

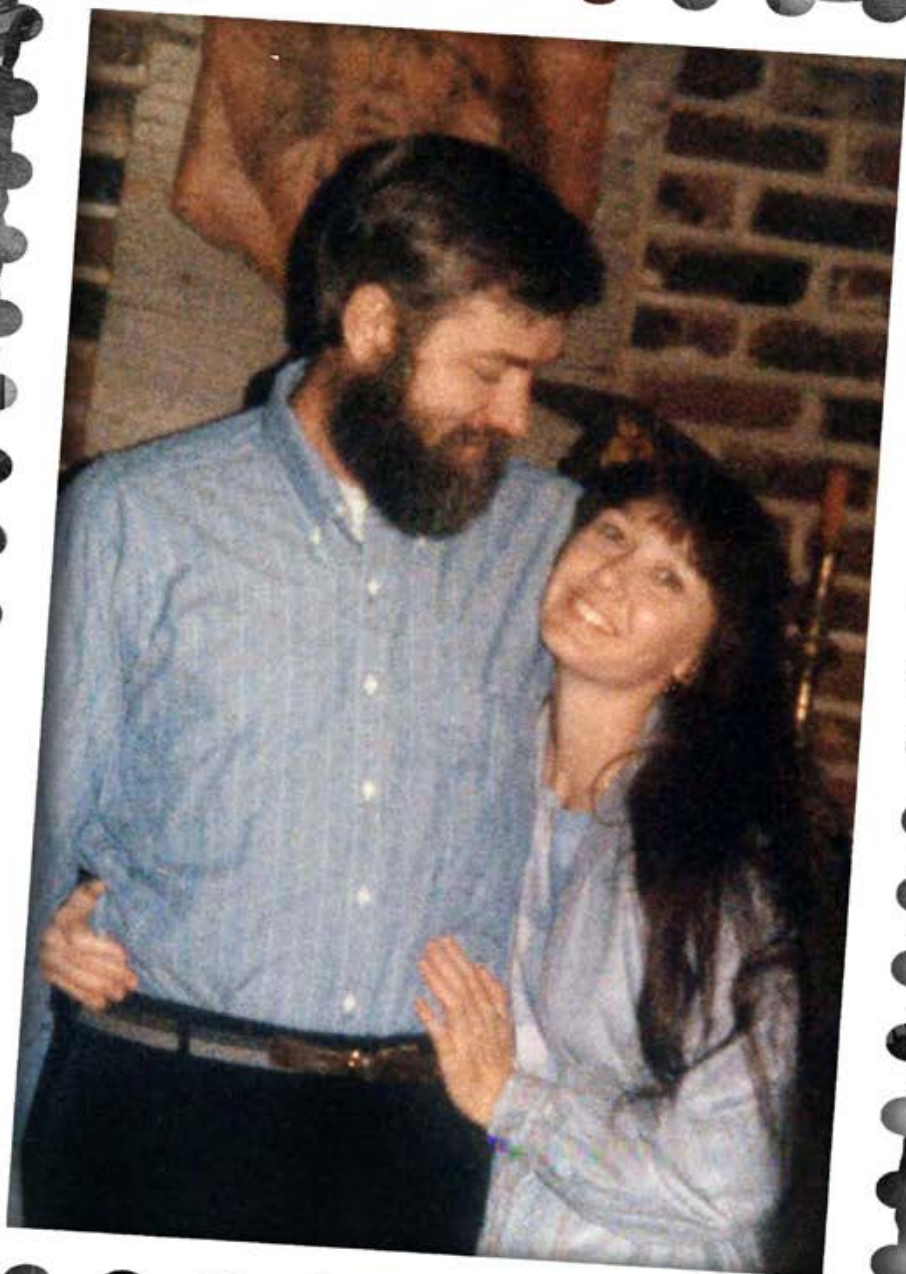


30 YEARS NO GREATER JOY

1994

2024

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2024



"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4).



This is the 30th anniversary of *No Greater Joy Ministries*. For most of those years we have been like the little red train climbing the mountain. Quite often we said, “*I think we can.*” Somewhere over the last three years we finally reached the crest, and it has been a very fast ride since then.

Yesterday I listened to JD give an update. He mentioned more countries than I can remember. Hundreds of thousands of Arabic-speaking people are responding to *Good and Evil* ads, countless folks from India are hearing the gospel, **one in every eighty** Iranians have opened *Good and Evil*; in Egypt hundreds of thousands are reading the message of salvation. JD spoke of outreaches in Pakistan, Israel, Gaza, Japan, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Russian Jews in Israel, etc. Without real, solid laborers none of this would be possible.

Our goal has been literature. One of the most fruitful ministries we know relies on short-term mission trips. But not us. A new ministry we follow uses tent camp meetings, and God’s hand is clearly on them. We do love going! From the beginning we irritated folks by not supporting short-term mission trips and frustrated a lot more by not providing

funds for camp meetings or to build church buildings. We have resisted those who hoped to use us as a safety net. For many ministries, these are their callings . . . but not ours. God raised us up to reach the world through the written word. We stayed the course. Like Moses, we were never politely, politically correct.

In my novel, *The Vision*, which I wrote many years ago, I tell an imaginary story that has now become a reality. Maybe I had a vision of what God was going to do or maybe it was just a hope. The book is about young people who pick up the life-long work of an old couple who dreamed of reaching the world with gospel literature.

At the end of *The Vision* there is a glorious scene of a meeting in heaven around the throne. There were people all around..

