty and calling to partner *with* our parents and empower them to fully engage with their children in the Word of God.

This can be done a number of different ways, but remember *simple* is the key.

When our parents pick up their children from church, we make sure that there is a tool in their hands to take home with them. This can be a simple color sheet featuring the story or Bible character that was discussed that week. These color sheets can also feature a simple family devotional on the back that includes easy prompts to help parents engage with their children about the lesson. It can even have some simple questions to ask and the answers included, (haha). These talking points can be done before bed, during dinner, or even on the way to school the next morning. These talking points really get the conversation going, and it empowers parents to really dive-in to what they're children are learning.

You could even create a simple postcard that illustrates the Armor of God, and parents can teach this to their children before school the next day. We created core value posters for our families and, while it's a great behavioral tool in services, in the home, it becomes a powerful guideline for a child's daily life. In turn, it can also impact their parents. I'll often get an email or phone call from a parent that wants more information, and I get to provide them with additional resources to keep the family conversation going. It's been very successful. There again, *simple*. Discipleship for our parents should be a daily way of life, not necessarily a formal program. Daily actions and involvement tips could even be placed on a fridge magnet calendar with each day featuring

a different area to pray for over their children. This would make a great first time visitor gift. While time is often limited in parents' lives, it is also such a precious gift.

I have a pastor friend that gathers his kids around the table or sofa, and they take turns saying nice things about the other family members each day. While this is a simple exercise, it reinforces positive feelings and encourages children to really think about what they want to tell their family members. It also sets a daily reminder for children that they are going to hear something positive about themselves from others. This is a great way to help our parents "break the ice" with their children and get the conversation going.

This season seems to always be the time of year that we slow down a little bit and spend that quality time with our families. Ministry can be quite busy and oftentimes inconvenient, but it's in those quality times that our families grow closer together - It's meaningful; it's intentional. While most churches have an annual serve day for their volunteers to help out in the community, I fully believe that children can also play a huge part in serving others. Whether it be writing cards to our first responders, delivering baked goods to our local doctors offices, or even visiting retirement homes and bringing some goodies or craft kits, all of these service projects will bring smiles to the community and give children a servant heart. Then, head out for some hot chocolate and donut holes, because those make everyday great!

I challenge you and your children's ministry teams to really think of fun and creative ways to get discipleship back in the home, while making it simple for our parents. Out of the average number of 50 weeks per year that we get to spend with children, let's make every effort to make each week count.



A person is shown from the back, sitting on a floor in a library or bookstore, reading a book. The shelves are filled with books, and the lighting is soft and warm.

THEY SHALL BE *Satisfied*

Finding Fulfillment in the Simplicity of Hungering and Thirsting for Christ

JEFFREY KENT

Growing within the Church today, there is a longing in many to return to the beauty and simplicity of following Christ. The 21-day devotional *Satisfied* was begun out of that desire. It was written to empower men and women of God to pursue the heart of Jesus daily. I believe that in some ways, the Church is rediscovering that sustainable spiritual growth is experienced far less in the big moments than in the daily commitment to deny ourselves and to commit to basic Christian disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, worship, and biblical study.

Christians today find themselves in a world intoxicated with self-indulgence. The battle cry of media and advertisements is more – more comfort, more money, more status. Yet for followers of Christ, standing in contrast to this hedonistic worldview is the Word of God beckoning us to lay down our desires and step into a life of intimate communion with Christ.

Our ultimate pursuit is not found in performance, but in presence. The Christian walk is a lifelong journey of stepping into more of the presence of Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This journey, by nature, demands us to equally seek less of ourselves – less of our own selfish desires vying for the driver's seat of

our wills and emotions. As leaders of the Church, we should be modeling and championing this call.

Of all the spiritual disciplines, perhaps no other propels us into Christ pursuit like fasting does. No other spiritual practice subjugates our physical cravings, while elevating our spiritual yearnings, quite like fasting. Fasting has incredible power in shifting the allegiance of our minds. Paul declared, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Our determination to fast cries out to our bodies that our devotion to God is greater than our devotion to physical comfort and satisfaction.

The transformative capabilities of fasting have been understood since ancient times. It has been practiced in nearly every civilization and prescribed in nearly every religion in the history of the world. The Bible mentions fasting some 77 times. It was an essential part of the spiritual life of the great leaders of our faith. Moses fasted in preparation for receiving the Commandments of God. Elijah fasted while on the run from Jezebel. King David fasted amidst the imminent death of his son. Nehemiah fasted as he wept over the condition of his nation. Even Jesus fasted as the Spirit drove him into the wilderness to face the tempter.

Biblical fasting is inextricably linked with prayer, worship and biblical study. Why? Because spiritual fasting drives us into craving God's presence, while unveiling how dependent we are on physical sustenance. Missionary Elisabeth Elliot once wrote, "One way to begin to see how vastly indulgent we usually are is to fast." Fasting builds a hunger deep within our spirits, not for physical indulgence, but for deeper waters of communion with Christ.

