Divine Analogies

Reflections on the Life and Future of the Church



Volume 6

52 Weekly Reflections

Charles D. (Chuck) Vollmer

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Divine Analogies

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Volume 6 of the Series

Charles D. (Chuck) Vollmer

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Divine Analogies Volume 6 Introduction

Reflections on the Life and Future of the Church

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns believers not to cause Jews, Greeks, or the Church of God to stumble (1Co 10:32). To me, the principle is simple but demanding: my conduct and words should never become needless obstacles between people and Christ. Yet avoiding needless offense does not require timid silence. Jesus confronted religious hypocrisy, political power, spiritual corruption, and human pride without compromising truth. He commands His disciples to follow Him with the same courage—speaking truth with spiritual authority, living in obedience, proclaiming the victory of the Cross, and preparing for His return.

The Church Age is the period in salvation history extending from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Ac 2) until the Rapture of Christ's Church, followed ultimately by His visible return as King. During this age, God's commissioned body for proclaiming the gospel and making disciples is the Church—not buildings, denominations, or religious bureaucracies, but the global body of believers who belong to Jesus Christ.

Every authentic member of this Church is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete Jesus promised. The Spirit always points believers toward Christ, guides them into truth, develops Christlike character, exposes corruption, empowers faithful witness, and equips disciples to resist the rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and spiritual forces of evil (Ep 6:12). The Christian's fight is not against flesh and blood. It is a spiritual conflict fought through prayer, truth, Scripture, faith, obedience, and Spirit-power.

Christianity remains vibrant in parts of Africa and Asia, but I sense that much of the Western world has turned from a biblical worldview toward secularism and humanism. This drift places many Western churches on a path toward compromise, irrelevance, and eventual judgment. I see four broad biblical indicators that the Church Age may be entering its final stage: spiritual apostasy within the Church; cultural and moral decay; geopolitical and natural turbulence described as "birth pains"; and developments involving Israel and the approaching "fullness of the Gentiles." I am particularly concerned about the United States and the American Church.

My perspective has been shaped by five decades of following Christ, actual combat experience, national-security work with American and foreign governments, years of interaction with Israeli and Arab leaders, and sustained study of biblical and Abrahamic eschatologies. Jesus is my intercessor at the Father's right hand, and the Holy Spirit lives within me and directs my path. I do not claim special revelation, but I cannot ignore the possibility that we are witnessing the culmination of the Church Age and the approach of the prophesied Eschaton. Derived from the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning "last" or "utmost," the Eschaton is the final climax of human history under God's sovereign plan.

On the surface, America's spiritual outlook remains surprisingly high. According to Pew Research Center's 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study, 86% of Americans believe people possess a soul or spirit,

and 70% believe in heaven, hell, or both. After decades of decline, the Christian share of the population appears to have stabilized temporarily at 62%, down from 78% in 2007. Another 29% claim no religious affiliation, 7% identify with religions other than Christianity, and only 33% of American adults attend religious services at least monthly.

Those numbers suggest that spiritual interest remains widespread, but spiritual interest is not the same as biblical faithfulness. Research from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University paints a more sobering picture. Pew primarily measures religious identity, beliefs, and practices. The American Worldview Inventory evaluates whether a person's beliefs and behavior consistently meet CRC's definition of a biblical worldview. The findings are therefore not necessarily contradictory: Americans may remain spiritually interested while becoming less biblically coherent.

The 2023 American Worldview Inventory reported that only 4% of U.S. adults demonstrated what CRC defines as a biblical worldview. The figure was 13% among born-again Christians and only 1% among adults under 30. Other CRC studies identify widespread syncretism—the mixing of selected biblical beliefs with secular, humanistic, therapeutic, and culturally fashionable ideas. Many Americans still believe in God, heaven, or the soul while rejecting moral absolutes, minimizing sin, redefining salvation, or treating personal preference as the final authority.

A biblical worldview is more than checking the correct boxes on a doctrinal survey. It is a way of seeing and living grounded in Scripture's authority and applied consistently to beliefs, values, relationships, and daily decisions. It interprets reality—God, humanity, sin, salvation, morality, purpose, and truth—through biblical teaching rather than cultural trends, political loyalties, social theories, or personal preference. A fragmented faith borrows from Scripture when convenient. A biblical worldview submits the whole person to Christ. A secular worldview rejects His authority, while a syncretic worldview divides a believer's allegiance between Scripture and culture. When either takes root within the Church, it creates fertile ground for spiritual apostasy—and perhaps for the Great Falling Away foretold in Scripture (2Th 2:3).

The 52 reflections in this volume trace the Church's condition and possible future from several directions. They begin with divine sorrow over Christ's wounded Bride and the need for godly repentance. They examine biblical worldview, spiritual atrophy, false teaching, syncretism, and the widening distance between cultural Christianity and faithful discipleship. They then explore Jesus, Christianity, the Holy Spirit, and the Remnant as contrarian forces that resist the spirit of the age. Finally, they consider persecution, martyrdom, resurrection, the approaching Eschaton, and the kind of Church that may be required to endure what lies ahead.

To avoid giving needless offense to the Church of God, I offer these reflections not as condemnation and certainly not as a claim to prophetic authority, but as an invitation to discernment, preparation, repentance, and faithful action. The Church Age will end, but that conclusion may remain decades or centuries away—or it may be just around the corner. My purpose is not to set dates. It is to help prepare Christ's Bride to remain faithful whenever that day comes.

Chuck Vollmer

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Prologue

My reflections on:

"The Church's identity, purpose, structure, authority, and mission."



These fourteen Divine Analogies provide the theological and autobiographical lens through which I understand the Church's identity, purpose, structure, authority, and mission. As a Protestant who raised his only child Catholic, as a mainstream-to-evangelical churchgoer, and as an Abrahamic Transitions cultural engagement expert, my views on ecclesiology, the branch of theology that studies the Church, tend to be formed by an ecumenical perspective.

1. Church as a Divine Era



I view the Church Age as a divine harvest season—a finite, purposeful era in God's redemptive timeline. It began at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon believers and empowered them to carry the Gospel outward from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8; 2:1-4). Like a farmer opening his fields for harvest, God created an extraordinary window in which Jew and Gentile could become one Body through faith in Christ.

From my dispensational perspective, this era was never intended to last forever. It occupies the interval between Christ's First Advent and His promised return, a mysterious period once hidden but later revealed through the apostles (Eph 3:3-6). During this era, the Church received its marching orders: make disciples, proclaim Christ worldwide, and gather the harvest.

For nearly two thousand years, that mission transformed civilizations. Yet when I look across the Western world today, I see unmistakable institutional decline. Historic denominations shrink. Sanctuaries empty. Magnificent European cathedrals increasingly function as museums and tourist destinations.

Across the Atlantic, I witness a different kind of tragedy in the American church: an insidious drift toward secularization and syncretism. Research from Arizona Christian University's Cultural Research Center deeply saddens me, showing that while a majority of Americans still claim the name of Christ, a mere 4% actually hold a biblical worldview. Americans have compromised the Gospel, blending Bible truth with moralistic socialism and secular humanism.

But institutional decline does not mean Christ's Church is dying. Christianity continues to grow vigorously in Africa, Asia, and the Global South. Perhaps Western Christians became too comfortable believing that their churches, denominations, seminaries, and cultural influence were permanent fixtures rather than temporary tools.

Turmoil in the Middle East, growing threats of global war, and the grim possibilities of nuclear, biological, or AI-driven catastrophe increasingly make me wonder whether we are witnessing the twilight of the Church Age. I don't know God's timetable, and Jesus specifically warned against pretending that I do (Mt 24:36). Yet, He commanded me to remain watchful.

A fighter pilot doesn't wait until the missile hits his aircraft to acknowledge the threat warning. He recognizes changing conditions, checks his systems, tightens the formation, and prepares. That is how I approach the Church's future. I am not trying to predict God's calendar. I am trying to read the warning lights. The harvest continues, but daylight does not last forever.

2. Church as Visible and Invisible



I have spent a lifetime in cockpits, boardrooms, and command centers learning that what I see and what is real are not the same. In aviation, I learned to distinguish between the visible formation and the invisible force holding it together. Through the canopy or on a radar scope, I could see aircraft flying in formation—a single physical unit moving through the sky. Yet what bound us together remained invisible: radio waves, encrypted data links, shared tactical intent, and the bond of trust between pilots sworn to defend one another.

The visible church is the physical gathering—its congregations and institutions. I think of it as the aircraft's mechanical frame designed to operate in a chaotic world. Yet because the visible church exists in human history, it remains a mixed formation. Genuine believers and nominal Christians can occupy the same pew, recite the same creed, sing the same hymns, and appear on the same membership roll. I cannot reliably distinguish one from the other.

The invisible Church is different. It is the spiritual reality as God sees it—every truly redeemed believer across geography, generations, denominations, and history united into the Body of Christ. No membership committee controls admission. No denomination owns it. No human authority maintains its roster. Human beings judge appearances, credentials, affiliations, and behavior. God sees the heart.

I can see the formation. Only God sees the Church.

Paul writes that God's foundation stands firm, sealed with this assurance: “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tm 2:19). Jesus illustrates this same reality with wheat and weeds growing together until the harvest finally reveals the difference (Mt 13:24–30). I see only what another person allows me to see. God sees what is actually there.

That matters enormously as I consider the future of the Church and what I believe may be the Church Age's approaching close. Churches can close. Denominations can fracture. Seminaries can drift. Sanctuaries can empty. Membership rolls can shrink—or swell with people who have never surrendered themselves to Christ. None of those statistics tell me precisely what is happening inside Christ's invisible Church.

To ignore the visible church is to abandon the formation, stripping away mutual accountability and orderly mission. But to rely solely on the visible structure is to mistake the airframe for the pilot's soul. I need both: standing faithfully within the visible gathering while remaining anchored to the invisible, eternal reality governed by Christ alone.

3. Church as a Building



Throughout my Christian life, I have witnessed congregations build magnificent structures and expect high-tech edifices to generate a living Church. The Bible presents the Church not as an architectural landmark, but as people gathered in Christ's name (Mt 18:20). When the living stones walk out, the sanctuary reverts to ordinary, inert stone (1 Pt 2:5).

The spiritual life of a church resides in Spirit-filled believers. Scripture teaches that God does not dwell in temples made by human hands (Ac 17:24), but within a living community indwelt by His Spirit (1 Co 3:16). A sanctuary fulfills its God-given purpose while the gospel is boldly proclaimed, authentic community thrives, and holy worship remains alive. High-tech can create emotive, mind-bending experiences, but only the Spirit can fill empty hearts.

In practical terms, a church building becomes just a structure when its purpose and fruit no longer align with its biblical foundation. Decline usually begins when purpose gives way to comfortable inertia. A congregation may still fill its pews out of habit, but Christ's warning to lukewarm Laodicea remains chilling (Rv 3:16). I pray that I never backslide like several churches in Revelation, maintaining an outward religious presence while losing the spiritual vitality Christ demands. As a disciple, if I don't seek all things spiritual, my flesh will pursue anything material.

Decommissioning marks the tragic final stage for many church buildings, leaving the structure ripe for abandonment or secular repurposing. Altars are cleared, central symbols removed, and property surrendered to secular endeavors. Western Europe provides a sobering preview. Thousands of historic churches have closed or been repurposed as residences, libraries, restaurants, bars, commercial venues, and even mosques. Grand sanctuaries that once proclaimed Christianity now sometimes survive mainly as architectural tourist traps.

I grieve as I watch churches across the United States and Canada move down a similar path. Traditional institutions can become preoccupied with preserving brick-and-mortar rather than restoring spiritual vitality—mistaking the physical container for the divine contents. Yet my sorrow does not yield to despair because I also witness the rapid rise of the digitally networked virtual church.

Recognizing that God cares far more about people than steeples, I have watched something unexpected emerge through Jobenomics and Divine Analogies. Without owning a sanctuary, our ministries have connected hundreds of believers across four continents who work to help others without pay. I don't pretend that a digital network replaces the local church. But it reminds me that Christ's Church was never imprisoned inside one. Buildings may close, denominations may decline, and steeples may disappear from the skyline. The Church moves where the Spirit leads.

4. Church as Power



When studying Acts 1:4–8, one biblical directive stands out above all else: wait for the power.

Jesus did not hand His disciples a complex organizational chart on the Mount of Olives. He commanded them to hold position in Jerusalem until equipped with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This was not passive comfort—it was divine power that could turn ordinary men into bold witnesses to the ends of the earth. The early Church was never designed to run on human intellect, slick rhetoric, or committee meetings. It was built to run on divine power. Jesus Himself modeled dependence on the Holy Spirit. In His incarnation, He humbled Himself and took the form of a servant (Php 2:6–8), conducting His earthly ministry in the Spirit's power (Lk 4:14, 18). If Jesus chose that path, I have little excuse for trying to operate on my own power, even though I often think it is sufficient. Wrongheadedness is one of my flat spots.

The proof shines throughout the New Testament. Before Pentecost, Peter panicked under pressure and denied Christ to a servant girl. Once filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached openly at Pentecost and about three thousand responded (Ac 2:14–41). Soon afterward, he stood before the same religious establishment that condemned Jesus and refused to back down (Ac 4:5–20). Paul underwent an equally dramatic transformation. The fierce persecutor became a relentless apostle, planting churches across the Mediterranean, surviving floggings and imprisonment, and engaging the philosophers of Athens on their own intellectual ground (Ac 9:1–19; 17:16–34; 2 Co 11:23–28). Spirit-powered disciples faced the Roman Empire and hostile cultures without retreating. They turned the world upside down (Ac 17:6).

Today's landscape feels strangely similar, with the Church facing secular skepticism, humanist pressures, and growing hostility toward biblical Christianity. Too often, churches counter these forces with human ingenuity—fancy programs, clever marketing, sophisticated technology, and organizational maneuvering. But ingenuity is not divine power, and human enthusiasm is no substitute for spiritual horsepower.

A church operating without Spirit power is like a rocket sitting on the launchpad with empty fuel tanks: brilliant engineering and impressive technology, but completely incapable of overcoming gravity. Structure without power is expensive static inventory.

Living faithfully keeps forcing me back to the true power source. I can organize, strategize, write, build networks, and push harder—I have spent a lifetime doing all five. None generates spiritual power. I must humble myself, pray, and depend on the Spirit to ignite whatever witness God expects from me. The future Church will need new structures, better technology, and creative strategies. But without the Holy Spirit, all we have built is a better rocket sitting on the pad.

5. Church as Syncretic

I have spent much of my life analyzing how I can improve, reengineer, or create better ways of doing things, from projects around my home, like masonry projects, to international initiatives, like the Russian Privatization Program. Reengineering institutions is the most difficult task because it involves the people, culture, and history within them. The modern Church faces a challenge when the Bible is blended with cultural beliefs simply because society accepts them.



Syncretism—mixing allegiance to God with incompatible beliefs or worldviews—is strictly forbidden. Scripture treats it not as a minor mistake but as covenant-breaking. At its core, syncretism is double allegiance: honoring God outwardly while inwardly or practically serving rival gods, rival authorities, or rival moral systems.

Syncretism rarely asks me to abandon Christ. It simply asks me to make room beside Him. That is what makes it dangerous. Christianity remains on the label while competing beliefs quietly enter the contents. Biblical morality mixes with popular sentiment. Divine authority competes with personal autonomy. Salvation becomes self-improvement. Sin becomes dysfunction. Truth becomes whatever feels authentic. Before long, Christ remains welcome, as long as He doesn't claim exclusive authority over my desires.

Barna/ACU's 2025 American Worldview Inventory reinforces my concern. It reports that 92% of American adults embrace syncretism, while only 4% hold what the researchers define as a biblical worldview. Two-thirds still identify as Christian, yet only 40% believe the God of the Bible exists and affects human lives, and only 34% say they worship or follow Him. Christianity remains America's dominant religious label, but syncretism has become its dominant worldview.

I am not immune. Syncretism becomes seductive when it involves something I already want to believe. Scripture repeatedly warns me against this kind of blending. Paul says I cannot drink both the Lord's cup and the cup of demons (1Co 10:21). He warns against being captured by hollow philosophies rooted in human tradition rather than Christ (Col 2:8). Rather than conforming to this world, I want the Holy Spirit to transform me by renewing my mind toward God (Ro 12:2).

Faith built partly on Scripture and partly on cultural approval develops a structural weakness. As long as biblical teaching and popular culture travel roughly together, the crack may remain hidden. But when they pull violently in opposite directions, every believer and every church must decide which foundation bears the load. The choice is simple: God or the world.

6. Church as Secular Bridesmaids

Whenever I attend a wedding, my eyes naturally go to the bride. She is radiant, unmistakable, and set apart for the groom. Her vows express an exclusive, lifelong covenant. Standing near her are the bridesmaids—attentive, beautifully dressed, and part of the ceremony. They manage practical details, soothe anxieties, and help keep the gathering orderly. Their role is honorable, but they are not entering the covenant.