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EDITORS IN CHIEF
Michael and Debi Pearl
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
**Michael Pearl, Debi Pearl, Karen Sargent,
Jennifer L., Stephanie Grimes**
ART DIRECTOR
Amber Gulickson
ON THE COVER:
Michael & Debi Pearl

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS

AS A Spouse?

by Michael Pearl

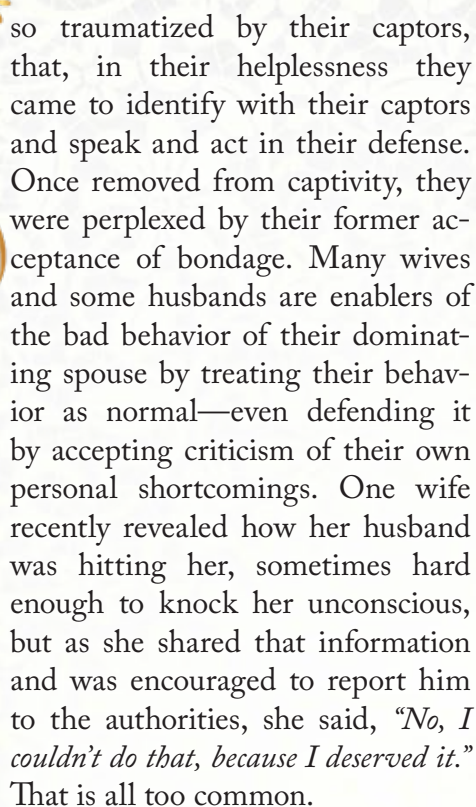
What are your rights as a spouse?
Answer: *All the rights of a human being.*

You did not forfeit any of your human rights when you married. Your God-endowed humanity is unalienable, which is to say, your personal dignity and liberty can never be conveyed to another—even when by all measures it appears so. One may forcibly subjugate another, and one may yield control to a bully-man (or woman), but that does not convey human rights to the controller. When you married you did not lose your humanity, your autonomy, your dignity, or your rights to your body

and mind. Neither the husband nor the wife has the right to physically, emotionally, or spiritually dominate the other. A spouse who intimidates or manipulates their ‘less significant’ other into subjection is a merciless, selfish bully, expressing the opposite of love.

The excuse you hear, “*I am doing it for their own good,*” is the mantra of all repressive regimes, dictatorships, and abusive husbands. When someone does something unpleasant “*for your own good*” and you submit to it, you have volunteered to be a victim. If you come to accept it as normal, you may end up speaking in defense of your subjection.

As so, you are suffering from Stockholm syndrome — a historical event where kidnapped individuals were



so traumatized by their captors, that, in their helplessness they came to identify with their captors and speak and act in their defense. Once removed from captivity, they were perplexed by their former acceptance of bondage. Many wives and some husbands are enablers of the bad behavior of their dominating spouse by treating their behavior as normal—even defending it by accepting criticism of their own personal shortcomings. One wife recently revealed how her husband was hitting her, sometimes hard enough to knock her unconscious, but as she shared that information and was encouraged to report him to the authorities, she said, “No, I couldn’t do that, because I deserved it.” That is all too common.

Many wives submit to abuse and degrading acts because they believe the Bible teaches that wives are to be subject to the total control of their husbands. The worst defense (and the most effective) is to reference the Bible as advocating the subjection of wives to husbands. And it doesn’t stop there; we see parents using the Bible to subjugate their children, even grown adult children. Pastors use the Bible to preach subjection to their rule in the church. Cult leaders so dominate the lives of their followers that adherents have been known to submit to sexual misuse, give all their money, and even commit suicide for their beloved, divine leader. History reveals kings, dictators, and parliaments using the Bible to subdue their citizens. Slavery was justified

by biblical passages taken out of context.

All use of the Bible to promote one’s own power and control over others comes from the same dark spirit. You will remember that in the garden Satan used the words of God to tempt Eve into doing his bidding. And, again, Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus in an attempt to get him to surrender his will.

Before I address the Scripture most quoted by these little dictators, I want to say this on the front end: **The Bible does not cause people to dominate others; rather, those with a dominating spirit just find it convenient to appeal to a higher power to justify their desire to control.** When the dominator knows the spouse has no respect for the Word of God, they will find another reason to justify their aggression, such as “*he/she is weak minded, doesn’t have a strong will, makes stupid mistakes, is lazy, lacks ambition, needs to be guided to be productive,*” etc. But when a man knows his wife regards the Bible as the highest authority, he will use that fact as a cudgel to manipulate her to his will.

Women can command the pious master’s chair as well as men, but for every religious, controlling wife there are maybe five dominating husbands. And the use of physical domination is almost exclusively the domain of men.

Before we look at the verses misused by power-hungry husbands, as well as others that speak of submission, notice one crucial fact that is almost universally overlooked. All

imperative verses on submitting to another are directed toward the one who is to submit. **There is no command anywhere in Scripture for a husband to submit his wife to himself**, or to even assume submission on her part. In fifty-two years of marriage I have never told my wife that she is supposed to submit to me. I have never referenced the Bible

when she was of a different mindset. I knew from the Word of God that it was my duty to lead by example and by living and acting in such a way as to generate confidence in my leadership. If she was not following, I understood it was my failure to create confidence. I felt it would be an evil thing to command her to respect and obey me—a fallen, selfish, most fallible son of Adam. And I knew I had no right to use the Bible as a way to manipulate her into following me when she lacked confidence in my direction. Sir, if you have done otherwise, you have sinned. Wife, if you have cowed to that kind of tyrannical rule, you are an enabler of evil behavior.

VERSES ON SUBMISSION

Soul-controlling husbands often quote, “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*” But they don’t mention the next verse, “*Husbands, love your*

wives, and be not bitter against them” (Colossians 3:18–19).

The second verse pulled out of context is, “*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands*” (1 Peter 3:1).