There are several types of fasts mentioned throughout Scripture, but in considering a fast, the purpose must outweigh the practice. Fasting is about the heart, not the methodology. *Satisfied* leads readers through a 21-day period of consecration to God through fasting, prayer and biblical study. This 21-day corporate fast has become most notably known as the Daniel fast, reckoning back to the time the young prophet boldly refused to abandon his faith and cave into the indulgences of the king's table.

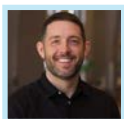
Satisfied is designed as a 21-day fasting and prayer resource for any believer or seeker regardless of where they're at on their faith journey. I found myself guilty of walking into periods of spiritual fasting with recipes, meal plans, and other preparations, but no clear plan for spiritual growth. I recognized that there are ample resources for preparing for fasting and

detailing the benefits of fasting. But the fact is, we generally don't need a book convincing us to fast in the middle of a fast; we need a guided spiritual plan to walk us through it.

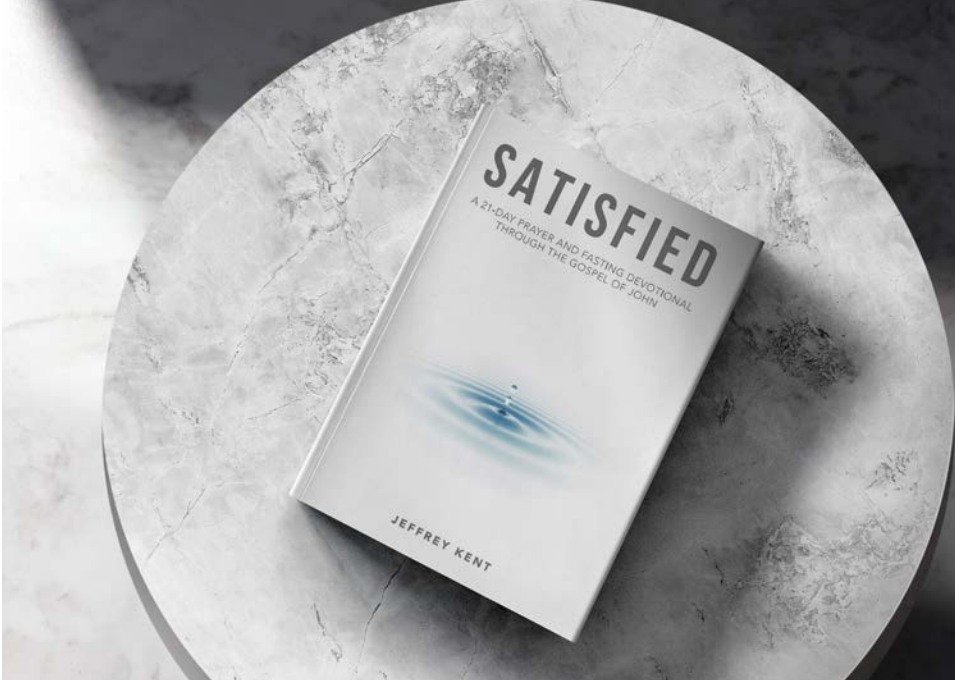
Trudging through three weeks of hunger pangs, social media withdrawals, and major schedule changes can be taxing. More spiritual meat is needed than a few verses or a 1-minute devotional. The goal of fasting certainly is not simply to be miserable. It is to remind us that as much as we hunger for food, we must hunger for His Truths more. As much as we thirst, we must thirst for His love more. As we experience weakness, we are reminded of His strength. As we change our schedules, we are reminded that He directs all our steps. Fasting welcomes us into an incredibly heightened awareness of God's love and our desperate need for His provision and grace.

I want to encourage you to consider this devotional for your next time of fasting. Perhaps it is an individual time of fasting or calling your entire church to fast, as many do, during the first three weeks of January in the upcoming year. *Satisfied* takes readers on a spiritual journey through the Gospel of John. Each day will introduce you to a central theme in the Christian faith. You will be guided to study, reflect on, apply, and lastly, to pray God's Word as you watch it uncover and transform areas of your life.

I hope and pray you find renewed satisfaction straight from the Bread of Life and the Living Water who is Jesus Christ as you embark on this 21-day journey with so many others. I believe if you commit to jumping all in, you will walk away knowing the heart and love of Jesus like never before. Jesus promised in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."



JEFFREY KENT IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE PASTOR AT CHRIST CHURCH. HE HAS BEEN TEACHING, PREACHING, AND SERVING CHURCHES FOR OVER 20 YEARS INCLUDING NEARLY 3 YEARS IN CHINA. JEFFREY RECEIVED A B.A. IN RELIGION FROM LOUISIANA COLLEGE, AND A MASTER OF DIVINITY FROM LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.



"You are not loved because of what you do, but because of what He did. If you are in Christ, then His love is in you. It is an eternal, unbreakable love."