Lately, I have viewed the modern church through this picture, and a quiet sorrow settles over me. Scripture reveals believers not as guests or attendants but as the Bride of Christ—betrothed to one Husband and called to pure, undivided devotion (2Co 11:2). Her calling has a sacred vertical focus: worship her Creator, guard the Gospel, make disciples, and prepare for the Bridegroom's return. Christ intends to present His Bride radiant, without stain or wrinkle (Ep 5:27).

Yet I have watched too many American churches step away from that bridal identity. In a genuine desire to remain relevant, accommodating, and culturally acceptable, they prioritize secular causes and public approval over their covenant vows. They devote their best energy to managing earthly concerns, soften difficult biblical convictions, and seek respectability from cultural gatekeepers. They may keep Christian language while letting the surrounding culture define their mission.

When that happens, a church begins behaving less like Christ's Bride and more like a secular bridesmaid. A bridesmaid can be kind, capable, and civic-minded. She can organize charity drives, host gatherings, and champion worthy programs. Those efforts are not wrong; authentic faith must care for the vulnerable and hurting (Ja 1:27). But when service becomes detached from covenant, it remains merely horizontal. A secular bridesmaid organizes the world's ceremony without belonging to the Groom.

Christ did not lay down His life merely to establish another well-mannered civic institution. He gave Himself to sanctify a distinct people who would live in the world without conforming to its patterns (Ro 12:2). The Church's deepest service to a weary world is not accommodation but transformation—not applause-seeking philanthropy but truth spoken in love, compassion rooted in Christ, and disciples deployed in His name.

Before I accuse churches of trading the Groom's embrace for the crowd's polite applause, I must examine my own allegiance. Do I wear Christ's ring while seeking the world's approval? Do my works flow from devotion, or have they become substitutes for it? Christ's true Bride does not abandon a hurting world. She serves the world best by remembering whose ring she wears, whose vows she guards, and whose arrival she awaits.

7. Church as Anachronistic



For most of my adult life, I've analyzed how to improve, reengineer, or create better ways of doing things. Years ago, I approached several large churches with what I considered a straightforward proposal: establish business and entrepreneurship centers to help people create microbusinesses, nonemployer enterprises, jobs, and intergenerational wealth. Church leaders considered the idea anachronistic—out of place. That response puzzled me. I wasn't proposing that churches change the Gospel. I was proposing another way to put it to work.

God spent decades teaching me how to create businesses. I offered those capabilities freely, particularly to help underserved people become economically self-sufficient. The response was polite but unmistakable. They seemed more interested in my checkbook than my capabilities. That irritated the contrarian in me, but eventually the Holy Spirit pushed me toward a better question: Was I offended because they rejected my idea, or concerned because churches were failing to deploy capabilities God had already placed in their pews?

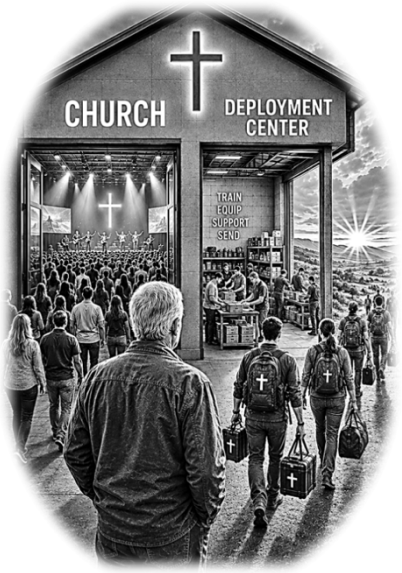
If Scripture lists a wide variety of gifts, from character gifts (Is 11:2), to power gifts (1Co 12:7-11), to ministries (Ep 4:11), to motivational gifts (Ro 12:6-8), why would the business-development capabilities God gave me be any different? Paul describes different gifts working together for the common good (1Co 12:4-7). Like Paul, I see a congregation not as an audience to be served, but as an enormous reservoir of God-given capability waiting to be equipped and deployed.

I believe that the Church must continually adapt how it equips believers to carry Jesus' Truth into their communities. Churches rightly address marriage, parenting, grief, addiction, and personal finance. Today's young adults face artificial intelligence, disappearing career ladders, and crushing debt. I cannot understand why helping someone create a business or become self-employed should somehow fall outside practical discipleship (Ja 2:15-17).

Jesus eventually redirected me outside familiar church structure. Jobenomics became one expression of that calling; Divine Analogies may become another. Neither requires a pulpit. Building an international grassroots business-development movement taught me that old doesn't mean obsolete, and new doesn't mean better. An institution becomes anachronistic when it protects yesterday's methods from tomorrow's mission.

I don't want the Church to modernize Christ's truth. I want it to modernize how effectively it equips believers to live that truth. The Gospel doesn't need reengineering. Some of the Church's delivery systems do, to answer an uncomfortable question. Are we equipping disciples for today's world, where AI can displace workers—or for the world ahead, where evil is gaining an ever-stronger foothold?

8. Church as a Big-Box Store



For two decades, I walked through automatic glass doors into what sometimes felt like a spiritual big-box store. Similarly, the modern megachurch offers an extraordinary inventory under one roof: arena-quality worship, children's programs, youth centers, recovery ministries, counseling, cafés, outreach, and a sophisticated digital immersion experience. I know the good their scale makes possible—disaster relief, community feeding, missions, professional teaching, family ministries, and an unintimidating doorway through which thousands encounter the Gospel. Scale creates enormous capability. But it also creates vulnerability.

Big-box retail is designed around consumers, convenience, centralized inventory, and constant traffic. Churches risk adopting the same logic. When faith becomes packaged primarily for comfort, convenience, entertainment, and emotional payoff, the model can produce spectators rather than disciplined disciples. A future under pressure may demand something different.

My main concern is resilience in a high-threat environment. Biblical Christianity increasingly faces pressure from inside through doctrinal accommodation, consumerism, celebrity culture, and theological dilution, while pressure from outside can include secular hostility, political coercion, religious persecution, social ostracism, and violence. A believer trained primarily to consume religious experiences may be poorly prepared when following Christ becomes costly.

Large, centralized campuses carry strategic vulnerabilities. They require enormous budgets, steady attendance, sophisticated technology, specialized staff, enhanced security and surveillance systems, and bodyguards for pastors. Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit for protection. COVID demonstrated how quickly a major disruption could empty sanctuaries. I cannot predict the next disruption, but experience taught me never to design an institution around the assumption that its headquarters will remain untouched.

Ironically, megachurches may possess precisely the resources the future Church will need at the culmination of the Church Age. Perhaps their greatest future role will be more like deployment centers—training believers, financing church plantings, supporting missionaries, developing digital businesses and startups, equipping small groups, and deploying resources outward. That possibility excites me. The megachurch doesn't have to disappear. It may simply need to change its mission from attracting larger crowds to equipping and enabling smaller units to carry on Jesus' campaign against evil.

Megachurches excel in getting people in the door. Deployment centers prepare and send them into the field fully equipped with the armor of God (Ep 6:10-18).

9. Church as Aglow & Fervent



Paul's appeal in Romans 12:11 reaches me with unusual force: “be aglow with the Spirit” (RSV). The KJV uses the word “fervent.” Both describe something I desperately need and increasingly believe the Church must recover. Christianity was never intended to operate at room temperature. The only way I can effectively serve my Master is to remain aglow—fervent—in the Spirit. Anything less eventually becomes religious motion without spiritual heat, flame, and fire.

I understand why churches emphasize compassion. People arrive wounded, lonely, frightened, addicted, stressed, confused, or simply exhausted. They need a warm blanket, and Christ demonstrated extraordinary compassion for those who suffer. But compassion has two parts as I understand it: empathy and solutions. I am probably wired 10% toward empathy and 90% toward solutions. That imbalance can make me impatient and insensitive, so the Holy Spirit continually works on me. Yet I also believe endless empathy without a pathway forward can leave people dependent upon the blanket instead of teaching them how to build a roaring fire.

I know something about fire because Christianity didn't reform me easily. I was a skeptic, contrarian, miscreant, and warrior accustomed to relying on myself. Christ accepted me anyway. What gradually changed me wasn't religious programming, emotional encouragement, or my own willpower. It was the indwelling Holy Spirit becoming my constant companion, conscience, counselor, and fire starter. He comforted me when I needed comfort, convicted me when I needed conviction, and repeatedly pushed me forward when staying comfortable would have been much easier. The fire was never mine. My responsibility was to stop quenching it (1Th 5:19).

Pentecost did not produce spectators wrapped in cozy comforters. The Spirit descended like fire, and ordinary believers became extraordinary witnesses (Ac 2:1-4, 41-47). Jesus called His followers the light of the world (Mt 5:14-16), and Paul urged Timothy to fan God's gift into flame (2Tm 1:6). A Spirit-filled church should therefore do more than gather, console, and encourage. It should teach believers to seize the Spirit, graft on to Him, seek His gifts, confront sin, endure hardship, serve others over self, and carry the Gospel outside the sanctuary.

As a Christian warrior, I don't want a church merely to keep me warm on Sunday. I want it to teach me how to carry the fire 24/7/365. Blankets comfort cold people, and sometimes that is exactly what love requires. But fire changes the temperature around it. A church aglow with the Spirit does both: it shelters people from the cold, then teaches them to carry God's flame into the world.

10. Church as a Universal Priesthood



For fifty years, reading the Bible has been part of my morning and nightly routine. After digging through Scripture, I now see it less as a religious textbook and more as God's operational blueprint. One feature stands out: God never intended Christianity to become a spectator sport where professional clergy perform ministry while everybody else watches. Christ calls ordinary believers out of the bleachers, equips them with spiritual gifts, and sends them into the field.

Under the Old Covenant, Levitical priests repeatedly offered sacrifices for sin (Ex 29; Lev 16). Jesus became both the spotless sacrifice and our eternal High Priest, offering Himself once for all and opening direct access to God's throne of grace (He 4:14-16; 9:11-14). I no longer need another human being to secure that access. Christ alone is my mediator with God (1Tm 2:5).

I am a Protestant who fell head-over-heels for a Catholic. We built our life together and raised our son through parochial schools. I was delighted to discover that universal priesthood is not simply a Protestant hobbyhorse. Catholicism distinguishes the common priesthood of baptized believers from its ordained priesthood, but both traditions affirm something I consider revolutionary: every Christian receives a commission to join the “royal priesthood” (1Pt 2:9).

Accordingly, I see the Church's primary mission as training, equipping, and deploying Spirit-filled, Christlike disciples. My priesthood doesn't require a collar. My altar can be a workbench, boardroom, dinner table, neighborhood, or underserved community. I offer my work, resources, prayers, spiritual gifts, and life as a living sacrifice (Ro 12:1). Compassion requires me to care about suffering, but discipleship asks what I can do about it. My solution-oriented nature sometimes outruns empathy, and the Holy Spirit regularly corrects me. Yet He also refuses to let compassion become an excuse for passivity (Ja 2:15-17).

When churches neglect universal priesthood, the clergy become the crew while congregants and parishioners become passengers. I don't blame pastors; pew-sitters like me can surrender our responsibilities to them. When pastors equip believers, believers carry Christ into everyday life, and the Holy Spirit supplies the power neither can manufacture (Ep 4:11-12).

Christ did not recruit me merely to occupy a pew and receive ministry. He equipped me to leave it and become one. The Church fulfills its mission when every believer understands that commission and carries Christ from the sanctuary into the world.

11. Church as a Remnant Vanguard



My military experience taught me that when the threat environment rises, numbers alone tell me very little about combat capability. I want people beside me who understand the mission, know their equipment, trust one another, and will hold their position when everything becomes chaotic. I increasingly view the future Church through this lens.

Scripture repeatedly describes God accomplishing extraordinary purposes through remnants—believers who remain faithful when the majority drifts elsewhere. Gideon's army became effective only after God reduced it from thousands to three hundred (Jdg 7). Elijah discovered that even during Israel's apostasy, God had preserved thousands who had not bowed to Baal (1Kg 19:18). Jesus began with twelve ordinary disciples. God does not require impressive numbers to accomplish His mission.

If institutional Christianity continues to weaken, nominal affiliation may become less attractive. Believers who remain may increasingly gather in smaller churches, homes, digital networks, ministries, and tightly connected communities. They may lack impressive buildings but possess something more important: biblical literacy, mutual accountability, spiritual discipline, economic resilience, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. I call them the Remnant Vanguard.

I am not suggesting that megachurches, denominations, or traditional congregations have no place in the future. They may become essential training and supply centers. The Vanguard is not defined by where it worships. It is defined by readiness.

From my dispensational perspective, I expect followers of Christ to endure some portion of the seven-year Tribulation before Christ gathers His Church (1Th 4:16-17). Scripture warns of a falling away before that gathering (2Th 2:1-3). Since I have no idea how long my time in this terrible period may last, I prepare.

My Christophany in 1977 taught me long ago whom I serve. My military and strategic planning experiences taught me not to wait for incoming fire to prepare for battle. My responsibility is to proclaim Christ, strengthen those willing to stand, help the vulnerable, challenge deception, and remain faithful to whatever assignment He gives me. I don't know whether the Remnant Vanguard has decades, years, or a much shorter watch remaining.

My orders are simpler: hold the line, strengthen the formation, and remain at my post until the Commander calls us home.

12. Church as a Divine Finale



Every military operation eventually reaches the moment when the mission changes. The Church Age will be no different. The era that began dramatically at Pentecost will also end dramatically—not because Christ's Church fails, but because its present assignment reaches completion.

During this Age, the Holy Spirit indwells believers and empowers the Church to carry the Gospel to every nation (Ac 1:8). Paul describes an era where Jews and Gentiles become members of one Body (Ep 3:3-6). He also speaks of a partial hardening of Israel continuing until the "fullness of the Gentiles" comes in (Ro 11:25).

Scripture warns that the closing environment will not necessarily look triumphant. Paul describes rebellion or apostasy associated with the revealing of the man of lawlessness (2 Th 2). Jesus warns of deception, persecution, lawlessness, and spiritual testing. I therefore don't measure the Church's ultimate success by buildings, membership rolls, political influence, or cultural approval. Consequently, I understand these passages as evidence that the Church Age has a determined endpoint and, given worldwide turbulence and anti-Christian sentiment, it might arrive soon.

As an eschatologist, I watch Israel carefully. Ezekiel 38 describes a future coalition attacking a regathered Israel, including Persia—modern Iran—and other nations. Some dispensational interpreters associate Magog with Russia, although Scripture itself does not explicitly make that modern identification. Whatever the precise geopolitical alignment, I believe God's prophetic attention ultimately returns decisively to Israel. At the U.S. Department of Defense's request, I have written numerous reports on regional conflict scenarios involving Israel and how an Eze 38-type scenario could become a gateway into the Tribulation Period. In an increasingly secular world, few would even consider the possibility of prophetic fulfillment.

For me, the decisive punctuation mark is the Rapture. Paul describes the Lord descending, the trumpet sounding, the dead in Christ rising, and living believers being caught up to meet Him in the air (1Th 4:16-17). I believe that supernatural gathering concludes the Church Age before the seven-year Tribulation and Christ's return.

From my dispensational perspective, I also understand the Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 as the Holy Spirit working through the Church. After the Church is removed, that restraining ministry changes dramatically; the man of lawlessness emerges, and the world enters its darkest period. Christ ultimately returns in glory and establishes His Millennial Kingdom (Rv 20:4-6). I cannot know when. I don't need to. A fighter pilot doesn't need to know when the war ends to understand today's mission. Until the Commander calls me home, I remain on station.

13. Church as Atrophying



When a muscle goes unused, it atrophies. It does not immediately die. It remains attached to a living body, supplied with blood and connected to nerves, but gradually loses strength and usefulness. When I look at much of today's American Church, Christ's Bride, I wonder whether I am watching something similar. Christ remains its Head. Scripture remains its truth. The Holy Spirit remains its source of power. Yet parts of His Body appear to be growing weaker through spiritual disuse.

I do not make that observation lightly. Paul warned of a coming falling away (2Th 2:3), people abandoning sound doctrine for teachers who satisfy itching ears (2Ti 4:3), and an outward appearance of godliness that denies its power (2Ti 3:5). Jesus described Laodicea as materially comfortable but spiritually poor, blind, and naked (Rv 3:17). I increasingly recognize those symptoms around me—and sometimes in myself. Churches can remain busy, prosperous, and program-rich while losing the spiritual muscle required to confront sin, make disciples, endure opposition, and deploy believers into a hostile world.

Outside the Church, I see other signs that trouble me. Scripture warns that the last days will bring increasing self-centeredness, love of money, arrogance, unholiness, and loss of natural affection (2Ti 3:1–3). Jesus warned that increasing lawlessness would cause love to grow cold (Mt 24:12), while Peter anticipated scoffers dismissing Christ's promised return (2Pe 3:3–4). Jesus also described wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes as birth pangs while the Gospel continues spreading among the nations (Mt 24:7,14; Lk 21:11).

I cannot look at that convergence and dismiss it casually. I suspect we may be approaching the culmination of the Church Age, but I do not know God's timetable. Things could change. More importantly, His Bride could change**.** Atrophy is serious, but it is not necessarily irreversible. An unused muscle can regain strength when it is exercised again.