And the third and fourth verses are drawn out from a long passage: “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands . . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let*

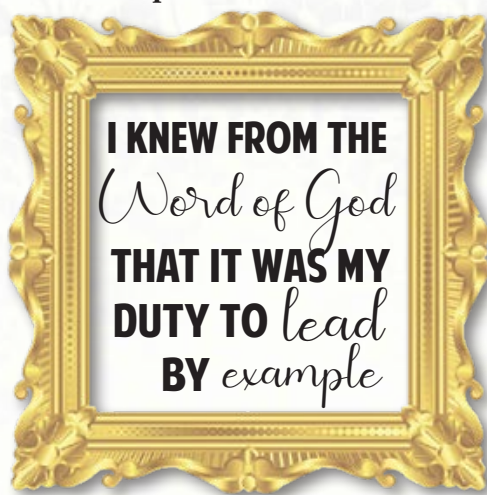
the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Ephesians 5:22, 24).

Controlling husbands have tunnel vision, only seeing these four verses that tell wives to submit to their husbands. To get a clear understanding of the word, let’s look at other passages that command submission.

Every husband is commanded to voluntarily “*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme . . .*” (1 Peter 2:13).

Every husband (and wife) is commanded to “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*” (Hebrews 13:17).

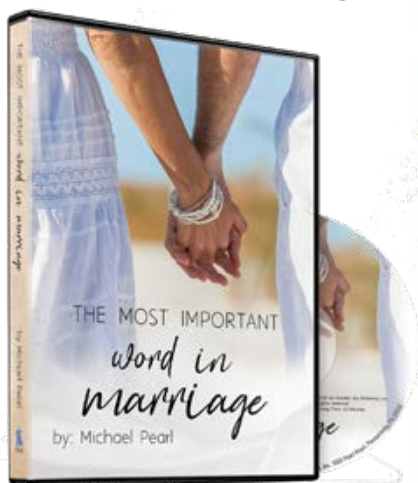
Every husband is commanded to “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7).



Every husband is commanded to submit to other Christians. The oft-quoted verse “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,*” is preceded by “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God*” (Ephesians 5:21–22). The context of submission reveals that **before a wife is commanded to submit, the husband is commanded to submit to others**

in his Christian acquaintance, to government, to the church elders, and to God. Likewise, in the chain of command, the wife is to submit to her “own husband” (not to men in general). Again, the Bible gives the wife a command to submit, but it does not give the husband the authority to demand it, or even expect it.

The Most Important Word In Marriage



The most important word in marriage is GOODWILL.

Goodwill includes, love, patience and kindness. To have the best, seek the best in your spouse. Jesus came with goodwill. If you can treat your spouse with goodwill, your children with goodwill you will have a wonderful family.

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QUALIFIED SUBMISSION?

There are many men (preachers included) who view the wife’s submission to her husband as unqualified. A woman wrote to us of how hard it is to submit to her husband “in every thing” (Ephesians 5:24). He made her stand guard and be the “get-away driver” at truck stops while he robbed the trucks. I know this is extreme, but it speaks to the question: Is obeying “in every thing” unqualified? Another woman wrote of how her husband had a habit of hanging out at the rest stops along the interstate highway. The dumb woman didn’t have a clue what he was doing, but it concerned her when he decided he would begin taking their young teenage son along. She said, “*I want to obey my husband, but I feel something is terribly wrong.*” She knew her husband was queer; she just couldn’t bring herself to face it. She believed the command for wives to submit to their husbands in every thing did not allow her to question his motives or actions.

Another woman told my wife how she had come to the knowledge that her husband was sexually active with his daughters. “*He tells me it is*

none of my business; I am to submit to him if I am to be a good wife."

In all three of the above cases, and many more like them, we informed the wives of their liberty and duty. They informed on their husbands and at least two out of the three were arrested, and one is doing hard time while he gets done by the other inmates who hate child molesters. Prisoners have no tolerance for child molesters and often take justice into their own hands.

Many, many wives write of how their husbands, engaged in pornographic viewing, have come to seek deviant ways of penetrating the wife and of abusing her for their twisted pleasure. Many women have submitted and feel cursedly used and stricken in conscience. Is the command to wifely obedience unqualified? Has she forfeited her human rights to the whims of another?

The command to submit to and obey the elders has equal standing with the command for wives to submit to their husbands. Does the man demanding unqualified submission from his wife yield to unqualified rule from pastors—from government? Or does he exercise his God-given conscience to determine if the authority is legitimate?

Forty-six years ago, when there was an ordinance against home-schooling, noted Christian ministers were preaching that Christians should obey every ordinance of man **without distinction** or reservation. Well, in good conscience, my wife and I refused to obey unjust laws. The time came when the court sent

a summons for us to bring our children and appear before the judge. I did not submit to every ordinance of man. I arranged for the children to be taken out of state to an undisclosed location, and we appeared before the judge without them. I rebuked the judge and left the court promising to resist his rule and change the law, which we eventually succeeded in doing.

How could I in good conscience not "submit to every ordinance of man?" Because the passage doesn't end there. It continues with a qualifier. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man...**as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.**" The passage assumes that the ordinance of man is founded on godly principles, designed to punish evildoers. Then it acknowledges our freedom from tyranny when it says *"As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."* There is a caution that though we are free to follow our consciences, we are not to take advantage of that liberty as a way of malicious self-promotion.

When the elders of Israel, wielding the office of government, commanded Peter and the other disciples not to preach Jesus, they responded, *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* (Acts 5:29). The law and those representing it were no longer acting to punish evildoers. They were threatening to punish good-doers, and so forfeited their moral authority.

In the 1500s, when the church and state passed a law against the printing of Scripture, William Tyndale became an underground printer and smuggler of Bibles. He did not submit to “every ordinance of man” when the ordinance was against truth and righteousness. He became an outlaw of man and a hero of God.

No Greater Joy Ministries defies the laws of many countries in providing gospel literature to their citizens. The laws to obey every ordinance of man are not unconditional.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SCRIPTURE

Now let us examine the most popular verse on women submitting to their husbands.

Ephesians 5:21 *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”*

The command to submit comes with a qualifier—submit *“in the fear of God.”* It does not say we should submit “one to another” out of fear of how God might respond if we don’t; it says the submission is in the context of the fear of God. When friends, church leaders, husbands, or government speak the truth in the fear of God, we should weigh the validity and yield to the truth behind what they say.