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

Satisfied is a 21-day devotional through the Gospel of John, that also incorporates fasting and prayer. This is a great tool for any church going through a 21-day fast. The goal in this devotional is three weeks of immersion into the heart of Jesus. The book will walk readers through how to choose the right fast, how to keep with it, and how to pull truths out of Scripture and apply them to life today. This is for the Christian who feels overwhelmed with where to begin. *Satisfied* is a chance to go deeper and experience God in new and refreshing ways.

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THE SCANDAL OF ORDINARY

LANDON GALLOWAY

The first Christmas story is marked by extraordinary happenings. Though two of the Gospels record the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, Matthew emphasizes the supernatural elements the most. A virgin discovers that she will have a child (Mt. 1:18). When her husband-to-be discovers this, he decides to end the engagement. But, an angel appears to him in a dream (1:20) and tells him that this child was the fulfillment of prophecy (1:23). That's right, Joseph, your fiancée is expecting a child that was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. Pretty extraordinary, right?

The supernatural phenomena around Jesus' birth continue throughout the early chapters of Matthew. A star announces His birth to wisemen from a faraway land (2:2). They follow the star to the land of Israel and arrive at Herod's palace. If a king is to be born, where better to look than the royal house? However, the chief priests provide yet another supernatural sign by revealing that the prophet Micah foretold the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem (2:6). They find the holy child, worship him, and lavish gifts on him. A dream warns them of telling Herod of Jesus' location (2:12).

Soon after, Joseph receives another angelic dream and is instructed to take the child to Egypt to escape Herod's maleficent intent and to fulfill yet another Old Testament prophecy (2:13-15). Even Herod's murderous rampage against the innocents was foretold by the prophets (2:17, 18). An angel notified Joseph of Herod's death and instructed him to return to the land of Israel (2:19), and another dream led the holy family to Galilee rather than Judea (2:22). The decision to settle in Nazareth of Galilee fulfilled another prophecy that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene (2:23).

It is really impossible to read the Gospel account and not be overwhelmed by the miraculous signs and wonders that accompanied the birth of the Savior. Extraordinary miracles, angelic visitations, dreams, visions, and fulfillment of prophecy characterize

the entire account. And this should be expected. After all, the coming of the long awaited Messiah was a remarkable moment in history. The Savior of all humanity, who was actually God in the flesh, had made His grand entrance into the world. We expect nothing less than the phenomenal to accompany His coming. **The scandal of Jesus is not that He was extraordinary; it is that so much of His life was ordinary.**

The scandal of Christmas is that Jesus was born in an ordinary place, in an ordinary manner, to ordinary people. There were a variety of messianic expectations in first century Judaism. Some were expecting a militant Messiah who would defeat Israel's Roman oppressors and firmly establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Others were looking for a priestly king who would purge the corrupt Temple system and restore righteousness. In other words, the Messiah would be an extraordinary figure, a strong fighter, and/or a capable religious character. No one was expecting the Promised One to be a baby born to a peasant family in a stable. God demonstrated His ability to cloak the extraordinary in the garments of the ordinary. When God wanted to send His Son and our Savior into the world, He sent an ordinary child.

ORDINARY PLACES

Religious Jews of the first century had a sophisticated theology of space. Israel was the most holy nation. Jerusalem was the most holy city in the nation. The Temple was the mostly holy building in the city. And, the Holy of Holies was the most holy spot in the Temple. This theology of place naturally associated the coming Messiah with the holy city of Jerusalem. However, Gabriel did not appear in Jerusalem but in the hills of Galilee. There was a religious bias against the land of Galilee because of the presence of Gentiles since the days of Isaiah. This is why it was sometimes mockingly referred to as "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Mt. 4:15). It was among the most unlikely places for God in the flesh to arrive. This theme is reiterated throughout the birth narratives. The announcement came in Mary's pedestrian home, rather than in the

prestigious Temple. The angels' song echoed in the rural fields, rather than the royal halls.

Jesus' birth redefines the theology of space. God is not confined to metropolitan centers; His voice can be heard in agrarian areas. God's presence can be experienced inside a beautiful cathedral or underneath a tree, in a church pew or on a bar stool. God shows up in the ordinary. He is just as likely to be found in the poor house as He is to be found in the White House. Christmas shows that the ordinary can be extraordinary and the natural can be supernatural.

ORDINARY PEOPLE

The Messiah was birthed by peasants rather than priests or Pharisees. One would expect the Great High Priest to be born into a Levitical family. Or, perhaps the Righteous One should belong to a family of Pharisees. After all, they were the guardians of righteousness. The religious elite often scorned commoners because they could not afford to frequently pilgrimage to Jerusalem to participate in the sacrificial system and because they lacked the education to understand the minutiae of the law. However, God chose to entrust His Son to humble and lowly peasants.

Ordinary people are continually highlighted in the birth narrative. Luke informs us that Gabriel first appeared to Mary, a woman, rather than Joseph. Jesus' birth is announced to shepherds and Gentiles rather than priests and kings. The elderly duo of Simeon and Anna are the only people in the Temple to recognize His potential. The religious hierarchy castigated commoners, but God trusted them with the Christmas message. The Holiday Season is a reminder that there are no extraordinary people; there are only ordinary people that trust in an extraordinary God.

ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

The supernatural phenomena, such as fulfilled prophecies, angelic visitations, and dreams, highlighted at the beginning of this article certainly capture our attention. But, many of the circumstances surrounding Christ's birth are unexciting and mundane. He was born while His parents were journeying to Jerusalem for a census. Unless you really like numbers and counting, censuses are not exciting.

Furthermore, He was born in a cave surrounded by animals. The greatest moment in history was void of paparazzi and pizzaz. There was just a man, a woman, a baby, and some barn animals. This is a great encouragement when we find that our lives are ordinary, humble, and seemingly average. Mundane moments are ripe for miracles.

Shortly after His birth, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had to escape King Herod's ruthless massacre of the infants. The one who would bring peace on earth was born in the midst of senseless violence motivated by selfish ambition. This is a great encouragement when we find that our lives are tumultuous and tragic. God is more than capable of sending His best blessings into the worst situations.

Does your life appear ordinary right now? The promise of Christmas is that God will work through ordinary people in ordinary places in the midst of ordinary circumstances. This is the most wonderful time of the year. Not because you are wonderful, but because the One who is came and dwelt among us.





FROM PRODIGAL TO *Preacher*

SHIVON WOODARD-GREEN

How does someone go from a prodigal to a preacher? Only by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. I'm convinced of the love of God because of the radical love I have received. My journey from prodigal to preacher included God placing people in my life that believed God's plan for me was greater than my biggest mistakes.

I grew up in Hot Springs, Arkansas with loving parents who always desired for me to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. At the age of 5, I remember encountering the love of Jesus during the puppet ministry at our church.

Over the years, my passion for Jesus began to grow even more. By the time I reached middle school, I was a full time evangelist to my classmates. The first email I ever sent my mom was to tell her about a classmate I shared the Gospel with.

I was baptized at 16 serving and leading worship at church. I was on fire for God and proudly proclaimed my faith all the way through high school.

At age 17, something shifted and the world started to look appealing. I had a thought: "What if I'm missing out on the fun? I've been a good Christian girl all my life." With that thought, I set out on my own journey leaving the Father's house. I headed off to college at Louisiana Tech with hopes of "living my best life" fully naive to the dangers of life without Christ. My innocence was stolen in every way, and I felt trapped in cycles of brokenness.

By the age of 24, the party was over and I felt nothing but shame and regret. It's interesting how we think that choosing our own way won't bring us pain, but it certainly does. That's when I learned that in our moments of despair, God's grace steps in to rescue us if we allow him to.

In 2010, I attended a revival service in Monroe, Louisiana. I don't know what I was looking for that day, I just knew I needed to do something different than what I had been doing. It was the best decision I ever made. I had the most powerful encounter with God. The presence of the Holy Spirit fell on me so heavily during the service that I couldn't stand.

Everything I thought was stolen from me with riotous living was being restored by the love and grace of Jesus. I wasn't where I wanted to be, but the one thing I refused to do was leave the Father's house again.

Lost and looking for a church, a friend of mine told me about Christ Church in West Monroe, LA. After one visit, I felt God telling me this would be home for a while. Near the end of service, I brought my shame to the altar and was met by a lady who knelt with me and prayed. She asked God to stir up the gifts in me. I couldn't believe that she was saying those things about me. I'd never met her before. I later discovered this woman was the pastor's wife.

I joined the young adult community at the church called "The Table" and met a young lady who discipled me. She was an instant friend who opened her life to me and inspired me to discover my purpose. She challenged me to co-lead the ladies ministry with her. I felt disqualified, but did it anyway. One day while writing a Bible study, I shared an insight with her from scripture, she responded by saying God gifted me to teach the word. I laughed, I knew she couldn't be serious, not me! Then she said something that stuck with me, "Small group leaders make the best pastors." I didn't realize she was prophesying over my life! A year later, I took over the leadership of the young adult women's ministry and had trained 5 other women as co-leaders. The Lord called me to preach in

2012, and after much fear and resistance, I said yes. The young adult pastor invited me to preach for the first time, and I came alive. I had a deep passion to grow more as a leader and reached out for guidance. Our pastor of care recommended Destiny Leadership Institute.

In 2014, I started DLI. After two years I graduated with a new fire for the Gospel of Jesus and a better understanding of the word of God. During my time as a young adult leader, I was licensed as a minister and in 2017, I left my job to become the full-time young adults pastor at Christ Church. I was ordained in 2018 with my parents, pastors and staff present. In 2020, I became the discipleship pastor for Christ Church. None of this would have been possible without the grace of God. I literally went from hopelessness to being a hope giver for others.

On October 9th 2021, God graced me to launch an itinerant ministry as well as a podcast called "That's Real Life" available on all podcast platforms.

I am a living testimony of what God's love can do. No matter what you've done or how far you've strayed away, God welcomes you into his love with open arms, preserves the destiny you thought you squandered and uses you for his glory!