That possibility turns prophecy into a personal question. If Christ delays His return another generation—or several—what kind of Church am I helping leave behind? Am I merely documenting decline or helping strengthen what remains? I cannot control the prophetic clock, but I can choose whether I turn toward the world or toward God.

Perhaps the first step in reversing spiritual atrophy is not another program, building project, strategy, or sermon series. Christ's Bride may need to realign with the heart of her Groom—the Man of Sorrows who grieved for the humanity He came to save. Before she can regain her strength, she may need to remember how to sorrow.

14. Church as Reconciling



The American Church is atrophying, as evidenced by declining membership, emptying pews, youth leaving, churches closing, fading institutional strength, and waning cultural influence. I believe this is happening because Christ's Bride has turned her attention from the Groom to the bridal party and needs to reconcile with the One she first loved. Reconciliation requires sorrow, but not all sorrow produces reconciliation. Paul drew the differences clearly: godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, while worldly sorrow produces death (2Co 7:10).

Jesus looked beyond institutions to people. He wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41). He had compassion for crowds without a shepherd (Mt 9:36). He came to seek and save the lost (Lk 19:10) and gave His life for them. If His Bride has become wayward and estranged, I believe reconciliation begins when she learns to feel what her Groom feels. Jesus was called the Man of Sorrows because He fully entered human grief and bore our sorrows (Is 53:3-4). His sorrow provides the standard for discerning divine, godly, and worldly sorrow.

Divine sorrow originates in God Himself. It is the pure, holy grief of the Creator whose creation is wounded, whose children are harmed, and whose image-bearers turn away from life. Divine sorrow is never self-protective, never manipulative, never despairing. It is sorrow rooted in love, justice, and the desire to restore. I sense this when I choose my will over His.

Godly sorrow is the sorrow the Holy Spirit produces in me when I see my sin truthfully. It is not about embarrassment, consequences, or reputation. It is grief over the moral fracture itself—grief that aligns with God's heart. It leads to repentance, ownership, and lasting change. In contrast, worldly sorrow turns inward toward excuse-making and rationalizing.

In this analogy, I perceive the Holy Spirit as the Groom's divine Best Man, who confronts, counsels, and prepares an apprehensive Bride for reconciliation. When confronted, I have watched her offer excuses. Satan exploits her worldly sorrow to redirect her attention toward preserving her position rather than restoring intimacy with her Groom. The Church can mourn her decline without grieving what grieves Christ.

I know that Jesus will never abandon His Bride. I also believe His Bride has wandered. Waywardness produces estrangement, but estrangement need not be permanent. Divine sorrow can realign her heart; godly sorrow can change her direction and restore intimacy.

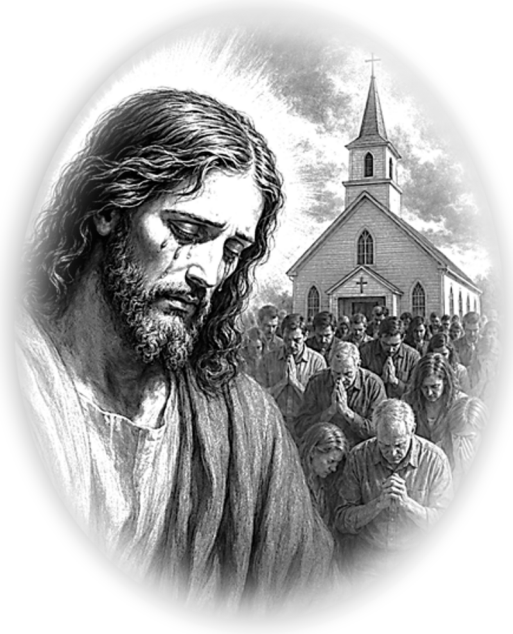
Perhaps reversing the American Church's atrophy begins as she reconciles with her Groom. Having examined the wayward condition of His modern Church throughout this Prologue, I trust the Groom's divine Best Man to do what He does best: turn His sorrowful Bride back toward her first love, Christ Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.

Section 1

The Man of Sorrows' Church

My reflections on:

"The power of being sorrowful."



The Man of Sorrows wept over people who rejected Him, then gave His life to save them. His Bride should share His heart. As the Church Age moves toward its culmination, these reflections examine whether today's Church feels Divine Sorrow for a lost world, practices Godly Sorrow that produces repentance, or increasingly substitutes its own Worldly Sorrow, self-preservation, and cultural acceptance for Christ's incarnation and sacrifice.

15. Jesus as the Man of Sorrows



I look upon the incarnate Christ and see the blueprint for holy endurance. When Isaiah described the Messiah as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3), he revealed a central reality of the divine mission: our Lord did not bypass human anguish; He fully inhabited it.

Jesus carried our griefs and bore our sorrows (Is 53:4). In Gethsemane, He was crushed with sorrow to the point of death (Mt 26:38). At Lazarus's tomb, He offered no detached platitudes; He groaned and wept beside mourners (Jn 11:33-35). His heart broke over Jerusalem's blindness (Lk 19:41). He offered petitions with loud cries and tears (Hb 5:7). During our journey together, Jesus has shown me that godly sorrow is neither spiritual failure nor lack of faith.

Christ did not endure sorrow through mere stoicism. Anointed by the Spirit at His baptism (Lk 3:22), led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Lk 4:1), and offering Himself through the eternal Spirit (Hb 9:14), Jesus modeled complete reliance on the Spirit amid agony. He did not exploit His divine privilege; instead, He humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, and carried out His earthly ministry in the Spirit's power (Php 2:6-8; Lk 4:14).

Sorrow must be acknowledged, brought before the Father, and carried through the Spirit's comfort and strength. I know this because Jesus placed His Spirit within me five decades ago, and the Spirit continues sustaining me through childhood wounds, wartime trauma, PTSD, and the accumulating griefs of a long life. He has never required me to pretend that sorrow does not hurt.

Paul distinguishes godly and worldly sorrow by their fruit: one produces repentance leading to salvation; the other produces death (2Co 7:10). As I begin this section on divine, godly, and worldly sorrow, I find myself examining how the modern Church receives suffering people. I have watched some churches address grief and sorrow through therapy alone.

Sound counseling, trauma care, emotional regulation, and compassionate companionship can become valuable instruments of healing. However, they cannot replace the Holy Spirit, who reaches wounds no human method can touch. The Spirit who anointed and empowered Jesus now indwells His followers, bringing truth, comfort, conviction, and supernatural strength.

I therefore enter this section looking first to the Man of Sorrows. His Bride can treat symptoms, but she cannot restore wounded souls without His Paraclete. I will reflect on how Jesus entered my anguish and how His Spirit exposed the evil one's lies before sorrow hardened into physical and spiritual toxicity.

16. Sorrow as Three Realities



After nearly fifty years with Jesus, I have come to see sorrow not as something to avoid at all costs, but as one of the most important realities in the Christian life. From a biblical standpoint, sorrow runs like a thread through the entire story of redemption. Jesus Himself is called "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3). The prophets, the apostles, and the early Church all knew deep sorrow. Far from being a sign of weakness or failure, Scripture presents sorrow as one way my heart aligns with God's heart and purposes. In my experience, I recognize three distinct kinds of sorrow.

First, there is Divine Sorrow—the sorrow God Himself feels. The LORD is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ex 34:6; Ps 103:8), yet He grieves over sin and rebellion. When I read how the Spirit can be grieved (Ep 4:30) or how Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41), I realize God's heart is not distant or stoic. He feels true sorrow for His people.

Second, there is Godly Sorrow. This is sorrow that "produces repentance leading to salvation without regret" (2Co 7:10). I first experienced its transforming power during my 1977 Christophany, and it has redirected me many times since. Painful yet healing, it turns me from sin toward the cross. I have watched it change lives—including my own—again and again.

Third, there is Worldly Sorrow. Paul calls this the sorrow "that produces death" (2Co 7:10). It is the regret of getting caught, losing something I wanted, or facing the consequences of chasing the world's pleasures while rationalizing my sin. It looks similar on the outside, but at its core, it leads to loneliness, bitterness, despair, or self-pity rather than turning to God.

After nearly half a century, these distinctions have become personal. Divine Sorrow helps me appreciate God's longsuffering—He did not give up on me when I backslid, dishonored His Son, and grieved His Spirit. Godly Sorrow has produced repentance and lasting change in me more times than I can count. I try to recognize Worldly Sorrow before its rationalizations produce strained relationships and fruitless outcomes.

I am not writing this series of papers as a theologian or preacher, but as a person who can now recognize when I am falling short. I am reflecting on what I have lived, what I have seen in Scripture, and what the Lord has shown me as a traveler on the difficult road towards the narrow gate. When I walk with Christ, sorrow will be part of my journey, as it is for His beloved Church. The good news for me is that I am yoked with the Man of Sorrows even during my deepest sorrows.

17. Sorrow as Heart Condition



God's recurring pattern of creation, judgment, destruction, and restoration runs like a heartbeat through Scripture. It reveals His sovereignty, holiness, justice, and mercy. My heart condition determines whether I seek God's restoration or resist it when I sin, which happens daily.

In Scripture, my heart is my fickle spiritual control center. It can be deceitful and desperately sick (Jer 17:9) or increasingly shaped toward spiritual devotion and moral clarity (Mt 5:8). If I sin and insist that I have not, I call God a liar, and His word is not in me (1Jn 1:10). Woe to me for my inherent unrighteousness, but thanks to God through Jesus for rescuing me from evil's pit (Ro 7:24-25). That sounds dramatic, but I believe it is theologically accurate. God looks at my heart (1Sm 16:7) and knows exactly what's inside (Ac 15:8). From my perspective, what happens next depends less on the degree of my sin than on the nature of my sorrow.

Sin is a fact of fallen human life. God sees my present sins, the sins of my youth, and those I have yet to commit—an enormous shortfall of righteousness. Yet Scripture says that when I trust Jesus' sacrifice and confess my sins, He cleanses me white as snow (Is 1:18; Ps 51:7). But confession involves more than admitting that something happened. Godly sorrow produces repentance; worldly sorrow produces death (2Co 7:10). Godly sorrow seeks forgiveness and change. Worldly sorrow offers an excuse and seeks approval.

This distinction makes me wonder about the American Church's heart condition. I increasingly see a Church more concerned about offending its dwindling membership than offending God. In trying to remain welcoming, relevant, and socially acceptable, well-meaning Church leaders soften words that Scripture refuses to soften. Sin becomes unhealthy behavior. Evil becomes wrong. Repentance becomes personal growth. Judgment becomes consequences. The vocabulary sounds kinder, but the diagnosis becomes weaker.

I do not believe compassion requires me to dilute the diagnosis. A cardiologist does not protect me by finding a gentler name for heart disease. He tells me what is wrong because he wants me to live. Jesus showed extraordinary compassion toward sinners, but He never redefined sin to demonstrate His love. Grace did not eliminate the diagnosis. Grace provided the cure.

I fear the Church's greatest danger is not declining membership, shrinking budgets, empty buildings, or even persecution. Its greatest danger may be losing enough spiritual sensitivity that it can no longer feel its own heart condition. Godly sorrow still offers the remedy: recognize the disease, call it by its biblical name, repent, and let the Great Physician begin His work.

18. Sorrow as My Sunday School Version



My four grandchildren are growing up—the oldest is approaching 30—but when they tell me they're sorry, I still like to ask, "Godly sorry or worldly sorry?" That question gets directly to the heart of 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." Both kinds of sorrow can bring tears and heartache, but only one leads to life. Whether my two older grandsons remember the lesson or not, I know my two college-age granddaughters still understand that Godly Sorrow begins when they recognize they have done something wrong and must amend their ways—not merely for others, but to honor God.

David demonstrated this after his terrible sins of adultery and murder. In Psalm 51, he prayed, "Against You, You only, have I sinned." David knew that his sins against people were ultimately rebellion against a holy and loving God. Godly Sorrow changed him. The biblical word for that change is metanoia—a changed mind that changes direction. It is not merely feeling bad; it is turning around and walking toward God.

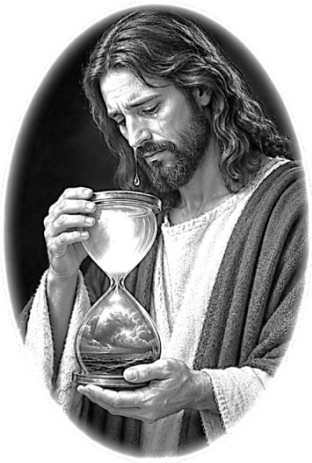
Godly Sorrow leads toward forgiveness, healing, and restoration. It releases me from unresolved guilt and the burden of hiding. After denying Jesus three times, Peter "wept bitterly." His tears were not repentance itself, but they marked the collapse of his self-confidence. Later, Jesus restored and recommissioned him to feed and care for His sheep (Jn 21:15-17).

Worldly Sorrow may show tears or guilt, but it focuses not on sin but on its consequences. Pride and self-pity can masquerade as repentance. Worldly Sorrow does not produce lasting change; it leads toward despair. Sometimes that death is spiritual—my heart grows cold or defensive. Sometimes it is emotional—guilt and shame consume me. In Judas's case, it became literal. He felt remorse for betraying Jesus and admitted his sin, but he did not turn toward God. His sorrow stopped short of repentance and ended in tragedy.

When an opportunity presents itself, I remind my grandkids that when their friends say they're sorry, they should listen to the words, discern the true meaning, and watch what follows. Does the apology lead to honesty and changed behavior, or just an excuse to return to past behavior? Godly Sorrow looks upward and outward; it wants to make things right with God and others. Worldly Sorrow looks inward; it merely wants the pain or embarrassment to disappear.

So, I tell them this: If your "sorry" leads you to accept responsibility, make things right, change direction, and ask God for help, that is Godly Sorrow—and something to be thankful for. If your "sorry" stops at "I feel bad," it is not enough. Godly Sorrow leads my precious grandchildren forward on the righteous path Jesus calls them to walk; Worldly Sorrow leaves them spinning aimlessly in this troubled world.

19. Divine Sorrow as God's Long-Suffering



Babies are cute until they aren't. Marriages are wonderful until fractured. Humanity pleased God until it rebelled, and the earth drowned in a Flood. God is long-suffering until He isn't. When His patience reaches its appointed limit, righteous judgment follows—and His wrath is swift, complete, and decisive.

After frustrating Jesus and the Holy Spirit on many occasions, I've come to understand God's long-suffering through three deepening stages before judgment finally falls: sorrow, heartache, and grief. Since the Holy Spirit came to indwell me, I have learned to discern these stages—when I listen to His quiet voice (1Kg 19) in this increasingly evil and noisy world.

The first stage begins with Divine Sorrow, which is the initial grief the Holy Trinity feels when I place my desires over His. Fortunately, He is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ex 34:6; Ps 103:8). His patience is an invitation to return to Him, for He is gracious and merciful (Jl 2:13), and His kindness is intended to lead me toward repentance (Ro 2:4). He delays judgment because "He does not wish that any should perish" (2Pt 3:9). His restraint is mercy under tension—and that tension increases if I continue backsliding.

If I continue rebelling, His sorrow deepens into heartache. I see this anguish in Jesus when He stood over Jerusalem and wept (Lk 19:41). Paul warned me, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Ep 4:30). The Trinity experiences genuine relational pain—in ways consistent with God's holy nature—when I repeatedly choose myself over fellowship with Him. His heart aches, yet He still withholds judgment and leaves the door open for my repentance.

When rebellion turns into insurrection, heartache becomes the grief preceding judgment. He designed the world for His glory. Genesis 6:5–6 gives me the clearest picture of this final long-suffering stage: God saw humanity's pervasive wickedness, "and it grieved Him to His heart." When God reaches His appointed limit, His holiness requires righteous judgment. He judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their pervasive wickedness. Except for Noah's family, He ended Humanity 1.0 through the Flood. From my perspective, Humanity 2.0 is following the same destructive path by abandoning a biblical worldview.

Nothing can separate me from God's love (Ro 8:38-39). However, God respects my will to choose. If I choose the world over Him, He may allow it and require me to endure the consequences of damaged fellowship with Him. I dare not treat His long-suffering as permission to grieve Him. I have found this truth to be one of the most sobering realities in my life. It presses me to examine my daily choices carefully. Every time I break fellowship through willful sin, I know the Father, Son, and Spirit feel it. That's why Jesus came to atone for my sins and gave me His Spirit to convict, counsel, and keep drawing me close to God.

20. Divine Sorrow as Silent Patience



There are hours when heaven does not answer, and I have learned slowly not to call those hours abandonment. The psalmist asked why God stood far away and hid Himself in times of trouble (Ps 10:1). Job searched in every direction but could not perceive Him (Jb 23:8-9). Yet neither man stopped addressing God. Faith that exists only while answers arrive is commerce. Faith that remains when heaven is quiet is worship.

Silence is not absence. God may be working beyond my perception, testing my allegiance, correcting my direction, or patiently allowing events to mature. Job did not know that Satan had challenged the integrity of his faith. He only knew that the God who once seemed near had become silent. Yet God had not surrendered His authority or forgotten His servant. When He finally spoke from the whirlwind, He revealed that His silence never meant disengagement.