Immediately following in the next statement, we see another qualifier. *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”* Just as wives voluntarily submit to kings, governors, pastors, etc., they should submit to their own husbands *“as unto the Lord.”* Our Lord

doesn’t command the unreasonable or sinful. When a wife submits to her husband it is because she sees the will of God behind his wisdom in the matter.

That is not to say a wife must hold her husband to a rigid examination of every turn of direction. She can voluntarily follow his lead (when it doesn’t involve immorality or abuse) even when she thinks it not the best course, knowing that he is growing and trying to do the best he can. He can learn by his mistakes as she honors his office and follows him on the halting path of his sincere navigation of the perplexities of life.

The text continues with *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”* All verses on submission, whether of man to government, church leaders, one another, or wives submitting to their husbands, are rooted in the assumption that the authority is operating in a chain of submission to God. *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.”* Husbands must view their headship as representatives of Christ. Husbands are heads just as Christ is head of the church. That doesn’t translate into brute force or intimidation. The example of what it means to be head is found in the next verses. Sir, read them carefully and ask yourself if you have earned to right to represent Christ’s headship.

25 Husbands, love your wives,

*even as Christ also loved the church,
and gave himself for it;*

Husbands are the head
of the department of love and
giving.

*26 That he might sanctify
and cleanse it with the wash-
ing of water by the word,*

*27 That he might present
it to himself a glorious church,
not having spot, or wrinkle, or
any such thing; but that it should
be holy and without blemish.*

The husband's headship is that
of "cleansing" and "washing" his
wife with his kind words.

*28 So ought men to love their wives
as their own bodies. He that loveth his
wife loveth himself.*

*29 For no man ever yet hated his
own flesh; but nourisheth and cher-
isheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

Husbands are the head of the
nourishing department "even as the
Lord the church."

*30 For we are members of his body,
of his flesh, and of his bones.*

*31 For this cause shall a man leave
his father and mother, and shall be
joined unto his wife, and they two
shall be one flesh.*

*32 This is a great mystery: but
I speak concerning Christ and the
church.*

*33 Nevertheless let every one of you
in particular so love his wife even as
himself; and the wife see that she re-
verence her husband.*

The major emphasis of this passage
is what it means to be the head.
When a husband loves "his wife even
as himself," she will reverence her
husband.



She **CAN**
Voluntarily
Follow
HIS LEAD

CAUTION TO THE WIVES

Wives can be selfish, advantage-seeking Jezebels just like men can be controlling tyrants. We do not have the time, space, or energy to address this, even though I know that, although this article is directed toward correcting the tyrannical husband's misuse of Scripture, there will be many controlling women who will use what has been said here to justify a rebellious streak.

OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO MISUSED WIVES

Although, dear wife, you main-
tain your human right to complete
autonomy, and you have a right (a
duty, even) to resist tyranny or abuse,
you also have a duty to humility and
grace. Neither husband nor wife is
perfect. If you want to find fault in
your spouse, there is plenty to be
found. If you are stubborn by nature

(so-called), this article will cause you to feel liberty to further your stubbornness.

For this article to be balanced, I would need to cover 1 Peter 3:1–17. I encourage you to study it for yourself and consider the advantage of “taking some stuff” off of your unreasonable husband as way to glorify

God and perhaps win your man to the path of love and goodwill. Quite often, while acknowledging your rights, giving them up is the more prosperous path.

Next magazine I will provide balance to this subject.

From Debi

When I first wrote *Created to Be His Help Meet* we didn’t see many manipulative, controlling men, especially secretly violent ones. I wrote to wives admonishing them to be in subjection because that was what was lacking in the church at that time. Nowadays the pendulum has swung to the other side. I recently spoke with a young Amish wife who sincerely asked what she should do if her husband keeps beating her for no reason. I have to say, I was so stunned my brain drew a blank. Another young bride came and asked, *“Do I have to let him choke me? It feels like he is killing me, and he just laughs when I beg him to not do it again.”* This is now a thing.

The news, our mail, and social media tell us that there are two issues among men who profess to be Christians. One group of men seems to have just given up. They have no interest in their wives, work, or even hobbies, except what they can do from a couch. The other extreme, which is what was addressed in this article, is the problem of men who feel they are like gods, demanding service, giving little, and showing no compassion or normal camaraderie. Many of these men treat their

Marriage God's Way



Husbands, learn how to sanctify your wife and cleanse her of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes. You have the power to bring your wife into the fullness of all that God intended her to be.

Wives, learn the freedom of honoring and ministering to your man. You can help him become all that God intended him to be.

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wives as less than servants. I know there are many possible variables, including odd health issues, but the most glaring change in men's habits is the wide use of pornography.


Porn reacts with the brain in two distinct ways. One is to remap the brain (literally) so that the man's body no longer reacts to a woman. He simply can't get it up. This can lead to depression (moral courage) and to more viewing, which deepens the remapping of the brain.

Another way porn destroys the brain is through reprogramming the brain to lose emotional connections with the one you are supposed to love; the physical brain connections that create feelings are disrupted and rerouted. Without normal feelings, a man loses his natural desire to protect and cherish. He takes, he uses, he expects, and if it hurts, all the better.

We live in a world of vile maliciousness. We have seen it close to

home. Surely porn is not the only precursor leading to over-played dominance, but it is the principal one.