I love the verses 1 Timothy 1:15-17 and how they sum up my story:

"This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen."

Pastor Shivon Woodard-Green is a speaker, podcaster and mentor. She joined the Christ Church staff in 2017 as their first African-American female pastor. Pastor Shivon served first as the young adult pastor from December 2017-June 2020 and as discipleship pastor until October 2021. Her passion to see lives changed by the Gospel of Christ has led to the development of the lifeline discipleship initiative of which the church still implements today.

Prior to joining the ministry team, Shivon served as a mentor and servant leader in the young adult ministry of Christ Church for 9 years as a volunteer. In 2016, she completed her ministry certificate with the Destiny Leadership Institute and was licensed and ordained as a minister under the Destiny Church and Ministers Network in June of 2018. Among all her personal achievements, Shivon is most passionate about sharing the Gospel of Christ and empowering the body of Christ to love and live abundantly.



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10 IDEAS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

1. VISIT A LIVING NATIVITY.

2. BAKE CHRISTMAS COOKIES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS.

3. HAVE A GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING CONTEST.

4. GO CAROLING AT A RETIREMENT CENTER OR NURSING HOME.

5. HAVE A CHRISTMAS MOVIE MARATHON WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS.

6. READ THE CHRISTMAS STORY.

7. BAKE AND DECORATE A BIRTHDAY CAKE FOR JESUS WITH YOUR FAMILY.

8. PROVIDE GIFTS FOR A CHILD ON THE ANGEL TREE.

9. LISTEN TO CHRISTMAS MUSIC WHILE TAKING A TOUR OF CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

10. ATTEND A CANDLELIGHT SERVICE.



I STRUGGLE



BO KILGORE

The year was 2010, and I was in the home of a Japanese man who I simply knew as “Blue.” Blue was a tattoo artist that worked out of his home in Okinawa, Japan, where I was stationed as a 21-year-old Marine.

The language barrier between Blue and I was difficult to navigate, so I relied on bits and pieces of artwork and very few Japanese words that I had memorized to try and communicate with him. I handed him a piece of paper and told him, “this picture, here,” and I motioned over my left arm. It was a drawing of a man wrestling with an angel. I handed Blue another piece of paper. “And I want these words around it.” The words were from Genesis 32:28, “You have struggled with God and with men and you have overcome.” Blue studied both pieces of paper briefly and made some adjustments, making it fit perfectly on the space of my arm, and without very many words, he got to work.

I began reminiscing about this story today as I sat down to write. I wondered what I might say to my Destiny family that would be useful, or impactful, or at least interesting. The truth is, I don’t have very much to offer you in terms of church growth strategy, I don’t have a huge success story to inspire you with, and I don’t have a depth of spiritual wisdom to give you some kind of new revelation. Here’s what I can tell you - **I struggle.**



When I decided to get that tattoo of Jacob in Genesis 32, I was living a very sinful and destructive life. I'm not even sure what compelled me to get that particular tattoo on my arm. I was very far from God and stayed that way for several years after. It's only by the grace of God that today, I am alive and well at the age of 32 with a beautiful wife (Lauren), two beautiful daughters (Scarlett & Imogene), and I have the opportunity to serve as the associate pastor at the church I grew up in. I have been serving in full-time ministry at Life Church since January 2017. My first position was to lead our Small Groups ministry, which was still relatively new to our church strategy. Just as we were launching our small groups for the 2017 fall semester, Houston was hit by Hurricane Harvey. The dynamics of the entire church changed in that season. With our building damaged by the storm, we had to move our services to a much smaller auditorium. We began running 2 services on Sunday, then 3 as we experienced an incredible burst of growth during the aftermath of Harvey. My role in the church became very fluid and dynamic - it was a demanding season and we were doing things we had never done before, and we were forced to figure it out as we went. I struggled.

It took a year for our building to be repaired after Harvey, and in October 2018 we had our first service back in our main auditorium. We had over 1,100 people in attendance at that service. It was a great day for our church. My role had officially changed and I was now leading the Small Groups ministry, the Growth Track, and our Guest Experience teams. I struggled.

Just a few months later at the start of 2019, my father & pastor told my wife Lauren and I that Life Church would launch a new campus in 2020 and that we would be the campus pastors. Lauren and I spent the majority of 2019 learning all we could about church planting and campus launching. We attended conferences, we hired consultants, we picked the brains of pastors who lead multi-site churches, we secured a venue at a public junior high auditorium, we bought equipment, we trained our team, we held interest socials, we sent mailers... We were doing everything the playbook tells you to do. We built a team of about 80 people, and we were all set to launch our new campus on March 22, 2020. Two weeks before we launched, I got a phone call from the school district telling us that we would not be able to launch. Covid changed the world for all of us. I struggled.

The months that followed were not easy. Soon we were only having online church, and aside from recording the occasional message and doing what I could to maintain contact with my launch team, I felt useless. The purpose that I had been waiting for and preparing for and training for had been taken away seemingly overnight. I know I am not alone in this - if you are reading this, I'm sure you went through a similar season, or even worse.