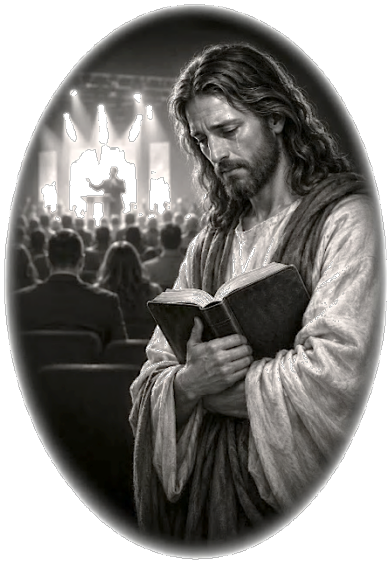
I also perceive sorrow within God's patience. He grieves over sin and rebellion, yet He does not immediately unleash judgment. Isaiah heard God say that He had kept silent and restrained Himself for a long time before crying out and acting (Is 42:14). His silence can be mercy under tension—the holy restraint of a Father allowing His wayward children time to turn. Jesus displayed similar patience when crowds followed Him for bread but retreated when His teaching became difficult (Jn 6:26, 60, 66). He allowed them to walk away without changing the truth to keep them close.

God's silence becomes my classroom. It exposes whether I love the Giver or merely His gifts. It often finds me burned out, grieving, depressed, or impatient that my prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling. In those dark hours, I turn to the Holy Spirit, my indwelling Companion and Counselor. He does not always explain the silence, but He helps me endure it without converting uncertainty into accusation.

To me, divine silence resembles a cellphone set to vibrate. The alarm is still active, but I must quiet myself enough to sense it. Godly sorrow changes how I endure the silence. It examines my heart, accepts correction, and clings to what God has already promised. Worldly sorrow makes the night darker by turning silence into evidence that God is unfair, absent, or uncaring.

God eventually spoke to Job, but He did not answer every question Job asked. Most often, God speaks to me through the Word already given; sometimes He provides a quieter answer I did not expect. Until then, silent patience asks whether I—and Christ's Church—will trust His character and become quiet enough to discern His presence. The lantern has not failed. God may simply be teaching His Bride and me to see in the dark.

21. Divine Sorrow as False Teaching



As I weigh Jesus' warnings about the days preceding His return, I sense His Divine Sorrow over false teaching He said would mark the Eschaton. In the Olivet Discourse, Christ warned, "Take heed that no one deceives you." Many would come in His name, claiming to be the Christ, and false prophets would arise—some performing signs and wonders capable of misleading even the elect, if that were possible (Mt 24:4-5, 11, 24). Jesus warned me to be discerning because deception can look spiritual, sound compassionate, and lead many souls away from Him.

Paul foretold a time when people would reject sound doctrine and gather teachers who tell their "itching ears" what they want to hear (2Tm 4:3-4). That time is here. Many now blend Scripture with culturally fashionable, self-centered moral frameworks that elevate humanity above God. False teaching rarely announces itself as rebellion. It enters carrying a Bible, quoting enough truth to make error sound holy. I once asked a wise priest if Scripture could be twisted. His answer still rings in my ears: "Absolutely. It can be twisted by evil teachers!"

I feel Jesus' sorrow when churches chase comfortable messages while ignoring the narrow way He described. Lawlessness makes love grow cold, and many become offended, betray one another, and fall away (Mt 24:10-13). This apostasy may begin as slow erosion, but it ultimately becomes a turning from truth that grieves the One who called Himself "the truth" (Jn 14:6). Truth does not become false because the culture rejects it, and a lie does not become true because the sanctuary applauds it.

Yet Christ's sorrow does not extinguish hope. He promised that, for the elect's sake, those days would be shortened and that He will gather His elect from the four winds with the sound of a trumpet (Mt 24:22, 31). Revelation also portrays a faithful remnant who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Rv 12:17) until the very end until He returns. Their supernatural endurance will shine as a beacon amid Satan's deception.

I watched friends drift toward teachings that promise comfort without the cross. More than anger, I feel sorrow that refuses to abandon them. Likewise, Jesus' Divine Sorrow mourns His wandering sheep while continuing to call them home. A comfortable lie is still a lie; putting it behind a pulpit merely gives it a microphone.

Thus, His Divine Sorrow awakens Godly Sorrow within me—a holy summons to stand firm, test every spirit (1Jn 4:1), and warn others with gentleness. I pray for ears that recognize my Shepherd's voice and courage that will not bend when truth becomes unpopular. Apart from Him and His Spirit of Truth, I would drift. The Spirit empowers me to cling to the Shepherd—not merely to endure deception, but to help others find their way home.

22. Divine Sorrow as the Seven Churches



Reflecting on the letters Jesus gave to John, I see more than a snapshot of ancient congregations. They reveal the spiritual condition of Christ's church across the ages, especially as the world moves toward His return. In them I see both the beauty that delights my Lord and the failures that grieve Him deeply.

To Ephesus, Jesus praises doctrinal purity and perseverance but rebukes them for abandoning their first love (Rv 2:1-7). Their faithfulness hardened into routine. Smyrna receives no rebuke but encouragement to remain faithful through persecution, poverty, and slander (Rv 2:8-11).

Pergamum and Thyatira tolerated compromise. False teaching, immorality, and worldly influence had entered the church through false doctrines (Rv 2:12-29). I see this today when churches soften biblical truth to gain cultural acceptance while still claiming Christ's name. Sardis presents another warning. Though it appeared alive outwardly, Jesus declared it spiritually dead, with works unfinished before God (Rv 3:1-6).

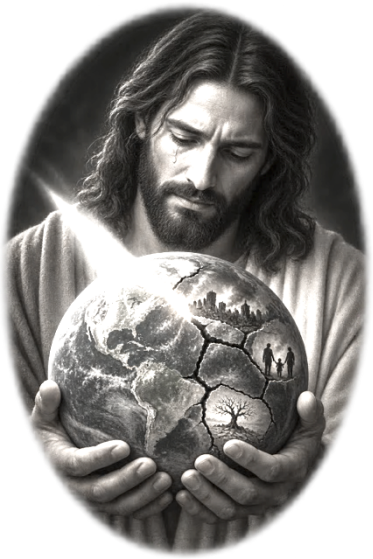
Then comes Philadelphia, a source of encouragement in these letters. Though small and weak, this church remained faithful to His Word and did not deny His name (Rv 3:7-13). In Philadelphia, I see a faithful remnant that holds firmly to Christ despite having little strength.

Laodicea is perhaps the most sobering of all. Lukewarm, self-satisfied, and blind to its own poverty, the church believed it needed nothing while Christ stood outside knocking (Rv 3:14-22). However, even here, His rebuke is filled with mercy. He still calls them to open the door and fellowship with Him.

Across these letters, I see conditions Jesus warned about existing today: love growing cold, deception spreading, compromise increasing, and faithful believers enduring amid decline (Mt 24). Some churches drift toward spiritual death while others overcome through obedience and perseverance. Yet, every letter contains hope. To those who overcome in each church, Jesus promises eternal rewards—white garments, crowns, authority, and fellowship with Him in His kingdom.

These letters also force me to examine my own heart. At different times, I can see traces of Ephesus, Sardis, or even Laodicea within myself. They remind me that Christianity is not sustained by appearance, knowledge, or activity alone, but by abiding fellowship with Christ through the Holy Spirit. The same Lord who grieves over compromise is also preparing a faithful Bride for Himself. His promise steadies my heart—but His warnings keep me awake.

23. Divine Sorrow as Mourning a Broken World



Lord, the world You declared "very good" now groans beneath the weight of sin (Ge 1:31; Ro 8:22). Your Church is atrophying. Secular humanism increasingly competes for humanity's allegiance. War consumes nations. Violence destroys families. Disease weakens bodies. Injustice exploits the powerless. Creation bears the scars of humanity's rebellion. I sometimes become numb because the scale of suffering overwhelms me. You never do.

Divine Sorrow is Your holy grief over everything sin has damaged. Before the Flood, You saw that human wickedness had become pervasive, and You were grieved to Your heart (Ge 6:5-6). Your grief was not weakness, surprise, or helpless despair. You knew what humanity would become, yet our rebellion still mattered to You personally.

Jesus made that sorrow visible. He wept at Lazarus's tomb even though resurrection was moments away (Jn 11:35). He wept over Jerusalem because its people rejected His peace and could not see the judgment approaching (Lk 19:41-44). His tears revealed that divine sovereignty does not produce emotional detachment. God rules completely and still grieves deeply.

The Holy Spirit also grieves when I resist His transforming work and damage fellowship within Christ's Body (Ep 4:30). The entire Trinity responds to brokenness—not with worldly despair, but with Divine Sorrow joined to redemptive action. The Father sent His Son. The Son entered our suffering and bore our sins. The Spirit now indwells believers and applies Christ's transforming power. Nevertheless, much of Christ's Church is drifting from the biblical worldview entrusted to her. This grieves my Savior, who gave Himself for His Bride.

When I draw close to God, His concerns increasingly become mine. But unless shared sorrow moves me to action, it is only commentary. I cannot carry Divine Sorrow as God carries it, but I can share His concern for what sin destroys. If I grieve for underserved communities, broken families, poverty amid overabundance, persecuted believers, addicted neighbors, confused young people, or churches drifting from truth, my grief should produce prayer, courage, compassion, and action.

The broken world does not need another spectator describing its collapse. It needs a Church embodying the compassion of the Man of Sorrows while proclaiming His truth. Creation's groaning reminds me that redemption is not yet fully revealed, but restoration is coming (Ro 8:19-21). Until then, sharing God's concern means entering broken places without surrendering to their darkness. Divine Sorrow does not leave me hopeless. It recruits me into God's redemptive mission.

24. Divine Sorrow as America Falls Away

On the surface, Americans' spiritual outlook appears strong: 86% believe people have a soul or spirit, and 70% believe in heaven or hell, according to a 2023-24 Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study. After years of decline, the Christian share seems to have stabilized at 62%, down from 78% in 2007, with 29% of all Americans claiming no religious affiliation (43% among adults ages 18-29) and 9% identifying with other religions. Only 33% of U.S. adults say they attend religious services at least monthly.



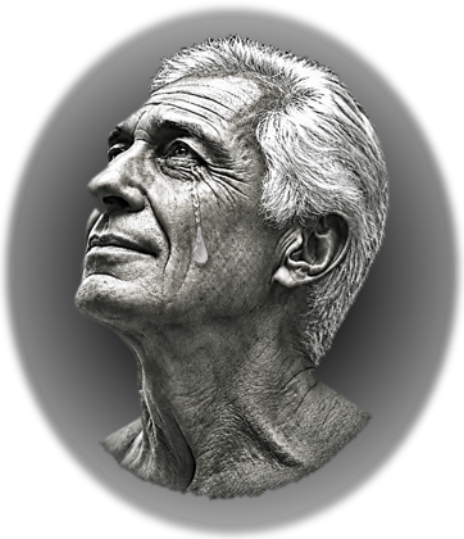
The American Worldview Inventory (AWVI), conducted by Arizona Christian University's Cultural Research Center (CRC) under George Barna's direction, presents a more sobering picture because it measures the coherence of people's beliefs rather than their religious identity. Across recent AWVI studies, those meeting CRC's criteria for a biblical worldview include only 4% of U.S. adults, 37% of Christian pastors, 13% of born-again Christians, 12% of youth pastors, and approximately 1% of Millennials and Gen Z adults. AWVI also classifies 92% of Americans as syncretistic—mixing Holy Scripture with secular moral frameworks. Even among Christians, syncretism is now mainstream, replete with humanistic ideologies.

A silent and pervasive moral and theological drift has occurred. Truth is seen as subjective by a majority of Americans under 40. Most adults reject moral absolutes. Belief in objective sin, Satan, and the Holy Spirit has declined sharply. A majority of U.S. Christians hold views that contradict historic Christian teaching on salvation and human nature. The AWVI argues that worldview formation is "largely complete by age 13," yet only 2% of parents of children under 13 have a biblical worldview.

A biblical worldview is a way of seeing and living grounded in Scripture's authority and applied consistently to beliefs, values, and daily decisions. It means interpreting reality—God, humanity, morality, purpose, and truth—through the Bible's teachings rather than cultural trends or personal preference, forming a coherent, Scripture-anchored framework for life.

CRC believes renewal is possible through family-based discipleship, pastoral reform, and early worldview training. I agree in part, but my eschatological studies suggest that the Church Age is ending and the Eschaton (see Volume #3) is approaching. Life for persevering Christians will become increasingly difficult as professing Christians fall away. These numbers do not make me triumphant; they deepen my sorrow. America remains spiritual yet drifts far from biblical truth. Divine Sorrow mourns that drift—and calls Christ's remnant to prepare, teach, and stand.

25. Godly Sorrow as Purifying Tears



Tears can reveal sorrow, but they do not prove repentance. I have shed tears from physical pain, grief, frustration, embarrassment, anger, and self-pity. Some cleansed my vision. Others merely expressed how sorry I felt for myself. The spiritual value of my tears depends on what produces them and where they lead.

Paul distinguishes Godly Sorrow from Worldly Sorrow by its outcome. Godly Sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation without regret. Worldly Sorrow produces death (2Co 7:10). Purifying tears are therefore not emotional payment for sin. They cannot earn forgiveness, erase guilt, or replace Christ's blood. Only Jesus atones. Tears become purifying when the Holy Spirit uses conviction to wash away my defenses and turn me back toward God.

David understood this after his adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged death of Uriah. When confronted, he did not ask God merely to restore his reputation or protect his throne. He acknowledged his sin and prayed, "Create in me a clean heart" (Ps 51:10). His sorrow reached beyond consequences. He wanted cleansing, renewal, and restored fellowship.

Peter also wept bitterly after denying Jesus three times (Lk 22:61-62). His tears were not repentance itself, but they marked the collapse of his self-confidence. The disciple who insisted he would never abandon Jesus finally saw himself accurately. Those tears prepared him to receive Christ's restoration and return to service (Jn 21:15-17).

I do not enjoy the moment when the Spirit breaks through my rationalizations. Conviction hurts because it exposes the distance between who I claim to be and what I have actually done. My first instinct may be to defend myself, explain my intentions, compare myself with someone worse, or blame the circumstances. Purifying tears begin when those defenses fail. Then, and only then, can I stop managing my facades and become straightforward before God.

The cleansing is not in the moisture on my face. It is in the surrender occurring within my heart. The Spirit uses Godly Sorrow to loosen my grip on pride, hidden sin, resentment, and self-reliance. My indwelling, constant Companion and Counselor turns my confession into changed direction and regret into repair. He informs me that this pleases God.

Godly Sorrow leaves evidence: a softer heart, truthful confession, willingness to accept consequences, and desire to make things right. If nothing changes after my tears dry, I experience emotion without repentance. I no longer ask whether sorrow made me cry. I ask whether it made me surrender. Tears that carry me toward the cross do not leave me drowning in regret. They clear my vision so I can see the righteous path Jesus wants me to walk.

26. Godly Sorrow as My Weeping Savior



Jesus wept, and His tears revealed three dimensions of His heart and mission. At Lazarus's tomb, He wept with people grieving under death's shadow. Over Jerusalem, He wept for people rejecting salvation. In Gethsemane, His anguish revealed the terrible cost of carrying humanity's sin. Together, these moments show me how His Divine Sorrow responds to suffering, rebellion, and sacrifice—and how my Godly Sorrow should reflect His.

At Lazarus's tomb, Jesus knew He would raise His friend. Yet He did not bypass the mourners' pain or rebuke their grieving. He entered their sorrow and wept beside them (Jn 11:33-35). These tears reveal divine compassion. Resurrection hope did not make present suffering unreal. Jesus knew death would not have the final word, but He still mourned what death had done.

His tears over Jerusalem reveal another dimension. Jesus saw the people of His beloved city rejecting their Messiah despite possessing God's Word. He knew enemies would surround it and destruction would follow because its people "did not recognize the time of God's coming" to them (Lk 19:41-44). These were not merely tears of sympathy. They were tears of rejected love and approaching judgment.

In Gethsemane, Jesus entered sorrow from another direction. At the cross, He was overwhelmed to the point of death (Mt 26:38). Hebrews describes Him offering prayers with loud cries and tears to the Father (Hb 5:7). His anguish did not indicate reluctance to obey. It revealed the staggering weight of the cup He willingly accepted: "Not My will, but Yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

My Weeping Savior corrects three mistaken attitudes within me. At Lazarus's tomb, He teaches me not to rush grieving people past their pain. Over Jerusalem, He teaches me that love must mourn rebellion and warn of judgment. In Gethsemane, He teaches me that obedience can involve profound anguish without becoming faithlessness.

His tears were never self-pity. They always moved toward compassion, truth, surrender, and redemption. Consequently, Christ's Church should weep as her Groom wept. She should stand beside those crushed by suffering, mourn those rejecting salvation, and remain obedient when faithfulness becomes costly. A Church that merely entertains suffering people without entering their pain does not reflect the Man of Sorrows. Neither does a Church that offers compassion without warning—or warns of Judgment Day without tears.