This is an alert to wives who are married to hard-working, good-hearted men that are resisting porn. Ladies, please keep in mind that the same old Eve issues are still alive and active in you. You might read this and be inclined to use the old "spiritual heartbreak" to control your husband. You might be disappointed that your husband neglects family devotions, never prays with you, or doesn't want more babies. Don't use what Mike wrote as a license to become the spiritual dominator. You can't be your husband's conscience, and, if you try, neither of you will thrive spiritually or in your marriage. You need your husband to thrive, so stand by your man and be thankful. Pray for the wives who are not so blessed.■

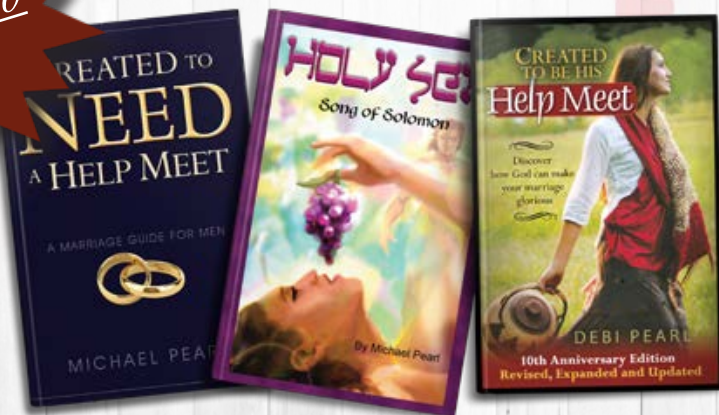
A photograph of a family of five walking through a grassy field. A man in a dark shirt and light pants is carrying a young girl in a white dress. A woman in a white dress is walking next to him, holding a baby. Two other children are walking in front of them. The background is a line of trees under a bright sky.

**YOU CAN'T BE YOUR
HUSBAND'S**
Conscience

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1994 History

Pearl Family:



Rebekah - Tamed a wild horse.

Gabriel - Killed so many squirrels, which he had to eat, that he never wanted to kill another squirrel again.

Nathan - Split his index finger in half.

Shalom - Dreamed of being a missionary to India, had the map on her wall.

Shoshanna - Was our dumpster diver that year.

NGJ History:



1994
Original Cover



Current
Cover

The humble beginning of our journey. It all started with:

- A child training question
- A used computer that a friend gifted to us.
- An advertisement in the only Homeschooling magazine at that time, and before we knew it we had our book published and selling faster than we could package them!

★★★★★ 1994 ★ Fun Facts ★★★★★



Nashville, TN | Weather Report



High

61°F / 16° C

January

• 1994 •

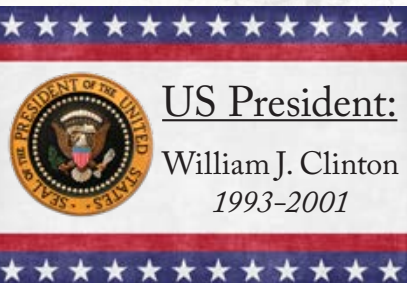
Low

25°F / -4° C



BACK IN 1994

- Gallon of Milk.....**\$2.29**
- Dozen Eggs.....**\$0.87**
- Postage Stamp.....**\$0.29**
- Gas Price.....**\$1.09**
- Avg. TN Income.....**\$24,106**



THE GOOD

Since AD 33

Lamb of God • Jesus • Alpha & Omega • Redeemer • Br

by ~ Jennifer L. Texas

I just had the most amazing encounter with a homeless man, where God orchestrated something I could've never set up myself.

Just this morning, I put a *Good & Evil* comic book into both our SUV and our truck, along with some Starbucks gift cards. In fact, I want to start having these books on hand in the vehicles at all times for whenever the Holy Spirit shows me somebody who needs one.

So, after I picked up my twin boys from school, we saw a homeless man on a busy corner downtown, but since the light was already green I didn't want to cause a huge traffic jam by stopping at his corner.

However, as we passed him, I really felt like we should have given him one of the *Good & Evil* books.

As we kept driving, I said to my boys, "Should we turn back around?"



Another child of God

I couldn't decide at first, but voiced my thoughts aloud: "What if there's no tomorrow? What if we're in heaven tomorrow? This man needs to come too! Plus, we have the time, we have the book, we have the man, and we have the assignment from God to evangelize."

So even though we were already halfway back to the house, we decided to turn back around and go deliver the book.

This time there was only one car in front of us at his corner, and the light was still red. So immediately I motioned to the homeless man to quickly come to my car because I knew I'd only have about 30 seconds to talk with him before I would have to keep driving.

First I gave him the Starbucks gift card, and then I handed him the *Good & Evil* book. As he took the book in his hands, he immediately recognized it and a flash of amazement and huge excitement came onto his face!

In fact, he was so excited that he completely ignored the gift card and became focused entirely on the Bible comic book!

What he said next blew me away: "I've been looking for this book everywhere, because I once read this in prison in Bradshaw, and I've been

GOOD NEWS

Jesus Christ

read of Life • Mighty God • Everlasting Father • Saviour

wanting to get this book again!"

At this point, the light had turned green, and I needed to keep going, but my last words to him were, "Promise me you'll read it." He exclaimed, "Are you kidding me? I'll start reading it right now!"

I literally shouted in the car with joy as we drove off, because I recognized that God had just orchestrated something BEAUTIFUL that I could never have set up myself.

What are the chances that a random person on the street has been desperately searching for EXACTLY the gospel book I'm about to hand to him?

That homeless man was so incredibly excited, and I'm sure that getting his long-lost book again reminded him that God had never forgotten him. I can't tell you how HAPPY I was that I turned back around for him!

So, my Jesus showed himself REAL both to that homeless man and to me today, and I shudder to think that I could have so easily missed this divine appointment. This has taught me to be extra sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance. I'll be your hands and feet Jesus; please orchestrate more amazing encounters like this!



EVEN **YOU** CAN
SHARE JESUS!

- *Don't have room for books?*
- *Don't have time to chat?*
- *Too busy to share?*

We got you covered!

Good & Evil Card



Simply hand someone
this card and it will
do the rest!

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PARENT RESOURCES



Balanced Patriarch | DVD

Today, there is a twisted Christian doctrine preached that justifies not cutting the umbilical cord, all in the name of “Children, obey your parents.” It is based on the assumption that one’s offspring remain children, duty-bound before God to always be subject to the chain of command.