We eventually got approval from the school district to launch our new campus, so my wife and I started the process over. Only this time, things were much different. It was a different world that we were launching a church campus in. New restrictions, mandates, social distancing, and the like, as well as a new dynamic in the community we were going into. We had to find a way to launch a new "in-person" gathering and not be the bad guys of the city. It was a difficult road to navigate. I struggled.

We launched our Friendswood Campus on Easter Sunday, April 4th, 2021, and we had 228 people in attendance. Six months later, we are averaging 125 in attendance. And I struggle. I struggle with change, with uncertainty, with stress, with fear, with insecurity... But there's something I am beginning to understand. The struggle is my friend. The struggle is what moves me from where I am to where God wants me to be. The struggle is where I become more like the person God is calling me to be. The struggle is what prepares me to lead others. God needed Jacob to become Israel, and it happened through a struggle.

We have recently purchased a new property in League City, TX and have plans to launch a third campus at the beginning of 2022. My role is changing once again. How exciting it is to think about what God has on the other side of the struggle.

James "Bo" Kilgore III has been married to Lauren since 2018. Together they have two daughters, Scarlett (8) and Imogene (1). Bo served in the Marine Corps from 2008-2013, including one tour in Afghanistan in 2011. He is currently a DLI Student and was recently ordained by Destiny Ministries. Bo serves as the Associate Pastor at Life Church, and leads the Friendswood Campus.

*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

ISAIAH 9:6



GOD'S ON THE MOVE

DESTINY IS DEBT-FREE



In August of this year, Dr. Brassfield received a call from First Bank of Owasso President, Dee Sokolosky. It was an unscheduled call that happened to come while Dr. Brassfield was ill with COVID. The voice on the other end of the call was a familiar one, the voice of Dee, but it had a strange tremble to it. Dr. Brassfield realized that Dee was emotionally moved as he told him that he and his wife had been praying for him and Destiny, and that the Holy Spirit had spoken to them that they should pay the remaining balance of Destiny's mortgage. Dee said, "Today, we paid the balance off on Destiny's mortgage. The Holy Spirit led us to do it..." Dr. Brassfield reflected, "I was absolutely blown away! The

thought of Dee and Shirley's generosity and obedience, and the incredible kindness of the Lord to move them to do it at such a difficult time for our family was overwhelming. It was a kiss from heaven, as the Lord used such dear friends to encourage us and support us in such an amazing way." Today, Destiny is a debt-free ministry! --*Phillip Brassfield*

SADIE ROBERTSON HUFF EVENT AT CHRIST CHURCH



This past Fall, our church hosted Sadie Robertson Huff and her Live Original team for their first ever LO Sister Conference. Women came from all over the United States to spend the weekend in West Monroe, Louisiana, to worship together and hear messages from Sadie, Demi Tebow, and Jennie Allen. Sadie preached an incredible message on the last night of the conference about the Truth of the Gospel, and after her message, she gave an altar call for women to surrender their lives to Jesus and get baptized. Our team was prepared for baptisms, but we were not prepared for how many women that responded. So many women came forward to be baptized that we ran out of towels.

One girl had to be baptized in her clothes because we did not have enough baptism outfits. When the night was over, a total of 108 women were baptized! It reminded us that so many people are longing for the simple Truth of the Gospel. May we always be ready to share the Good News, and may we always be prepared for the results, because God is on the move!--*Kayla Mayo*

SPIRIT OF GRACE CHURCH BAPTIZES 160



We have often been asked the question, "How many people did you lose because of the pandemic?" We have been blessed to say, "Not too many. In fact, we have grown tremendously throughout the pandemic!" God has been so good to Spirit of Grace Church. While we know that many churches have struggled through and upon reopening, we have been blessed by God opening new opportunities and sending new people all the time. Since August 2019, we have been blessed and honored to baptize close to 160 people in Jesus' wonderful Name! In sheer numbers, we have more than doubled since the beginning of the pandemic! What is even more powerful to us though, is the depth of relationship growth that has happened, especially the depths in our relationship with

God! We are bigger, greater and more in tune with the Spirit of God than at any other time in our history. We are boldly entering the Throne of Grace at this time, and God is answering mightily in His own way!

We wish we could give some technique or some program that we have used to see this happen, but fortunately, we cannot. This has simply been a season (and we pray the season never stops!) where God was looking for a people that would be fearless and faithful to the things of God and the kingdom of God. The saints of Spirit of Grace Church have held their hearts open and have faithfully walked through whichever door God opened, leaving closed any door He had closed.

We believe that God is once again igniting His people for an unprecedented harvest of people looking to fill that emptiness in their spirit, and we know that it is Jesus for whom they are searching. We have decided that Spirit of Grace Church will be living epistles for all to read and see the revelation of Jesus Christ!--*Pastor Tim Sanders*



WHY DESTINY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE?