Jesus did more than feel sorrow. He carried it to the cross. His tears revealed His heart; His sacrifice accomplished our redemption. My Weeping Savior shows me that Godly Sorrow is not a passive emotion. It is love grieving deeply enough to act.

27. Godly Sorrow as Honest Biblical Lament



Biblical lament permits me to speak honestly to God when I am angry with myself, others, or sometimes God Himself. Lament looks suffering directly in the face and brings it into His presence. Worldly despair closes the conversation and walks away. Faithful lament pounds on heaven's door because it believes Someone is listening.

The psalmist asks questions many churches are uncomfortable hearing: "How long, LORD? Will You forget me forever?" David confronted God with his anguish, named his pain, and pleaded for help. Before circumstances visibly changed, however, he declared trust in God's steadfast love and promised to sing (Ps 13:1-6).

Lament moves from address to complaint to petition to trust. It may move slowly, but it keeps moving toward God. Laments are faithful protests from wounded believers who refuse to stop talking to Him. The Persistent Widow illustrates this posture of faith-filled prayer (Lk 18:1-8). To me, a Christian warrior, lament is a relentless appeal to my Commander—and a readiness to engage the injustice I lament.

Habakkuk protested violence, injustice, and God's apparent silence. He questioned God's methods when the answer seemed worse than the problem. Yet after wrestling openly, he declared that even if the fields produced nothing, the stalls stood empty, and his economy collapsed, he would still rejoice in the LORD (Hab 3:17-18). His faith survived an honest confrontation with God.

Biblical lament differs from accusation. Accusation places God on trial and assumes His guilt. Lament brings confusion before Him while remaining open to correction. Job approached that boundary, and God answered from the whirlwind—not by explaining everything, but by restoring Job's perspective.

In the summer of 1977, emboldened by Johnnie Walker Scotch, I walked down a dark Tokyo street and hurled an angry lament in the crudest terms: "God, if You are real, prove it!" Near death, my defiance concealed a secret hope that a lightning bolt might end my emptiness. I received only silence. Then, over the next two months, my spiritual veil began to lift, culminating in a Christophany—an encounter with Jesus Himself. That encounter began my nearly five-decade-long journey with Him.

Christ's Bride needs to teach and practice biblical lament, especially in these trying times. Believers facing death, trauma, persecution, betrayal, or unanswered prayer sometimes need permission to cry, "How long?" while someone faithful remains beside them. Lament is not abandoning faith. It is faith refusing to abandon the conversation. I bring God my protest because I trust His character—even when I do not understand His conduct.

28. Godly Sorrow as Fruitful Holy Grief



Godly Sorrow does not end when I confess. Repentance should leave observable evidence. Paul praised the Corinthians not merely because they felt distressed, but because their sorrow produced earnestness, eagerness to clear themselves, indignation against sin, reverent fear, longing, zeal, and readiness to make matters right (2Co 7:11). This passage forces me to examine the aftermath of my own apologies. Did I merely admit wrongdoing, or did I change direction? Did I accept responsibility, repair what I damaged, and put safeguards in place to prevent it from happening again? If my conduct remains unchanged, my sorrow may have been emotional but unfruitful.

Zacchaeus showed visible repentance. After meeting Jesus, he promised to give half his possessions to the poor and repay fourfold anyone he defrauded (Lk 19:8). His restitution did not purchase salvation. It revealed that salvation had entered his house. Grace changed what he did with his money, power, and relationships. Fruitful Holy Grief produces the same kind of evidence in me. Pride becomes teachability. Concealment becomes confession. Excuses become ownership. Resentment gives way to forgiveness. Self-protection becomes accountability. The Spirit turns my sorrow toward action and develops His fruit as I surrender: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Ga 5:22-23).

The sequence matters. Godly Sorrow produces repentance. Repentance turns me back toward God, and renewed surrender allows the Spirit to produce His fruit. Sorrow is therefore not the fruit; it breaks the hardened ground where the fruit can grow. This applies to Christ's Church as well. A congregation can issue an apology, appoint a committee, revise a policy, and still avoid repentance. Institutional language can acknowledge "mistakes" without naming sin or repairing those harmed. Fruitful grief becomes visible when leaders accept responsibility, restore truth, protect the vulnerable, correct false teaching, and change the conditions that allowed damage to continue.

Jesus said a tree is recognized by its fruit (Mt 7:16-20). Tears, statements, promises, and emotional worship may accompany repentance, but they cannot substitute for its harvest. I have learned not to judge my repentance by how intensely I felt yesterday. I judge it by how obediently I walk today. Godly Sorrow should leave tracks: a changed decision, a repaired relationship, a surrendered habit, a stronger boundary, or a renewed commitment to truth.

Holy grief is fruitful when it stops circling my failure and starts producing Christlikeness. The Spirit does not convict me merely to make me feel remorse. He exposes what must die so I will surrender it, then cultivates something righteous in its place.

29. Godly Sorrow as the Promise of Eternal Comfort



I thought I was safe. I was based in Thailand while flying combat missions over Vietnam, protected by a fortified airbase. One night, an enemy sapper crossed the border, penetrated the perimeter, and inadvertently tripped the warning flares. The defenses detected him—but we ignored the warning. My buddy "Rhino" did not. He grabbed the pistol from his flight gear, charged from the squadron building, and single-handedly took down the sapper before he could throw a satchel of dynamite through our door. Had Rhino not stopped him, that satchel could have killed dozens of F-4E Phantom pilots and crew members.

That night taught me that a defensive system is only as effective as my response to its alarms. A flare cannot stop an intruder; it exposes him while I still have time to act. As a combat-tested warrior, I view Godly Sorrow as an early-warning system in my spiritual defense network—designed to detect, delay, and deter entry by selfish desires, temptations, and evil forces. The Holy Spirit detects what I ignore, and Godly Sorrow illuminates the threat before it ruins my life.

The first signal from my 24/7/365, Spirit-managed defense system may be a flicker of conviction—a thought I know is wrong, a motive I cannot defend, a temptation moving closer, or distance growing between God and me. I can dismiss or explain it away. But I have learned to react before sin takes root and metastasizes like the evil it represents. I stop, identify the threat, confess what is mine, seek the Spirit's direction, and reinforce vulnerable ground with Scripture, prayer, and trusted believers. Repentance is a counterattack that denies the enemy a foothold (Eph 4:27).

When I suppress Godly Sorrow, or turn to excuse-making Worldly Sorrow, I override my defense network's detection system. The intruder advances from temptation to consent, concealment, and bondage. Rather than confronting evil at the perimeter, I must fight inside the walls. Yet Godly Sorrow works—and quickly leads me to the comforting peace of God, the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort." He meets me in my affliction and transforms my sorrow into ministry (2Co 1:3-4). Sorrow warns me because danger remains until it is mitigated; Divine Comfort assures me that sorrow and pain will not remain forever.

Godly Sorrow has an expiration date. John saw God dwelling with His people, wiping away every tear as death, mourning, crying, and pain disappeared (Rv 21:3-4). In the New Jerusalem, the gates never close because there is no night and nothing unclean enters (Rv 21:25-27). No enemy will probe the perimeter. No selfish desire will betray me. No flare will pierce the darkness because darkness will be gone. For now, Godly Sorrow warns, and the promise of Eternal Comfort sustains. One day, the Man

of Sorrows will return as the triumphant King and abolish every threat that made tears or alarms necessary.

30. Godly Sorrow as Righteous Guilt



Righteous guilt and godly sorrow are related but distinct. Righteous guilt recognizes moral responsibility: "I did wrong." Godly sorrow grieves that my sin offended God and damaged fellowship. Righteous guilt sounds the alarm; godly sorrow turns me toward repentance and repair. Worldly sorrow turns me inward towards consequences and shame (2Co 7:10). The Holy Spirit does not sound this alarm to condemn, for there is no condemnation for those in Christ (Ro 8:1). He sounds it because something needs attention. When I respond, I accept responsibility and change direction. When I ignore the warning, the damage increases.

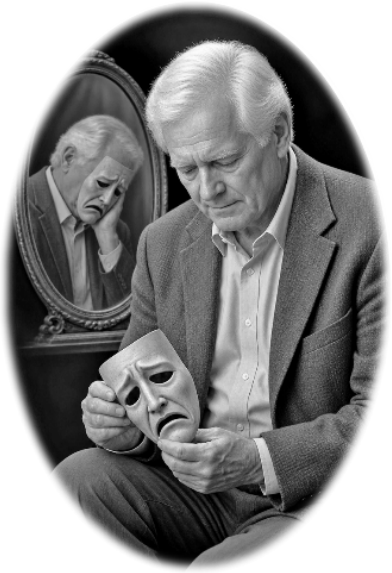
I learned this through nicotine addiction. I started smoking at the Air Force Academy at 19 and smoked a pack a day until I encountered Christ at 30. For 15 years, I was a closet smoker, hiding my habit to protect my Christian persona. I quit smoking but transferred the addiction to nicotine pouches. Finally, at 60, with the Holy Spirit counseling me one day at a time, I quit nicotine for good. This struggle taught me that I don't learn repentance once and keep it automatically. I must keep listening and responding. The Spirit also heightened my sensitivity to His alarm—not only concerning obvious sins, but also pride, resentment, and self-reliance. Early conviction can prevent years of bondage.

My experience causes me to wonder whether churches could help us hear that alarm above the world's noise. I see the Church as a spiritual repair shop rather than a religious comfort station. A repair shop doesn't ignore a warning light, tape it over, or pretend nothing is wrong. It diagnoses, repairs, and returns the vehicle to service.

Although my hidden struggle involved nicotine, pornography reveals how widespread other concealed struggles have become. For example, Barna found that 54% of practicing Christians report consuming pornography, including 22% who view it weekly or daily. Yet 84% of users say nobody helps them avoid it, and only 10% of Christians and churched adults report relevant church programming. These numbers do not make me condemn believers. My hidden addiction leaves me in no position to throw stones. Instead, they make me wonder whether truthful teaching, confidential confession, Holy Spirit accountability, and professional care could help people respond before secrecy turns guilt into shame.

I needed a place where I could admit my warning light was on without being treated as a failure. I needed someone willing to tell me the light mattered. Righteous guilt does not tell me I am worthless; it warns me that I am wandering. The Holy Spirit sounds the alarm—not to drive me from Jesus, but to bring me home before damage is done.

31. Worldly Sorrow as Opposed to Godly Sorrow



My worldly sorrow manifests itself as self-focused distress over the exposure or consequences of my wrongdoing, not the wrongdoing itself. When I fall into it, I do not grieve the fracture I caused. I grieve the embarrassment, discomfort, and pressure bearing down on my ego.

Scripture defines worldly sorrow as deadly (2Co 7:10). I experience this as an emotional fog that lets me avoid repentance while pretending I am engaging it. Unlike godly sorrow, which exposes what I have done, worldly sorrow redirects my attention to how badly I feel about myself. It hardens instead of softening me, trapping rather than freeing. Worldly sorrow is the mask I put on when I want to look repentant.

As I mature in Christ, I am learning to recognize the texture of worldly sorrow in real time—especially in myself. I have stopped being impressed by emotional intensity. Tears, trembling voices, and dramatic pauses—even my own—do not necessarily tell the truth. What tells the truth is the direction of the sorrow. When the Spirit convicts me with godly sorrow, I turn outward: toward relationship, repair, and truth. I take ownership without hedging or quibbling. I stop negotiating consequences or managing how others perceive me. Godly sorrow makes me willing to be seen accurately, even when that accuracy costs me something.

David modeled this kind of sorrow after his sin with Bathsheba. He did not minimize his offense, qualify his confession, or bargain with God. Instead, David asked God to cleanse his heart, renew his spirit, and restore the joy of his salvation (Ps 51:10–12). His concern moved beyond escaping punishment toward reconciliation with God and transformation within himself.

Worldly sorrow moves in the opposite direction of godly sorrow. It is inward, tight, and self-protective. My words become slippery: “Mistakes were made,” “I’m sorry if you felt hurt,” or “I didn’t mean it like that.” I tend to push for quick reconciliation, not because I value healing, but because I want relief. When someone asks a clarifying question, I withdraw or bristle. Most revealingly, worldly sorrow produces short-lived change. I adjust my behavior long enough to escape pressure, then drift back once the spotlight moves.

The Holy Spirit shows me that worldly sorrow is dangerous. It masquerades as repentance while resisting transformation. It uses apology as a shield, not a bridge. When I sense it rising, He helps me stop defending my image and start confronting my sin. Godly sorrow leads me toward repentance, restoration, and life. Worldly sorrow leaves me circling myself until guilt hardens into despair—and worldly sorrow produces death.

32. Worldly Sorrow as Toxic Shame



From my perspective, worldly sorrow is the bridge between acute shame and toxic shame. As the accuser, Satan exploits my weakest moments, turning conviction into condemnation and wrongdoing into the lie that I am irredeemable (Rv 12:10). Toxic shame is one of his most destructive weapons because it persuades believers to hide from God, who offers forgiveness.

Satan's process is simple: a mistake or sin produces guilt ("I did wrong"). Godly sorrow turns that guilt toward repentance; worldly sorrow turns it toward exposure ("I got caught"), acute shame ("I am bad"), and finally toxic shame ("I am unworthy"). Without the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, this toxicity can lead to death. Tragically, statistics reflect a downward spiral. Between 2000 and 2022, the U.S. suicide rate increased approximately 36%. In 2023, suicide was the second-leading cause of death among Americans ages 10-14, 15-24, and 25-44. Meanwhile, 43% of young adults ages 18-24 now identify as religiously unaffiliated. These parallel trends do not prove causation, but together they reveal generations struggling with belonging, identity, meaning, and hope.

In my early life, I experienced acute shame on several occasions. As I matured from believer to follower to disciple, Satan's nefarious process was increasingly truncated. Today, the Holy Spirit's power of discernment and self-control helps me recognize and interrupt toxicity at the onset of shame; however, there are still times when my ego thinks I can go it alone. I also feel fortunate that I did not grow up as a screenager. Gen Z and Alpha face an unrelenting digital environment of comparison, public judgment, social exclusion, and permanent online memory that my generation never had to navigate.

I see a massive need for the church to step in and interrupt the downward spiral into toxic shame. Professional counseling and therapy matter, but to truly heal this malady, the church needs a power source that reaches beyond human intellect. The power of the Holy Spirit, augmented with mental health tools, creates a space of genuine grace and supernatural restoration that changes a person's identity from the inside out before the shame can take root. As a combat-hardened warrior, I learned that defeating a determined enemy requires superior firepower. Against toxic shame, Jesus brings the greater power: the Holy Spirit.

I know this to be absolutely true because the Holy Spirit did not waste my childhood and wartime traumas. He transformed wounds that once isolated me into a ministry that helps others find hope. When my heart condemns me, God is greater than my heart (1Jn 3:20). Satan's accusations no longer define me. The Holy Spirit tells me exactly whose I am.

33. Sorrow as Repentance or Death



Paul presents sorrow as a fork in the road: godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, while worldly sorrow produces death (2Co 7:10). Both can involve regret, tears, and fear. The difference is direction. Godly sorrow turns toward God, accepts responsibility, and changes course. Worldly sorrow grieves exposure and consequences while defending the choices that caused them. One surrenders the sin; the other protects it.

I recognize both reactions in myself. When the Holy Spirit exposes my wrongdoing, I can confess and repair the fracture or mobilize my ego to explain why I was justified. Repentance is more than feeling bad or apologizing. It is a combat about-face from rebellion toward God. It does not merely regret the battlefield I entered; it changes sides.

I see the same fork confronting the Church. Membership declines, pews empty, young people leave, and influence fades. Yet institutional sorrow is not necessarily repentance. A church can grieve lost attendance, revenue, and influence without grieving compromised doctrine, neglected discipleship, tolerated sin, or dependence on entertainment rather than spiritual power. Sorrow over atrophy will not restore Christ's Bride if she refuses to confront what weakened her.

Ezekiel delivered a stark warning to Hebrew exiles who blamed their fathers and questioned God's justice. God rejected their excuses and called each person to turn from transgression, receive a new heart and spirit, and live (Eze 18). Israel's exile and the Church's decline are not the same covenant event, but the principle confronts me: inherited failure does not eliminate present responsibility. Blaming secular culture, hostile media, younger generations, or previous church leaders doesn't substitute for repentance.

Christ gave churches the same choice. Ephesus retained doctrine and endurance but had abandoned its first love. Jesus commanded it to remember, repent, and return—or lose its lampstand (Rv 2:4-5). Sardis possessed a reputation for life while being spiritually dead. Christ ordered this church to wake up and strengthen what remained before it died (Rv 3:1-3).