Jumping Ship | DVD

There is a troubling trend showing up among some of the “homeschool crowd.” Their children are discontent and rebellious, jumping ship as soon as they think they can survive without the family—some as young as sixteen years old.

Teaching Responsibility | DVD

Work habits are best formed before a child is two years old. After five, it is more difficult, but still possible, to teach a child to be a responsible, functioning member of his family and of society.

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\$30.⁰⁰

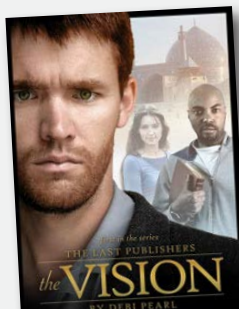
Continued from page 2

...giving praise to God in every language, and everyone could understand each other. Revelation 7:9 says it like this: “*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands . . .*”

That day is closer than any of us know.

Though Mike and I will still be writing and advising, moving forward, *No Greater Joy Ministry* will be in the hands of our son Nathan. As with men

of old, Moses had his calling, and then Joshua had his. Nathan will seek the LORD for the direction NGJ must go. We have unreserved confidence in him. We will pray for him to fight the good fight as the gospel goes forth. You pray for him as well. With his youthful energy, we expect to see a multiplication of the ministry in these last days. ▣



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Anxiety

by Karen Sargent

A few weeks ago I had a conversation with my youngest daughter and she made the most amazing statement that I have not been able to forget and I just have to tell you about it. It has already helped me in several situations, and I hope it will be a help to you too.

From the day of my birth until I was almost 57 years old, I did not know what anxiety was. If I suffered from it (and I did, to some extent), I was unaware it had a name. It was something I'd heard about but, like most people, grossly misunderstood.

I did not know what it looked like in practical terms.

But worst of all, I judged people with anxiety while struggling with it myself, even though I knew exactly zero about it. I looked down my good-Christian-girl nose, rolled my eyes, and thought, "Get a grip," or worse, "How unspiritual of you." Can you see me cringing?

It wasn't until I experienced my own brand of trauma (in the form of a car accident that left me with a diagnosis of PTSD) that I began to be honest about what I had lived

with for a long time. I still have trouble defining what, exactly, anxiety is, but I think that's okay because it probably feels different to everyone, and I don't think you can put these things in a box.

Just yesterday for the first time, I decided to look up the definition of anxiety, and here's what I found:

Merriam-Webster says the medical definition of anxiety is “*an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physical signs* (such as tension, sweating, and increased pulse rate).”

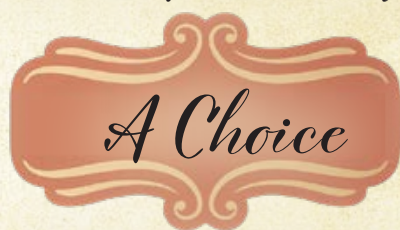
American Heritage defines it as “*A state of apprehension, uncertainty, and fear resulting from the anticipation of a realistic or fantasized threatening event or situation, often impairing physical and psychological functioning.*”

The APA says of anxiety “*Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure.*” But then it includes this: “*People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts* [I've written about them before] *or concerns,*” and boy, if that doesn't describe me.

All of these definitions perfectly describe my experience with anxiety. If you've never felt anxiety, here's what I will tell you: it feels terrifying, and it is not just in your head. It is very much in your body, and your body has an actual physiological reaction to it that includes (at least for me) a pounding heart, higher blood pressure, release of cortisol, shaking, and usually ends with tears. It can last a minute or days. It

may culminate in a panic attack. It is decidedly unpleasant.

Anxiety is a known, named, medical condition. It is not fake or made-up and if you suffer from anxiety, you are not just being a drama queen. It is very real and I am here to acknowledge that. But I don't stop there. Since I am a Christian, I always want to know what God says about a subject.



In the version of the Bible I read (King James), the words anxiety and anxious do not appear. The closest thing is careful, literally “care-full” or “full of care.” There are two well-known verses that use the word careful in this way.

The first is in Luke 10 when Jesus comes to visit two sisters and Martha complains to him that Mary isn't helping her serve. He says, “*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things ...*” In other words, you're so full of worries—worries about guests and worries about food and worries about doing stuff. He continues, “*But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*” One thing is needful, and it obviously isn't how the food gets put out.

But don't miss this: Jesus says, “*Mary hath chosen that good part ...*” She chose it and Martha did not. Mary chose not to be full of worry

over the serving of guests. She chose to listen to Jesus instead. It was her choice.

Now listen, I know some of you are saying, “*But I can’t choose not to have anxiety,*” and I hear you. Remember, I’m walking the same road you are, fighting the same battle. I know it’s not as easy as I’m making it sound.

What I get from this passage is that I don’t just have to be a victim of anxiety. I don’t have to sit there in my anxiousness being helpless. I have choices. Maybe not the choice to not have anxiety at all, but I can choose where to focus: on the worry or on listening to Jesus.

Remember, God doesn’t tell us how to feel, but he does tell us how to think, and what to think on. That’s because while we can’t choose our feelings, we can choose our thoughts, which are the basis of our feelings. Maybe negative, worrisome thoughts come into our mind many times a day, but we can choose to let them keep going. We don’t have to stop them in the middle and fixate on them or feed them. We can notice them, call them what they are—anxious thoughts that are probably untrue—and then usher them out the door. That’s the choice.

A Prayer

The second well-known passage that uses the word careful is Philippians 4:6, which says, “Be

*I feel like
things are out
of my control*

careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

I don’t know about you, but when I am in a state of anxiety, it’s most likely because I feel like things are out of my control. And here’s where we get to the amazing statement my daughter made.

We were talking about worry and fears and anxiety and she said this:

“Anxiety is rooted in a spirit of control. When I feel anxious, I ask, what am I trying to control that’s not mine to control?”