The purpose of Destiny Leadership Institute (DLI) is to make biblical and leadership training available anywhere in the world, enabling Christian leaders to develop **character**, discover **calling**, increase **competence**, and operate within their respective organization's **culture**. The training is designed to raise the quality of service coming from every level of leadership—not just those entering full-time ministry. The program is interactive, flexible, and affordable, so that emerging leaders can discover their purpose and develop their gifts, without interrupting other duties (i.e. family, work, local church ministry obligations). DLI seeks to be part of the answer to the prayer that Jesus instructed his disciples to pray, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (Luke 10:2)"*

The mission of DLI is to train Christian leaders through both study and service. Students learn Bible, theology, and leadership through online courses, while serving as interns in their local church under the guidance of spiritual leadership.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe that **character** is foundational to leadership. We do a great disservice to people when we teach them what they are supposed to do before we teach them what kind of person they are supposed to be.

- We believe that each person has a unique **calling**, that is to be discovered and developed.
- We emphasize the importance of **competence**. God expects excellence, which we define as "doing our very best every time."
- We are not competitors with the local church; we are partners with the local church. Thus, we seek to train leaders to operate within the structure and **culture** of their respective local church.

WHAT YOU WILL GAIN?

- **A practical understanding of the Bible.** Upon completion of the program, students should possess a practical understanding of the Bible including its major themes surrounding creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Central to this understanding is a grasp of the gospel of Christ. Students will be given the tools to construct a framework for lifelong learning of biblical themes and truth, and are encouraged to continue the development of a scholarly approach to biblical truth along with an open heart to receive and apply biblical truth in their lives, while sharing that truth with others.

- **A practical understanding of theology.**

Upon completion of the program, students will understand the parameters of sound Christian theology and its implications in ministry and the Church. Christian doctrines such as God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity, sin, salvation, and the Church will be examined in light of their biblical and historical formations, with emphasis on understanding and application in every area of life and practice.

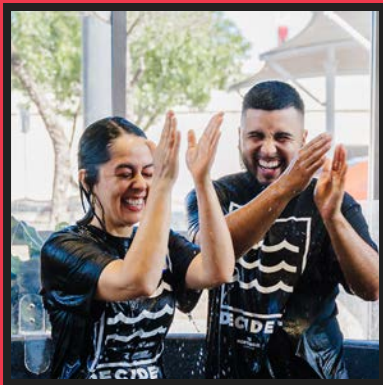
- **A Christian worldview.** Upon completion of the program of study, students will have enhanced their grasp of what it means to view the world and all of its related activities from a Christian perspective. Students will be equipped with the tools to apply biblical and gospel truth in every arena of thought, word, and action, carefully avoiding the common malpractice of secular/sacred divide, but rather recognizing that God's truth has implications of all of life and governs our interactions with others and society as a whole.

- **Spiritual maturity.** Upon completion of the program, students are expected to have developed spiritual disciplines which serve as a means of God's grace at work within them bringing them to a greater spiritual maturity in Christ. Students will have opportunities to practice and develop these disciplines within the context of their studies.

- **The ability to lead as a servant.** Upon completion of the program, students will have an understanding of the leadership example of Jesus, and will have applied the principles of servant leadership in multiple ministry settings. Students will be expected to model these principles in the context of their local church and demonstrate them throughout their studies in relation to their local context and towards fellow students as well as towards faculty and staff of DLI. It is expected that the understanding and application of these principles will enhance the students' experience in learning and also lend itself to the goals of spiritual development and maturity.



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VISIT [DESTINYLEADERS.COM/DLI](https://destinyleaders.com/dli)
FOR MORE INFORMATION



JONATHAN MOORE

In the fall of 2006, my wife, Alicia, and I were driving through north San Antonio, and out of no where, God dropped a dream in my heart. A dream to plant a life-giving church in San Antonio, Texas. We prayed, fasted, and talked to mentors and our pastor. During this time of seeking God's direction, we would often drive down to San Antonio from where we lived in Austin, to dream and pray. One day, I drove down alone, and on a hilltop I pulled over on the side of the road because I was overwhelmed by what I saw. I saw a sea of rooftops for as far as the eye could see. God spoke to me that day and said, "Every rooftop represents a family. Every rooftop represents people who are broken and hurting, and whose lives have been shattered by addictions, marriage issues, mental health issues, and hopelessness. Every rooftop represents people who need the grace, love, and hope that I can give them. Every rooftop needs me." So in the summer of 2008, Alicia, myself, and our two boys, Mason and Britton, moved to San Antonio to plant a church.

Then, on January 18, 2009, NorthRock Church was born in an elementary school in north San Antonio. The early days were hard, but they were so rewarding. God was faithful and the church continued to grow. We moved to Reagan High School in the summer of 2011, and that next year we launched a giving campaign called "Greater". We knew that our best days were ahead, and that God had something greater for us.

In July 2013, we closed on a building that no one thought we would actually be able to buy; but God provided in ways that only He can, and NorthRock Church finally had our first permanent home.