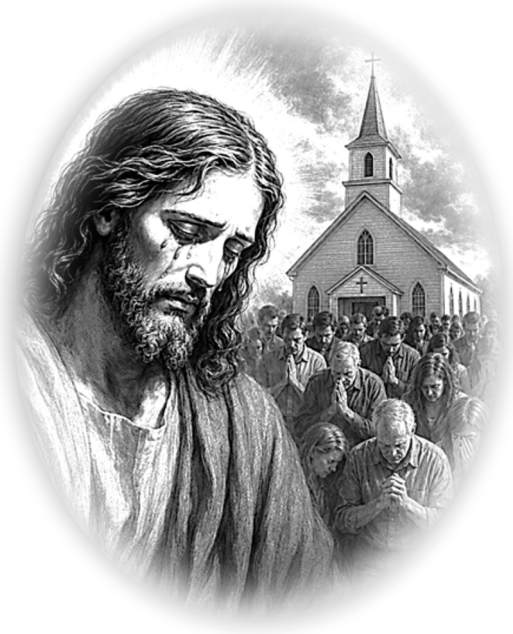
Christian researcher George Barna found that only 4% to 6% of American adults possess a biblical worldview—a catastrophic failure of discipleship. An unrepentant Church will continue managing its death spiral. A repentant remnant can still prepare for battle. Christ is preparing His remnant for the culmination of the Church Age and the approaching Eschaton. There is still time to reverse course, strengthen what remains, recover the whole counsel of God, and deploy disciples wearing the full armor of God (Eph 6:10-18).

Section 2

Jesus as a Contrarian

My reflections on:

"Talking Truth to the status quo."



The Man of Sorrows wept over people who rejected Him, then gave His life to save them. His Bride should share His heart. As the Church Age moves toward its culmination, these reflections examine whether today's Church feels Divine Sorrow for a lost world, practices Godly Sorrow that produces repentance, or increasingly substitutes its own Worldly Sorrow, self-preservation, and cultural acceptance for Christ's incarnation and sacrifice.

34. Biblical Worldview as a Contrarian Operating System



For years, I taught and wrote that fewer than ten percent of self-identified Christians appear to view reality through Scripture. I did not derive that conclusion from surveys. I reached it by observing churches, studying cultural trends, and comparing Christian behavior with biblical teaching. George Barna's research later confirmed my suspicion that only 4% to 6% of American adults and a minority of born-again Christians embrace a biblical worldview. Most people assemble a syncretistic faith: a verse here, a cultural assumption there, mixed with self-definition and therapeutic comfort. That mixture may wear a cross, but it is not a biblical worldview. I wonder whether this erosion is preparing the ground for the prophesied "great falling away" near the culmination of the Church Age (2Th 2:3).

A biblical worldview is the lens through which I interpret God, humanity, sin, purpose, suffering, and hope. I do not begin with the spirit of the times and then search the Bible for permission. I begin with the God who created heaven and earth, made humanity in His image, judged the Fall as rebellion, provided redemption solely through the sinless Christ, and will restore all things at His appearing. Absolute truth exists because God exists. Salvation is a gift, not a wage. Satan is not a metaphor. These truths are the operating system of a renewed mind.

My contrarian temperament is useful only when Scripture, not ego, governs it. Contrarianism is not virtuous by itself. Jesus was the ultimate Rebel against corrupted religion and the perfect Contrarian to worldly culture. Biblical contrarianism does not require me to oppose everything popular; it requires me to refuse anything that contradicts Christ. Fidelity to Him is the virtue. Contrarianism is a call to action—and sometimes a call to arms.

When Christ's Bride, the Church, absorbs secular priorities—self over stewardship, personal truth over revealed truth, comfort over the cross—she loses distinctiveness. Elijah told Israel to stop wavering between two opinions (1Kg 18:21). Paul warned against conforming to this world (Col 2:8; Ro 12:2). James called friendship with the world enmity with God (Ja 4:4). I can't serve two masters (Mt 6:24).

I write this first as self-examination, not accusation. Before I demand that the Church resist cultural pressure, I must ask where I have surrendered to it. Christians are not called to retreat from those Jesus came to save, but we also may not watch silently as deception advances. Evil does not always need my cooperation; sometimes it needs only my silence. For evil to persist, a good man—or a good Church—merely has to do nothing. A biblical worldview becomes contrarian wherever the world contradicts its Author. The question is not whether I resist, but whom I obey. Jesus is the perfect Contrarian. If I follow Him, I must stand where He stands, speak when He speaks, and act when He commands.

35. Jesus as a Contrarian



If a contrarian rejects the prevailing "wisdom" of the world to uphold a higher truth, then Jesus of Nazareth is the preeminent Contrarian in human history. His ministry was not a refinement of the status quo; it was its divine disruption. The Way—an early designation for the Christian movement—cut across the dominant political and religious power structures of the first century.

The status quo of Jesus' day rested on three rigid pillars: Roman imperial power, religious legalism, and an honor-shame culture. Jesus confronted all three using spherical logic—one that transcends a flat-world, linear mindset and views all things from the Creator's holistic perspective—a framework His contemporaries could scarcely grasp.

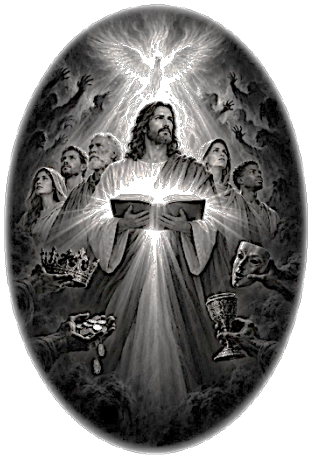
First, Jesus was a political Contrarian. Many expected a Messiah—a military conqueror to overthrow Rome and restore the Davidic kingdom by force. Jesus refused to reduce people to an "oppressor versus oppressed" binary, even commanding His disciples to love their enemies. When asked about taxes to Caesar, He escaped the trap by pointing to a higher reality: Caesar may claim the coin bearing his image, but God rightfully claims the whole person who bears His image. Jesus conquered not by taking life, but by giving His own. To a world that worshipped power, He declared that true power is perfected in weakness, humility, and love.

Second, Jesus was a religious Contrarian. Some religious leaders had reduced covenant faithfulness to external compliance while neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Mt 23:23). Jesus rejected traditions that obscured God's intent and returned to the heart of Mosaic law: Love God (Dt 6:5). He healed on the Sabbath, touched the unclean, and dined with outcasts. He was not breaking the Law; He was fulfilling it—exposing shallow religious consensus and revealing God's perspective.

The Way itself was contrarian because it refused the world's boxes. In a Roman society obsessed with status, the early church practiced a radical, lived equality—a circle with Christ at its center. The master served the enslaved, and the wealthy provided for the poor. They followed a narrow path, diverging from the broad road of Roman excess and pagan idolatry.

As a disciple grounded in the early Church's foundational doctrines, I recognize that Christ's contrarianism is our inheritance. Jesus did not come to join a side; He came to establish a Kingdom. Viewed through a linear lens, He appears as either a reformer or a traditionalist. However, through a spherical lens, I see that He is both and neither. He is the Center. To follow Him is to accept being at odds with a world that demands alignment on a flat line, left or right. To walk His Way is to live beyond the line—centered in Christ, strengthened by Him (Php 4:13), and aligned with Father God's will.

36. Christianity as a Contrarian Theology



Christianity is contrarian not because it fights everyone, but because it refuses every authority, ideology, and allegiance that competes with Jesus Christ.

I perceive Jesus as the ultimate contrarian. He did not arrive to blend in, make polite compromises, or rubber-stamp the status quo. His spiritual sword divides truth from falsehood and exposes the corrupt systems governing humanity (Mt 10:34). He overturned the tables of those profiting from worship and, through the cross, publicly disarmed the rulers and authorities of darkness (Col 2:15). Sacrifice defeated raw force. Love overcame hatred. Resurrection shattered death's final weapon. These became Christianity's rules of engagement.

Before ascending, Christ equipped His disciples with the ultimate operational reinforcement: the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:8). The Spirit within me is not a cozy blanket meant only for personal comfort. He is the dynamic, living power who anchors my counteroffensive against principalities, powers, and spiritual forces of evil operating within this dark world (Ep 6:11-12). He gives me discernment to expose deception, courage to confront it, and power to remain faithful. Without His restraining work, evil advances largely unchecked (2Th 2:7).

Yet when I survey today's spiritual battlefield, I see too much of Christ's Church surrendering her Spirit-given power. Political instability, financial uncertainty, religious apostasy and extremism, digital deception, and authoritarianism are converging. The world is not becoming less spiritual; it is becoming more openly contested by rival spiritual powers. At precisely the moment the Church should be discerning and deploying, too much of her remains domesticated. Christians who fawn over culture for applause quench the Spirit's work in their midst (1Th 5:19). When Christianity abandons Spirit-power, predatory powers quickly fill the vacuum.

Christ called His Church to remain a pure, vigilant Bride fiercely devoted to one Husband (2Co 11:2). Seductive suitors crowd her doorway, offering political clout, counterfeit security, cultural acceptance, and fleeting social status. Every gift carries a hidden claim to her allegiance. Friendship with the world's corrupt order makes her unfaithful to God (Ja 4:4). The Bride cannot prepare for her Groom while entertaining His rivals.

As a five-decade follower of Christ, I resist the secular seductions of power, prestige, possessions, passion, and pride. I will remain a Christian contrarian—not because defiance is virtuous, but because fidelity to Christ demands it. My weapons are not worldly. I will stand firm, expose deceit, reject bankrupt ideologies, proclaim truth with love, and rely upon the unquenchable power of the Holy Spirit. Christianity was never designed to retreat from darkness. It was deployed to overcome it until Christ returns as the Lion of Judah for His prepared Bride (Rv 5:5; 19:7-8).

37. Contrarianism as a Mindset



Being a contrarian means going against popular opinion. It is not being contrary for its own sake; rather, it reflects disciplined skepticism toward consensus and the status quo. At its core, contrarianism is a commitment to pursue truth through first principles—historical, constitutional, and theological—rather than drifting with modern trends.

Instead of today's linear mindset, I prefer a circular or spherical approach to decision-making. A straight line represents one-dimensional thinking along an X-axis. A circle expands perspective across X and Y, while a sphere adds Z—depth, context, and relationships that linear thinking misses. Linear thinking reduces complex questions to binary choices and makes half-truths easier to accept. Spherical thinking allows competing ideas to connect from different directions, revealing tensions that must be understood rather than prematurely eliminated.

Politically, this allows me to be a fiscal hawk who demands accountability while leading a nonprofit serving "the least of these" (Mt 25:40, 45).

Spiritually and ethically, it frees me from left-right labels. As a combat veteran who took lives, I treasure a woman's freedom to choose, yet I also recognize biologically that an unborn child is a living human organism and affirm morally that the child has a right to life. A spherical model allows these tensions to coexist without forcing them into partisan boxes.

As a political contrarian, I often view "consensus" as groupthink. Unlike partisans who follow party platforms, I can hold seemingly contradictory views—supporting radical economic reform while demanding strict adherence to constitutional principles. The outsider's advantage is seeing strategies both parties overlook because they remain confined within the same political framework.

Theologically, I resist the "spirit of the age." Like the biblical patriarchs, I maintain a measured distance from religiosity, focusing less on church politics and more on understanding the nature of Christ and becoming more like Him. I also believe today's Church has lost its passion for Jesus.

America feels like a nation coming apart at the seams, trapped in a bitter political tug-of-war and deepening secularism. We are told to choose a side on a flat line, yet the path forward is rarely so simplistic. It requires a contrarian mindset that seeks a three-dimensional, truth-centered perspective. My ultimate model is not found in politics or religion but in a Person—Jesus, whose life consistently defied the expectations of His time. His will is not merely one option among many; it is the standard by which every dimension must be measured.

38. Contrarians as Truth Tellers



I have come to see contrarians not as rebels, but as truth-tellers in a world of convenient compromise. These are not capricious dissenters, but individuals who rightly challenge consensus, power, and comfortable half-truths. As someone who refuses to submit to contrived choices and deceptive narratives, I have found this calling costly but rewarding in the long run.

Jesus of Nazareth stands as my model and the preeminent truth-teller. He confronted the three great pillars of His day—Roman imperial might, religious legalism, and an honor-shame culture—without joining any of them. He told the Pharisees they were whitewashed tombs (Mt 23:27), overturned the temple tables (Jn 2:15), and calmly answered Pilate that His kingdom was "not of this world" (Jn 18:36). To crowds expecting a warrior Messiah, He spoke of loving enemies. None of it fit the expected script. However, in every confrontation, He spoke truth with compassion, calling people back to the Father's heart.

The Old Testament prophets were God's contrarian truth-tellers long before Christ. Elijah stood alone against 450 prophets of Baal and a corrupt royal court (1Kg 18). Nathan looked King David in the eye and said, "You are the man" (2Sm 12:7). Jeremiah wept over Judah while declaring uncomfortable truths that landed him in a cistern. They were outsiders who refused the "spirit of the age," empowered by the same Holy Spirit who blows where He wills and convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16:8).

After Christ's resurrection, the early church carried the mantle. Peter told the Sanhedrin, "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (Ac 5:29). Paul confronted Peter's hypocrisy (Ga 2:11) and submitted his plans to the Spirit's redirection from Bithynia to Macedonia (Ac 16:6). Their boldness came not merely from personal courage, but from the indwelling Spirit, who still produces fruit amid conflict with the flesh (Ga 5:16-25).

Today, as divisions fracture America, I feel that same call to action. My own path—fiscal hawk and servant of the poor, veteran who took life yet cherishes the unborn—finds coherence only in Christ's center. More than once, speaking truth to power in the military and corporate worlds cost me promotions, yet earned enduring respect**.** The Holy Spirit continues to impress upon me that truth-telling is less about winning arguments and more about faithful presence: resisting groupthink, serving the marginalized, and pointing beyond left and right to the One who strengthens me (Ph 4:13).

So I no longer measure success by acceptance, but by alignment with the whole truth. Christ will preserve His Church, but her future witness requires believers anchored in Him, not cultural approval. Today, His believers must resist groupthink, serve quietly, speak faithfully, and stand without compromise. The contrarian path is often lonely, but it is never aimless.

39. Contrarianism as a Transformational Force



Throughout human history, I see a landscape reshaped not by the consensus of the many, but by a few unconventional visionaries. Society often attributes their motivations to stubbornness or attention-seeking. When divinely inspired, however, they become agents of transformation.

A humble, itinerant preacher from Nazareth established the pattern for this sacred disruption. In a world obsessed with Roman might and Pharisaic legalism, Jesus stood as the preeminent contrarian. He did not seek the elite's endorsement. Instead, He reoriented humanity's moral axis toward the margins. By declaring His love for the "least of these" (Mt 25:40), He sanctified the poor, the sick, the outcasts, and the imprisoned—those the world had reduced to liabilities. His life contradicted the status quo, proving that the greatest power often resides in the lowest places. Most decisively, Jesus confronted life's greatest obstacle: death itself, transforming dying into rebirth. He founded a movement that has transformed the world for two millennia. Soon, He will return, establish His Kingdom, and ultimately make all things new.

After the cross and resurrection, this transformational gospel advanced through Paul, who took up the mantle of sacred wandering. Like his Master, Paul operated without the world's visible safety nets. He lived without a permanent residence or traditional career—a tentmaker-evangelist whose "weakness" became his greatest credential (2Co 12:9). His ministry generated intellectual and spiritual resistance, pressing against the boundaries of tribe and tradition. He proclaimed a message of grace that appeared foolish to some and threatening to others, yet became the power that transformed the foundations of an empire.

The early Church, known as "The Way," flourished not by adapting to the culture but by resisting it. It grew under persecution, internal strain, and the persistent lure of worldly leadership. Why did it not collapse? Its foundation was not human consensus but the "Cornerstone" the builders rejected (Ps 118:22). Its people chose the invisible over the visible and the eternal over the expedient.

Behind this lineage of holy upheaval stands the Holy Spirit—the ultimate agent of divine transformation from creation to the present hour. The Spirit is the "Wind" that blows where He wills, unconstrained by human maps (Jn 3:8). He transforms hearts, overturns injustice, and calls believers into a transformation that appears foolish to the world but is God's wisdom.

I now set my sails to catch that Wind. Riding with Jesus at the helm has taken me from serving the "least of these" through international grassroots economic development to creating Divine Analogies. Both are intended to inspire contrarians who will transform today's Church.

40. Holy Spirit as a Contrarian



If Jesus is the preeminent Contrarian, then the Holy Spirit—His indwelling presence within the Church—must also operate contrary to the fallen world. The Bible does not explicitly label the Holy Spirit as a "contrarian." Scripture consistently portrays the Spirit as One who operates contrary to the sinful flesh, worldly wisdom, and even believers' preconceived plans. This oppositional, redirecting role recurs, emphasizing the Spirit's sovereignty, holiness, and alignment with God's higher ways rather than human logic or cultural norms.

In the Old Testament, the "Spirit of the LORD" empowers bold actions against the status quo, including Gideon leading an underdog victory (Jdg 6:34); David being anointed (1Sm 16:13); and prophets like Elijah (1Kg 18), who confronted kings. These illustrate the Spirit enabling counter-cultural obedience to God's plan. The New Testament states that the Spirit is in active conflict with self-centered tendencies (Ga 5). I witness this truth. My flesh encourages pride, anger, and other works of the flesh (Ga 19-21), while the Holy Spirit, who dwells within me, produces the fruit of divine love, joy, peace, and more (Ga 5: 22-23). This inner conflict will continue throughout my earthly life. At Judgment Day, Jesus will expose whether my choices increasingly reflected surrender to His Spirit or allegiance to myself.