I have not been able to forget that, and I’ve actually used it several times since we had that conversation.

Here’s the thing: When we are feeling anxious, our rational, thinking brain goes largely offline and our emotional brain takes over. Asking the question “what am I trying to control that’s not mine to control?” forces the rational brain to get back in the game and not let the emotional brain take over and do something dumb.

THIS is why God tells us what to think. It’s because he wants us to use

our rational, thinking brain to deal with a difficult situation rather than just let the emotional part rule the day and possibly make an unwise decision.

Please believe me when I tell you I am not saying our emotional brain is bad in any way. God created it, gave it a place and a function, and it is for our benefit. But he did not create it to run the whole show, just as he did not create the rational brain to always be the boss and never let the emotional brain speak up. Both parts have their function and place and they were designed to be used together to make life full and beautiful and rich with truth and feeling. One should never completely disregard the other,

and neither should ever be totally squashed.

But after he tells us what not to do (be careful for nothing), he tells us what to do: *“in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* Friend, there is so much here.

Every thing: every single thing in all of life.

By prayer: talk to God.

Supplication with thanksgiving: thankfulness is an antidote to anxiety because it changes your focus.

Let your requests be made known unto God: tell him what you need.

He is our first line of defense and he is just waiting for us to ask.

So make a choice and pray.

Beyond this, I have a few strategies when anxiety comes around.

1. *Cry.* It is your body's way of releasing excess energy and you will feel a lot better afterward.
2. *Exercise.* Again, release the excess energy. If I don't have time to go for a long walk, I just stand up and shake myself to get it all out. Maybe don't do this in public.
3. *Take* some long, slow, deep breaths. Google “box breathing.”
4. *Ground* yourself in the present by using your senses to notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. This pulls the rational brain back online so it can temper the emotional brain.
5. *Ask* yourself the question, what am I trying to control that's not mine to control?

6. *Finally*, come hang out with my cows. I've said before that I am an absorber of energy, both high and low. If people around me are stressed, I am stressed. If everyone is calm, I am calm. Standing in the pasture among peacefully grazing cattle is a first-class stress-reducer. If you don't have cows, go for a walk in nature.

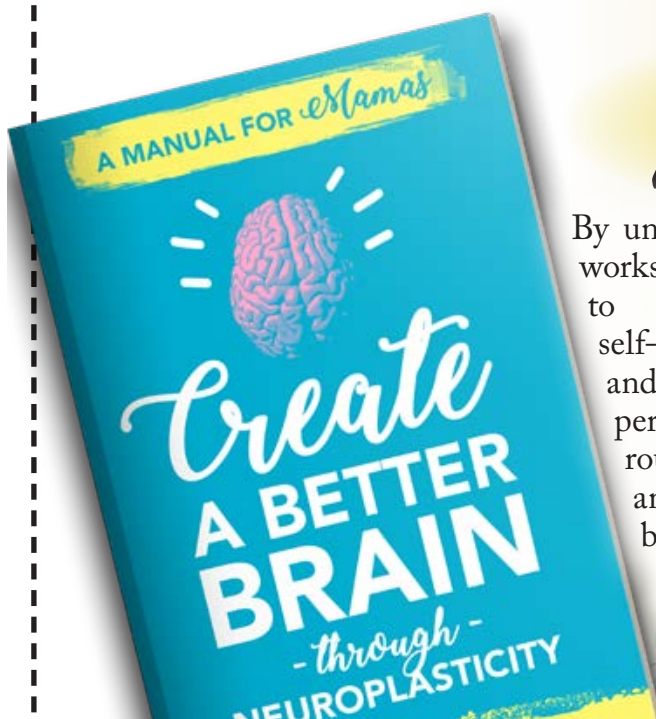
I hope there is some little thing here that will help you in your walk with anxiety, even if it's just the knowledge that someone else is walking through it with you and understands how you feel. But please don't just suffer. Get some help or try one of the strategies I shared, and then tell me about it. I love hearing from you!

You can read more of Karen's writing at www.karensargent.com
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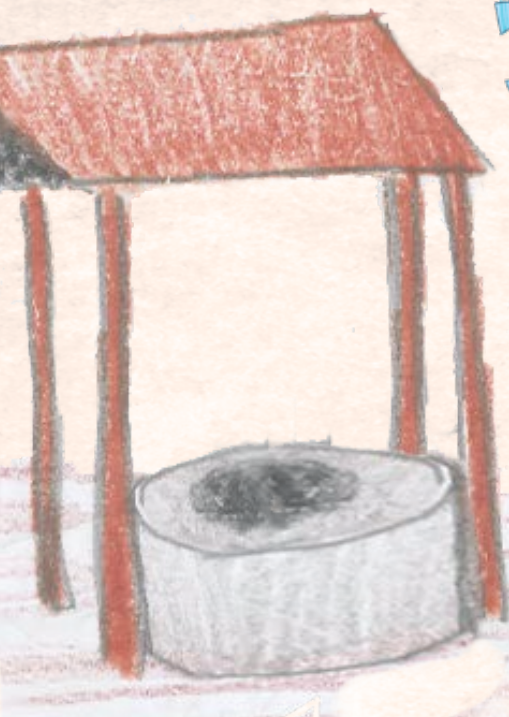
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A Stick Figure Illustration
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** Illustrations are to give you an idea of what the tracts could look like.*

by Stephanie Grimes

A little while back as I was reading a story in the Bible, I thought how much my son Lake would love to hear it too. Then, remembering how he loved stories that were in comic style, I had an idea.

Over the years, Lake has become a hoarder of little Bible tracts with the comic-style pictures. I can't tell you how many *Chick tracts* that boy has stuffed under his bed and in every nook and cranny to read! He would spend long amounts of time reading the Bible tract and looking at the pictures. He would read, reread, and think about them.