We've always dreamed of being a multi-site church that gives easy access to everyone from every corner of San Antonio, Texas. So in September 2019 we launched a second location and had crazy success. That is until

2020 when a worldwide pandemic closed the physical doors of our churches. We moved church online, and actually officially launched an online location with its own campus pastor.

During that time God reminded me of the story of the Shunamite woman in 2 Kings Chapter 4. The prophet Elisha wanted to bless the woman for her hospitality that she had shown him. While she wasn't in need of financial blessing, her desire was for a child. Elisha gave her a promise that she would have a child the next year, and the prophecy was fulfilled. The boy grew up, but he one day became ill and sat on his mother's lap until he died. The Shunamite woman was in distress, but answered at the death of her child, "Everything is all right" (vs 26). Elisha then told the woman to go back and lay his staff by her child and he would live; but she said, "I will not leave you." (vs 30). When all seemed hopeless, the woman put her trust in God, and He honored her trust by raising her child back to life. The promise was given, the promise was fulfilled, the promise died, and then the promise lived again!

So when our dream felt like it came to a halt in 2020, we didn't give up hope. We trusted God in that season more than we've ever trusted Him before. We didn't walk away from our calling; instead, we pursued, we built, and we continued to take ground. In the past year we have re-opened the physical doors at both of our locations, and in September 2021, we launched our third physical campus.

We've always been fiercely committed to the mission at NorthRock: to see lives [re] defined by being filled with life in Christ. No pandemic will ever change that because nothing can stop the church! And as we always say...we're just getting started. I love my city, I love my church, and we won't stop until Jesus runs this town!

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MARY MEMOIRS

DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD

I love news. I'm sort of a junkie I suppose. I mean when I go home I usually get at least two or three newscasts.

One of my favorite ways to get the information I crave is to listen to interviews, to hear "it" from the proverbial "horse's mouth". When you do, you tend to get the details without all the political agenda, just the facts. Interviews can be news themselves. News people often measure greatness in their field based on the interesting, unusual, or hard to get interviews they have conducted.

I love the Gospels (Gospel means 'good news' by the way), each for its own reason. The Gospels that give us the beginning of the story of Jesus Christ particularly, the Nativity story, are told to us by Matthew and Luke. Matthew gives us the general account which includes some fascinating details about the wise men coming from the east. He tells us the details of their having seen a star rising in the east (BTW I strongly recommend "The Star of Bethlehem" DVD and website which explains with amazing clarity the date and details associated with the Star), to them a sign that a king would be born in Judea. Most likely this was the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Venus creating an amazing spectacle in the heavens. He tells us of their visit to King Herod and of the diabolical plan devised by Herod to Mind the Christ Child and kill Him.

But I especially love Luke's account at the beginning of his Gospel. Scholars have generally credited Luke as being a first rate Historian. And being a Historian is kind of like being an investigative reporter. Did you know that the Gospel of Luke was essentially composed following a collection of interviews? These interviews were most likely given during the two year imprisonment of the Apostle Paul (Luke's companion) who was imprisoned in Caesarea along the Israeli Mediterranean Coast. Luke says to his reader in Luke chapter 1:1:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, v2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, v3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, v4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

If it had been published today, Luke would have had the attention of the World, maybe won a Pulitzer Prize! Can you imagine the long list of interviews he landed over a two-year period from firsthand accounts and eyewitness interviews regarding the life of Jesus? So, You might think of Luke's Gospel in this way, as a sort of documentary with interviews and dramatizations that tell the story of Jesus' life and ministry.

Luke most likely used the Gospel of Mark as a guideline for his own investigation. Mark's Gospel was already published and available. Mark, it is believed, received his information principally from Peter the Apostle who certainly would have had first hand information regarding the ministry of Jesus, but has nothing to say about the birth of Jesus. Peter had met Jesus some 30 years after his birth, as it was also with Matthew and John. So we can only surmise that when Luke wanted to include the details of Jesus' birth he had to investigate. He needed a relevant source, to conduct an interview with someone who would have known how and what had happened and still been alive, someone who was there, like Mary.

When I have taught the first couple of chapters of Luke to students over the years, I have always considered them to be the Mary memoirs. Who but Mary would have known the story of John the Baptist's conception and birth? And the story is told highlighting Mary's own participation in the event. Who but she would have all the private details of the miracle of her own conception? A song of praise she sang to the Lord is even recorded in the text. Who but Mary would have understood Joseph's reaction, struggle and been privy to his Angelic confirmation? Only she would have known the details about their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, of the Shepherds' wonder and the Angels' proclamation and the fact that there was no room available for them in the hotels of Bethlehem. Only she would have had first hand knowledge of Jesus' Circumcision and naming, of the prophecy of Anna, the reaction of Simeon and the humble sacrifice she and Joseph offered after the "days of her purification".

The next time you read the Christmas Story from Luke, remember, it is Mary's story that you are reading. The one told during an interview conducted by a young Greek Doctor turned Investigative Reporter turned Historian, who preserved for all of us the wonderful story of the first Christmas as told by "Momma" herself!



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