John records Jesus describing the Spirit of God as the wind blowing wherever it pleases: "So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8). This highlights the divine freedom that moves me to speak out against corruption and rigid human systems, and to confront corrupted religious systems and cultural paths opposed to God. As my Counselor, He often reveals the spiritual warfare being waged for my soul.

Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving for their good, so the Holy Spirit would indwell them and spread His words. When He returns, He will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16:8). As such, the Holy Spirit's ministry is inherently contrarian, challenging societal norms, self-justification, and secular thinking. Jesus presented this as a core function of the Spirit following His ascension, and through the Spirit's power, their ministries would flourish.

When Paul and his companions tried to enter Bithynia, the "Spirit of Jesus would not allow them," and redirected them to Macedonia (Ac 16: 7). Similarly, an angel directed Philip to a desert road, and the Spirit sent him to the Ethiopian official's chariot before carrying him away (Ac 8:26-29, 39). The Spirit blocks seemingly godly plans, even when they involve spreading the Gospel. This shows me that He overrules my best ideas and plans to accomplish God's will when they run contrary to his purpose. His thoughts surpass my understanding, not sometimes but every time (Is 55:8-9) when I don't seek His will.

41. Christ as the Contrarian King



When I look at the world's trajectory, I see its confidence in self-definition, elevation of personal truth, and reliance on systems built by human hands. I do not see stability, but rather weakness. The world does not need a better human leader. It needs a King who contradicts it.

Jesus of Nazareth was that King in His first coming. He did not conform to the expectations of a first-century world shaped by empire, religious legalism, and social hierarchy. Instead of seizing power, He relinquished it. Instead of affirming the righteous elite, He lifted the poor, the sick, and the sinner. Instead of reinforcing the system, He exposed it. His declaration that His kingdom is "not of this world" (Jn 18:36) was not an escape clause—it was a direct challenge to every earthly claim to ultimate authority. To me, that is the essence of divine contrarianism: truth standing unyielding against power, corruption, and the decay that leads to death.

The Cross remains the most profound paradox ever witnessed. By every human measure, it was defeat—public humiliation, state execution, and the apparent silencing of God's incarnate Son. Yet in that moment, Christ was not overcome; He was overcoming. What appeared as weakness was power concealed; what looked like loss was victory unfolding (1Co 1:18). I have come to see that God does not merely oppose the world's logic—He overturns it entirely.

When Christ returns to sit on David's throne (Lk 1:32), I believe He will again confound the expectations of the age, but without ambiguity. He will not arrive as a misunderstood servant, but as a revealed sovereign (Rv 19:11-16). And yet, even in that display of undeniable authority, He will remain a Contrarian King—not because He resists the world's systems, but because He replaces them. The structures humanity has built—political, cultural, ideological—will not be refined; they will be rendered obsolete in the presence of perfect truth. Every knee will bow, not to a negotiated consensus, but to reality itself (Php 2:10-11).

His Millennial Kingdom will establish what I can only describe as a divine counterculture. In a world that now celebrates moral fluidity, His reign will anchor everything in righteousness (Isa 2:3-4). Where self-interest dominates today, justice and righteousness will define the human experience (Ps 72:1-7). Even creation itself will reflect this reordered harmony (Is 11:6-9). What is now considered contrarian—humility, obedience, reverence—will become the standard by which all life is measured.

To follow Christ now is to live as a contrarian in a world moving in the opposite direction. But I take comfort in knowing that this tension is temporary. The day is coming when the Contrarian King will no longer stand against the world—He will reign over it. In that moment, we will finally see that what appeared upside down was, in fact, right side up all along.

42. Contrarians as Gap Fillers



Through Ezekiel, God said He searched for someone to build up the wall and stand in the breach to spare the land—but found no one (Ez 22:30). This scene disturbs me because the gaps in society's moral and spiritual walls grow wider by the day. I have always seen myself as a contrarian—not someone who argues just to be difficult, but someone who struggles to stay quiet when events move in the wrong direction. I sense the Spirit turning that instinct into an invitation to stand in the gap and accept the risks.

Moses stepped into the breach after Israel worshiped the golden calf. He pleaded for the people, risked his reputation, and interceded until God relented from judgment (Ex 32:11-14). Samuel, David, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul also stood against danger, rebellion, or falsehood. Tradition holds that ten of Jesus' original Twelve were martyred, revealing the cost of faithful witness. Yet Jesus remains the ultimate Gap Filler. He stood between sinful humanity and divine judgment and paid the full price for my rescue.

Filling a gap can mean two things: plugging or defending. Plugging is reactive; it closes an opening and hopes the wall holds. Defending is proactive. Nehemiah's people rebuilt Jerusalem's wall while remaining ready for attack—working with one hand and holding a weapon in the other (Ne 4:16–18). A warrior holds the breach, strengthens the defenses, protects those behind him, and prepares for action until his Commander returns to relieve him. Jesus did not enlist me to be timid. He gave me His Spirit of power, love, and a sound mind—not a spirit of fear (2Ti 1:7).

The assassination of outspoken Christian activist Charlie Kirk captured my attention and put me into combat mode because it signals much worse things to come. I do not seek revenge or identify people as my true enemy. I fight rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and spiritual forces of evil (Eph 6:11-12). Their influence grows through deception, intimidation, antisemitism, Christophobia, and contempt for biblical truth. Plugging gaps in our spiritual defenses is only the beginning. The Church must fill the breach with disciplined, trained Christian warriors like the contrarians who helped transform the first-century world with Pentecostal power.

My weapons are not physical. They are prayer, truth, Scripture, faith, disciplined obedience, and the power of the Holy Spirit (2Co 10:3-5). I intend to use them to confront lies, defend the vulnerable, strengthen wavering believers, and keep writing when biblical convictions become unpopular. Publishing these Divine Analogies is one way I can help repair breaches and restore faith along forgotten streets (Is 58:12). I intend to rebuild the wall, prepare those behind it, advance when the Holy Spirit gives the order, and fight faithfully until Christ returns.

43. The Remnant as Contrarians



Geopolitical anxiety is intensifying. A 2025 YouGov poll found that 45% of Americans believe another world war is likely within the next five to ten years. A 2022 Pew Research Center analysis projected that, under its most aggressive religious-switching scenario, Christians could represent only 35% of Americans by 2070. A separate Pew survey found that 47% of U.S. Christians believe humanity is living in the end times. These numbers do not prove that the Church Age is ending, but they reveal growing concern about Christianity's future and the approaching Eschaton.

In this setting, contrarianism is not rebellion for its own sake. It is a clarifying spotlight on spiritual truth amid the cultural drift from theism toward humanism. As Christianity loses cultural influence, I believe nominal faith will become harder to maintain. Social pressure and persecution will expose the difference between those who merely identify as Christians and a Spirit-filled Remnant grounded in a biblical worldview.

First-century Christians were social and spiritual contrarians. They refused to conform even when faithfulness cost them their lives. Early Church tradition holds that ten of the eleven faithful original apostles were martyred. Their deaths did not prove Christianity true, but they demonstrated that these witnesses considered the risen Christ worth dying for. In an empire where loyalty to Caesar helped hold the Pax Romana together, declaring "Jesus is Lord" announced a higher allegiance. A 21st-century remnant may soon face a strikingly similar choice.

International instability, domestic disorder, and hostility toward biblical Christianity increasingly converge. Open Doors reported that during its 2025 reporting period, Nigeria accounted for about 69% of Christians killed for their faith worldwide. For many believers, persecution is not a future theological possibility; it is already their daily reality. The approaching Eschaton will require a Remnant that has already died to self before persecution demands the ultimate price.

I see the same spiritual hostility in growing antisemitism and Christophobia throughout politics, media, education, and popular culture. The world appears increasingly aligned against "the people of the Book." To be a contrarian in this setting is to hold fast to the jagged edges of the Cross when society pressures believers to soften its message, conceal their faith, or remain silent.

The original disciples were accused of "turning the world upside down" (Ac 17:6). The rising Remnant may become a final line of faithful resistance in an increasingly frictionless, technology-shaped society that prizes conformity over conviction. In this setting, contrarianism is not stubbornness or opposition for its own sake. It is fidelity to Christ in defiance of cultural drift. I do not merely want to predict the Remnant; by the Spirit's power, I intend to stand faithfully among it should I live that long. If not, I will support them from above, God willing.

44. Martyrdom as Contrarianism

This morning, the Holy Spirit sparked a missing piece in my lifelong puzzle. Jesus chose me when I was already willing to die for a cause, even before I truly knew Him. During my Christophany in 1977, His final words were, "I want you for who you are." He was not looking for a polished saint. Before age 25, I had risked my life in combat and earned six Distinguished Flying Crosses and eleven Air Medals. Perhaps He saw a man whose warrior instincts He could redirect toward the contrarianism of self-sacrifice—even martyrdom, if required.



Martyrdom does not begin with dying. It begins with witnessing and refusing to recant, even at great cost. Jesus was the ultimate Contrarian and Martyr—not because He was a victim of circumstance, but because He chose to lay down His life as a ransom. He did not stumble toward the Cross; He deliberately surrendered to His Father's redemptive mission. He said no one has greater love than someone who lays down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13). His kingdom overturns "me-first" human logic: He transformed apparent defeat into eternal victory.

Early Church tradition holds that, except for John, nearly all the apostles were martyred. They did not merely "die to themselves" figuratively; they ultimately surrendered their lives. Stephen forgave his killers while they stoned him, and early believers refused to declare Caesar lord. Their deaths did not prove Christianity true, but they show me that these witnesses considered the risen Christ worth dying for. Risking death for others over 175 combat missions was not an issue for me; dying daily of my worldly desires is another story.

Through decades of outreach to the Islamic community, I have met Muslims who speak more openly about dying for their faith than Christians speak about dying for Jesus. That comparison indicts comfortable Christianity. We have traded the rugged, sacrificial Cross for a therapeutic faith that protects our peace, prosperity, and self-esteem. The question is not whether Muslims understand Christian Truth. It is whether Christians still consider that Truth worth suffering for.

As the shadows of the Eschaton (end-times) lengthen and the Church Age approaches its close, martyrdom may stop being a footnote or distant missionary story. It could again become a central issue facing Christianity. Faithfulness in the coming days will require a contrarian mindset that values allegiance to Christ above acceptance, security, and survival.

Whether I am called to die figuratively—through the loss of reputation, position, or livelihood—or literally through persecution, Jesus wants sacrificial courage, not suicidal zeal. Christian martyrdom is not a desire to die; it is a refusal to purchase survival by betraying Christ. I want to say, "I have already given my life away, as He gave His life for me." Scripture says the faithful overcome by Christ's blood and their testimony because they do not shrink from death (Rv 12:11). A Church prepared to die for Christ will not fear a world threatening to take away what it has already surrendered.

45. Resurrection as a Contrarian Reward



Jesus' death was more than martyrdom; it was sacrificial atonement. Rome executed Him under the political charge "King of the Jews," but the cross accomplished God's greater purpose—payment for humanity's sin. Jesus established the pattern for His contrarian Church: bear the cross, suffer without retaliation, forgive persecutors, and remain faithful unto death. His resurrection proved that apparent defeat was actually victory. For those who belong to Him, resurrection remains the ultimate contrarian reward.

For nearly three centuries before the Edict of Milan in AD 313, Christians endured recurring waves of Roman persecution, culminating in the Great Persecution of AD 303–311. Rome tried to eradicate Christianity, but martyrdom only strengthened its witness. I believe the buildup to the Tribulation may follow a similar pattern, although compressed into years rather than centuries. My understanding of Scripture is that faithful believers, both living and dead, will ultimately be gathered to Christ at the Rapture (1Th 4:16-17), when the Holy Spirit's restraining ministry will also be removed from the world (2Th 2:6-7).

To understand this reward, I distinguish four biblical ways God displays His authority over death: translation, temporary restoration, the Resurrection of Life, and the Resurrection of Judgment. Translation occurs when God takes someone without ordinary death. Enoch walked with God and was taken (Ge 5:24); Elijah departed in a whirlwind accompanied by chariots of fire (2Ki 2:11). Living believers at Christ's return will experience a similar transformation: they will be changed and caught up to meet Him in the air (1Th 4:17; 1Co 15:51-52).

Temporary restorations returned people to mortal life, but they eventually died again. Elijah raised the widow's son (1Ki 17); Elisha raised the Shunammite's son (2Ki 4); Jesus raised Jairus's daughter (Lk 8), the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7), and Lazarus (Jn 11); and Peter raised Tabitha (Ac 9). These miracles demonstrated God's power over death, but they also pointed to something greater: a permanent resurrection into a glorified body that will never die again.

Jesus identified two final destinies: the Resurrection of Life and the Resurrection of Judgment (Jn 5:28-29). He became the "firstfruits" of eternal resurrection when He rose in a glorified body (1Co 15:20). The first Resurrection of Life unfolds in stages and includes those raised to reign with Christ (Rv 20:4-6). After the Millennium comes the second Resurrection of Judgment, when those who rejected God stand before the Great White Throne (Rv 20:11-15). The world may treat faithful Christians as defeated contrarians, but resurrection will reverse its verdict. Death will not have the final word. Jesus will.

Section 3

The Invisible Church Revealed

My reflections on:

"The Final Days of the Church Age."



As the Church Age approaches its culmination, the Invisible Church will become increasingly visible—not through buildings or institutions, but through believers who truly abide in Jesus. These final reflections explore how Scripture portrays mounting persecution as exposing authentic faith, separating disciples from nominal Christians, and culminating in the Rapture. Those turning to Christ after the Rapture of the Invisible Church will face unprecedented persecution, yet a faithful Remnant will endure until Jesus returns as King and be glorified by Him.

46. Invisible Church as the True Church



When I look at a congregation, I see the visible church: its people, pastors, worship, programs, membership, and public witness. These are real and important, but human eyes cannot see the whole Church. Within and beyond those institutions is the Invisible Church—the complete Body of regenerated, Spirit-filled believers known perfectly to God.

I cannot reliably separate authentic believers from convincing imitators. I see conduct; God sees allegiance. Jesus warned that some who publicly claimed His name would hear, "I never knew you" (Mt 7:21-23). He also described a future separation of sheep from goats (Mt 25:31–46). Those warnings keep me from assuming that religious activity proves saving faith. They also keep me from pretending I can conduct God's final inspection.

For fifty years, I have experienced each day as a test that reveals and refines my faith's authenticity. The test does not earn my salvation; Jesus already paid that bill. It exposes where I still resist His command. Early in my walk, I often answered correction with worldly sorrow, defending my motives and explaining my failures. Over time, godly sorrow taught me to confess, repent, repair what I could, and resume following Him (2Co 7:10).

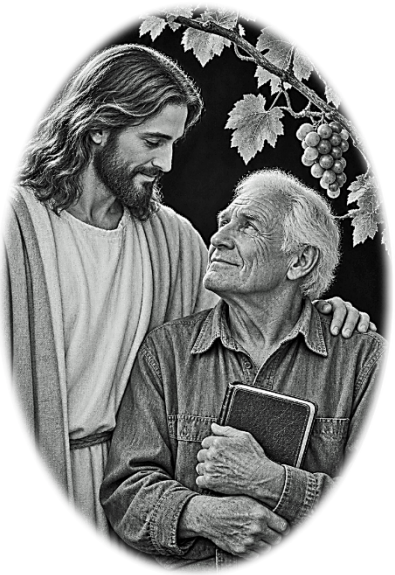
I remain imperfect. Pride is still my most persistent adversary. I have confessed it more times than I can count, and Jesus has never authorized me to stop returning. He told Peter to forgive seventy-seven times—effectively without keeping score (Mt 18:21–22). David learned that concealed sin drained his strength until he confessed it (Ps 32:3–5). Solomon wrote that whoever conceals transgression will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes it finds mercy (Prv 28:13).

A true believer does not become comfortable with sin. Regeneration gives me a new heart; sanctification trains me to live from it. Jesus forgives my guilt, while the Holy Spirit exposes sin's remaining power and reshapes my desires. God promised to replace a heart of stone with a responsive heart of flesh (Eze 36:26). I still fall, but I no longer want darkness to be my home.

As the Church Age approaches its culmination, I believe pressure will strip away much nominal Christianity. Buildings may close, institutions may fracture, and crowds may disappear. Yet Christ's Body will not vanish. The Invisible Church will become increasingly visible through costly faithfulness, spiritual fruit, supernatural courage, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Because counterfeit signs will also multiply, power must remain anchored to Scripture and allegiance to Christ (Mt 24:24; 2Th 2:9).

I cannot evaluate another's heart. My duty is to remain true to Jesus. If the visible church melts away, the formerly invisible Church must become the visible witness of Christ's Gospel.

47. Invisible Church as Abiding in Jesus



Jesus described authentic discipleship in the Upper Room: "Abide in Me, and I in you" (Jn 15:4). Abiding is not an occasional visit or religious performance. It is an enduring union that produces obedience, fruit, and dependence. It forces me to ask: Am I joined to Christ in the core of my being, or do I merely appear Christian?