That's the memory that came to mind and it's what sparked the idea in my head as I read the story in the Bible. So I started my own line of handmade, comic-style Bible stories for him that I call, "*A stick-figure presentation, by MOM.*"



If I think of a Bible story or certain verses I decide to make a tract out of, I write the verses and draw simple pictures to go with them to illustrate. For an

artist, it's pretty laughable work but it's entertaining!

I keep it simple. I only put one or two verses at the top of the page, then I depict them with my stick figures, many times adding speech bubbles to help tell the story. I use a bit of coloring here and there to make it a little brighter.

It doesn't take long, and I know how much Lake will feel the love and appreciate the story and pictures to look at. Besides, he absolutely loves getting mail!



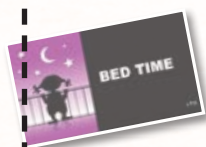
If you knew who I am, you would be asking me for living water.

Maybe as I go along I will improve the quality and look of them, but for now, I just love knowing he's going to be excited to get these! It makes me smile just thinking of the goofy grin he always gets when I do something that amuses him and I hear "Oh my word, Mooom." He acts like I'm silly but secretly loves it.

You don't have to be a great artist to do this for your children. Just draw a few stick figures and add a little text and the appropriate verses. Give it a try and watch their faces light up! ■

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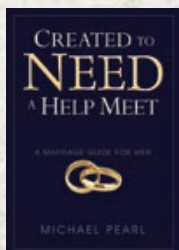


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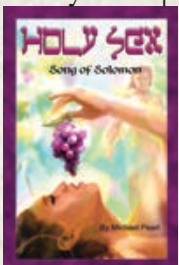


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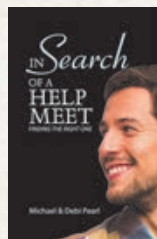
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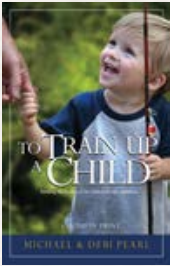


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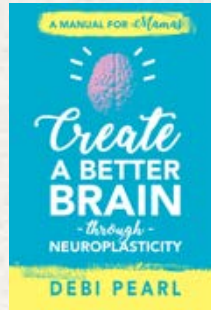


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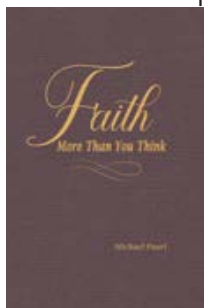
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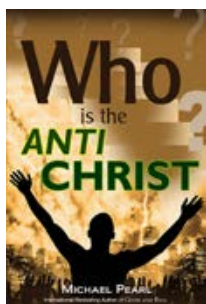
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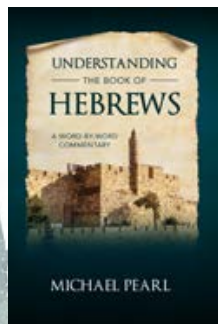
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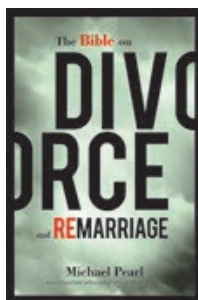
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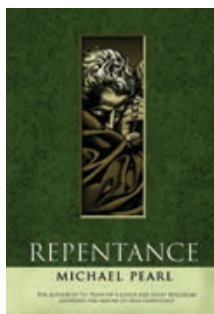
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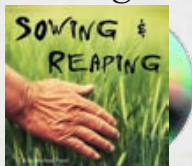


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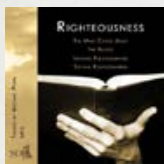
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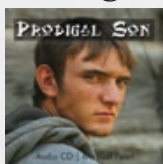
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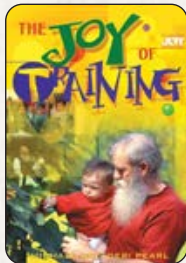


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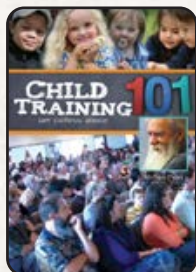
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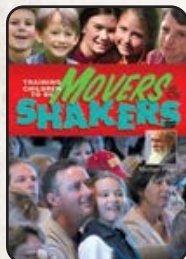
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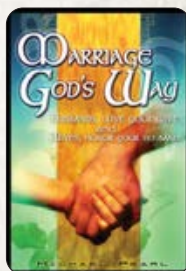
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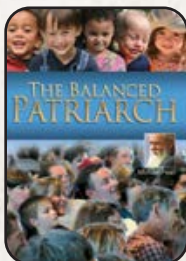
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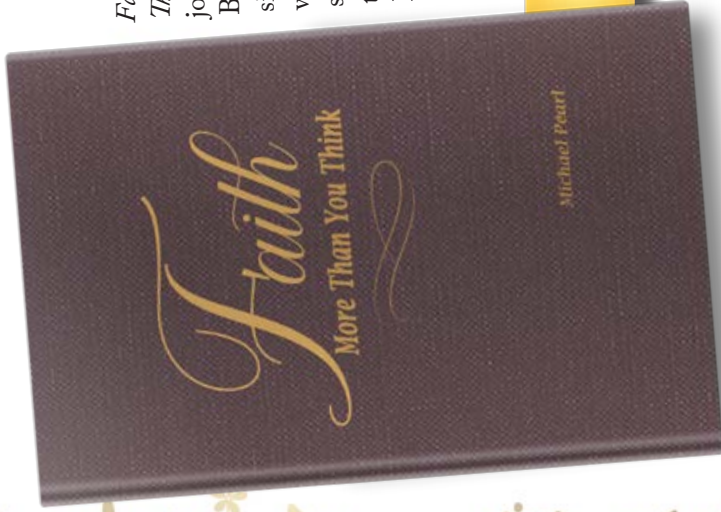
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