Ironically, my Air Force Academy class motto gave me language for that question: *Esse non videri*—"to be, not to seem." I now recognize its spiritual force. Being precedes appearance. Essence precedes performance. Reality matters more than reputation. I can polish a testimony, but I cannot deceive the One who searches my heart.

A true believer is someone God has made spiritually alive (Ep 2:4-5). I did not earn that identity through moral effort. Jesus gave it to me by grace. Calling myself a true believer still feels uncomfortable because I know my failures. Yet humility does not require permanent uncertainty. John wrote so believers could know they possess eternal life (1Jn 5:13). I can have assurance without presuming upon Christ's final judgment.

Truthfulness is evidence of that new life. A true believer is not sinless but becomes increasingly honest about sin. John warned that if I claim to have no sin, I deceive myself; if I confess, God forgives and cleanses me (1Jn 1:8-9). The Spirit of Truth does not flatter my ego. He exposes what is false and redirects me when selfish desire or satanic deception pulls me off course. Jesus said, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice" (Jn 18:37).

Perseverance grows from identity, not raw willpower. Sheep follow the Shepherd because they recognize His voice. Following does not make them sheep; it reveals whose sheep they are. I entered Christ's flock as something of a black sheep—independent, argumentative, and inclined to wander. Correction has not erased my personality, but the Holy Spirit has redirected it. The contrarian who once resisted authority now wants to resist whatever contradicts his Commander.

To abide is to remain connected when obedience hurts, answers do not come, or culture moves the other way. It means my inner allegiance increasingly matches my outward profession. Paul wrote that whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1Co 6:17). This is ontological transformation: Christ did not merely improve my behavior; He changed the source of my life.

As visible institutions weaken, abiding believers will become harder to overlook. The Invisible Church will become visible through truth, love, courage, spiritual fruit, and power that points only to Jesus. For the Eschaton remnant, *esse non videri* has become my survival standard: to be in Christ, not merely to be seen as a Christian.

48. Invisible Church as Unmasked



For generations, Americans have measured church strength by numbers the world understands: attendance, campuses, budgets, cultural influence, and organizational prestige. During seasons of peace, those measurements can be deceptive. Authentic faith and hollow tradition may occupy adjoining pews. Across the world, wheat and tares grow together until God separates them (Mt 13:36-43). Christ's true Church has never been confined to an earthly institution; it is the regenerate Body known only to God.

As I perceive the end of the Church Age, unseen principalities governing this present darkness will exploit human institutions, political ambition, technology, and fear to tighten their grip on society (Ep 6:12). The pressure may not begin with an obvious demonic display. It starts with small ideological compromises: altered language, selective silence on moral truth, and compliance with the state's changing definitions of righteousness.

That pressure creates a great sifting. When following Christ carries social stigma, professional loss, restricted access, or legal danger, casual churchgoers will reconsider the cost. Paul warned that the Day of the Lord would be preceded by rebellion—the "falling away" (2Th 2:3). I believe growing hostility may help create the conditions for that apostasy. The rebellion is not divine, but God can use the surrounding pressure as a winnowing fork that exposes cultural Christianity.

When the cost of discipleship rises, I expect the crowds to thin quickly. Those who used the church for networking, political cover, entertainment, or respectability will drift toward safer ground. What remains will be believers who follow Christ because they know Him, not because Christianity remains convenient.

I cannot assume that fifty years with Jesus guarantees I will stand courageously when the cost rises. Pressure will expose whether my convictions are living commitments or merely positions I defended while they remained affordable. Combat taught me that training records and confident speeches mean little when warning lights flash and survival is suddenly uncertain. The test reveals what preparation concealed.

By demanding uniform compliance, worldly powers may inadvertently shatter the institutional veneer they intended to control. Buildings may close, and organizations may surrender, but genuine disciples will remain—exposed, distinct, and increasingly difficult to ignore. Their quiet refusal to drift with the cultural tide will shine like a spotlight in a dark room.

The Invisible Church will be unmasked because nominal believers will fade away. Pressure will strip away institutional camouflage. The world will finally see the remnant that was present all along: imperfect but loyal believers who simply refuse to bow.

49. Invisible Church as Global Anathema



Once the lines are drawn and casual adherents abandon ship, the dark powers behind the world's final rebellion will step into clearer view. Revelation describes a Satanic Trinity: Satan supplying illegitimate authority, the Antichrist exercising political and military domination, and the False Prophet directing worship through deception and counterfeit signs (Rv 13). Their goal is global control over commerce, culture, worship, and public allegiance.

Totalitarian empires commonly manufacture a shared enemy. Hitler blamed the Jewish people for Germany's humiliation and decline, stripped away their rights, branded them subhuman, and turned them into an official state anathema—a despised population blamed for national collapse and marked for destruction. My encounters with North Korean officials gave me a firsthand glimpse of a system built around coercion, information control, and a dynastic personality cult. During the Eschaton, I envision something more comprehensive: ancient tyranny amplified by artificial intelligence, biometric identification, digital currency, universal surveillance, and control over access to daily life. When an authoritarian regime demands that every person receive the Beast's mark to buy or sell, faithful Christians become economic and social outlaws (Rv 13:16-17).

Because they refuse the state's manufactured gods, I expect the regime to portray these believers as enemies of human unity—religious extremists obstructing peace, progress, equality, and public safety. They may blame them for ongoing disasters, economic disorder, and resistance to the new world system. The Church that once sought cultural approval will discover that accommodation never purchased lasting acceptance.

Yet the enemy's apparent victory produces a result he does not anticipate. By isolating believers from ordinary commerce and public institutions, the system forces them into underground networks of radical brotherhood. They share food, shelter, intelligence, Scripture, spiritual gifts, and sacrificial love. What institutional religion could not achieve through programs, persecution produces through necessity.

I have witnessed how combat pressure can convert a group of very different men into brothers whose survival depends on mutual trust. Their common allegiance becomes more important than the differences that once separated them.

John wrote that believers overcome the enemy through the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and their willingness to surrender their lives rather than abandon Christ (Rv 12:11). Their captors may call them backward, dangerous, and cursed. Heaven will see them differently. The world's global anathema will become Christ's purified remnant—hunted like criminals on earth but revealed as pure gold before God.

50. Invisible Church as Raptured



After stripping the Church of comfort, influence, and public acceptance, the Satanic Trinity will believe it stands near total victory. The faithful may be scattered into underground cells, surviving through shared food, covert communication, and sacrificial brotherhood. The world will mock the God who appears to have abandoned them. Yet evil always forgets that history remains inside the Creator's sovereign timeline.

Paul wrote that a restraining power prevents the man of lawlessness from fully rebelling until that restraint is removed (2Th 2:6-7). Scripture does not explicitly identify the Restrainer. I believe it is the Holy Spirit working through His indwelt Church. As long as the Invisible Church remains on earth, her presence functions as preserving salt, exposing light, and spiritual resistance against the enemy's final advance.

I do not claim to know precisely when the Rapture occurs in relation to every Tribulation event. My understanding is that believers will experience at least part of this final persecution before Christ gathers them. Jesus warned His followers to expect hatred, betrayal, and tribulation, while Paul promised that the Church would be caught up to meet the Lord (Mt 24:9-13; 1Th 4:16-17).

Then, at the moment the Father has established, divine extraction begins. The Lord descends with a commanding shout, the archangel's voice, and God's trumpet. The dead in Christ rise first. Living believers are caught up with them in the clouds. In an instant, the battered remnant disappears from the enemy's battlefield and enters the presence of its Commander.

From earth, the disappearance may initially look like surrender. The world that cursed the faithful as an anathema will suddenly encounter their absence as a cold, empty silence. The restraining presence exercised through the Church will be removed, but God will not leave Himself without witnesses. The Holy Spirit remains sovereign and active, drawing others to Christ during the darkness that follows.

With this particular restraint removed, the Beast advances into his final rebellion. He occupies the place of worship, claims divine authority, and demands global allegiance—the abomination of desolation and the ultimate counterfeit of Christ (2Th 2:3-4). For a brief period, lawlessness appears uncontested.

But Satan has not won; he has merely entered his final trap. The Church has not been defeated; she has been redeployed into the presence of her Groom. Christ will return physically, destroy the lawless one with the breath of His mouth, and end every counterfeit claim to sovereignty (2Th 2:8; Rv 19:11-21). The world's apparent triumph will become heaven's declaration that Jesus Christ alone is Lord.

51. Left Behind as Final Remnant



When the Invisible Church is suddenly caught up to meet Christ, the world will not continue as though nothing happened. The disappearance will leave a vacuum in families, communities, and nations. People who ignored warnings, postponed commitment, or treated Christianity as religious theater will be forced to reconsider what they dismissed.

Scripture does not tell me how many will turn to God after the Rapture or what they previously believed. Revelation does reveal an innumerable multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language emerging from the Great Tribulation, washed clean through the blood of the Lamb (Rv 7:9-14). I believe many who awaken too late for the Rapture will still receive God's mercy and become the Tribulation Remnant.

Their conversion will not lead to comfortable Christianity. The Beast will demand worship and require his mark for participation in the economy (Rv 13:15-17). Refusing it may mean losing employment, property, medical access, transportation, communication, and the ability to purchase food. Public churches will offer little refuge. Faith will move underground into remote shelters and covert networks.

Survival will require more than stockpiled supplies. Believers will have to share food, shelter, skills, intelligence, and protection. They may have to memorize Scripture, conceal it, and pass it from person to person. Denominational arguments will lose their importance when possessing a Bible or confessing Christ can produce imprisonment or death.

I believe the same Holy Spirit who empowered the ragged, outnumbered believers after Pentecost will equip this remnant for an even more hostile battlefield. He will give courage, discernment, spiritual gifts, supernatural endurance, and whatever power Christ determines necessary for their assignment (Ac 4:29-31). But supernatural activity alone will prove nothing. The False Prophet will also perform convincing signs, requiring believers to test every spirit and remain anchored to Scripture (Mt 24:24; 1Jn 4:1; Rv 13:13-14).

As a combat veteran, I know that isolation magnifies fear and that disciplined teams survive what individuals cannot. The Tribulation saints will need one another. Their small groups will become spiritual survival cells held together by truth, trust, prayer, and allegiance to Jesus.

Those left behind will not have comfortable pews, professional staff, or safe sanctuaries. They will have one another, God's Word, the blood of the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit. In that environment, Christianity will stop being a cultural identity and become a life-or-death allegiance. The Beast will demand a mark proving who belongs to him. The remnant will answer with lives, proving they belong to Christ.

52. Tribulation Remnant as Overcomers



The Antichrist will wage war against the saints, overcome their earthly defenses, and exercise temporary authority over peoples and nations (Rv 13:7). Believers who refuse his image and mark will be hunted, imprisoned, and killed. From the battlefield below, the Tribulation Remnant may look like another defeated resistance movement erased by superior power.

Heaven records a different outcome. John saw believers overcoming the enemy through the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and their willingness to surrender physical life rather than betray Christ (Rv 12:11). Their victory does not depend on escaping death. It rests on remaining faithful when death becomes the price of allegiance.

Combat taught me that losing the battlefield is not always the same as losing the war. A soldier can be overrun while completing his mission. The martyrs' assignment is not necessarily to survive the Beast, but to testify against him. Their blood exposes the regime's brutality, their endurance defeats its claim to own every conscience, and their refusal to bow preserves a witness no executioner can silence.

John saw the souls of those beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for refusing the Beast's worship and mark. They were raised to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Rv 20:4–6). The prisoners become rulers. The condemned become judges. The outlaws become kings and priests beside the One whom the world rejected first.

Then the Commander returns. Jesus descends not as the suffering Lamb but as the conquering King. His feet stand again upon the earth, the lawless ruler is destroyed by the breath of His mouth, and the counterfeit kingdom collapses before its rightful Sovereign (Ze 14:4; 2Th 2:8; Rv 19:11-21). Satan's final empire becomes another ruin beneath Christ's throne.

I am not a prophet but a discerner of current events. Consequently, my discernments can misinterpret prophetic sequences, symbols, or timelines. Prophecy usually becomes clearest after God turns prediction into history. Scripture gives me enough landmarks to remain watchful but not enough detail to justify arrogance. My responsibility is not to predict every date. It is to prepare believers to recognize the battlefield, reject the counterfeit, and remain loyal to Jesus.

I do not need every coordinate to know how this war ends. The Beast falls. The martyrs rise. The hunted reign. Jesus returns as King, and every counterfeit power collapses before Him. The Invisible Church that the world dismissed, exposed, outlawed, and tried to exterminate will stand beside her victorious Lord. The final word does not belong to Satan, death, or the Eschaton. It belongs to Jesus Christ, His raptured Church, and Tribulation overcomers.

Afterword

Until He Comes

I began this volume by looking at the Church as Christ's living Body and beloved Bride. I end it looking toward the day when the Bridegroom returns. Between those realities lies my present assignment: to remain faithful, help prepare His Bride, and stand resolute until He comes.

I do not know whether the Church Age will end tomorrow, decades from now, or centuries after I am gone. Jesus did not order me to calculate the day. He told me to watch, remain ready, make disciples, and faithfully use what He placed in my hands. Prophecy should not make me fixate on the future while neglecting the people I love. It should make me more obedient today.

These reflections have forced me to confront two churches. One is visible in buildings, denominations, programs, budgets, and public influence. The other is visible only to God: the Invisible Church of regenerated believers who abide in Christ and follow the Holy Spirit. They presently overlap, but persecution, deception, and apostasy will eventually expose the difference. Cultural Christianity may collapse, but Christ's true Church will endure until He calls her upward.

I also confronted two responses. I can mourn the Church's decline with worldly sorrow—complaining about lost influence, empty pews, compromised institutions, and a culture moving farther from God. Or I can allow Godly Sorrow to produce repentance, courage, disciplined obedience, and action. The first leaves me circling the problem. The second sends me into the breach.

That is where contrarian Christianity matters. Jesus never contradicted truth; He contradicted every power, tradition, appetite, and deception opposing it. Following Him does not authorize anger, recklessness, or self-righteousness. It requires me to stand when standing is costly, speak truth with love, defend the vulnerable, resist deception, and refuse to exchange biblical conviction for cultural acceptance.

My enemies are not flesh and blood, and my weapons are not physical. My strength comes from the Holy Spirit, who continually returns me to the unchanging foundation: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, for God's glory alone.

At 79, I know my earthly watch may end before the prophetic Church Age does. Either Christ will return for me, or I will go to Him. I cannot rebuild the entire wall, but I can repair the section assigned to me—writing, teaching, strengthening wavering believers, and preparing those who may face a harder world than the one I inherited.

The Church's future does not depend upon America, political power, institutional survival, or my ability to interpret every prophetic sign correctly. It depends upon Jesus Christ. He purchased His Church, indwells her through His Spirit, disciplines her when she wanders, preserves His Remnant, and will return for His Bride.

Until then, I will remain on station—watchful, armed with truth, surrendered to the Holy Spirit, and faithful to my Commander.



Until He comes.

Sources and Notes

Divine Analogies is a collection of personal theological reflections, not an academic treatise. Scripture is the primary authority underlying these essays. Biblical references use abbreviated book names, followed by chapter and verse. Unless quotation marks indicate otherwise, biblical language may be summarized or paraphrased to preserve the reflective style and space limitations of each essay.

The author writes from a dispensational, premillennial perspective. Interpretations concerning the Church Age, Rapture, Restrainer, Tribulation, Remnant, and Millennial Kingdom represent the author's understanding of Scripture. Faithful Christians hold differing interpretations of the timing and sequence of these events.

1. **American Religious Identity and Practice.** Pew Research Center, *2023–24 Religious Landscape Study*, published February 26, 2025. The study reports that 62% of U.S. adults identify as Christian, 29% are religiously unaffiliated, 7% identify with non-Christian religions, and 33% attend religious services at least monthly. It also reports that 86% believe people possess a soul or spirit and 70% believe in heaven, hell, or both.
2. **Biblical Worldview and Syncretism.** Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, directed by George Barna, *American Worldview Inventory*, reports published between 2023 and 2026. CRC defines a biblical worldview through answers concerning beliefs and behavior across multiple areas of life. Its studies report that approximately 4% of American adults meet its criteria for a biblical worldview, compared with 13% of theologically defined born-again Christians in 2023 and 12% in 2026. The 2024 and 2025 reports classify 92% of American adults as syncretistic. These percentages reflect CRC's particular definitions and measurement methodology rather than religious self-identification.
3. **Pornography Among Christians.** Barna Group, *Beyond the Porn Phenomenon* research, 2024. Barna reports that 54% of practicing Christians consume pornography at least occasionally, including 22% who view it weekly or daily. Among pornography users, 84% say no one is helping them avoid it. These findings inform the discussion of concealed sin, guilt, shame, confession, and restoration.
4. **Suicide and Young Americans.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Center for Health Statistics. CDC reports that the U.S. suicide rate increased approximately 36% between 2000 and 2022. In 2023, suicide was the second-leading cause of death among Americans ages 10–14, 15–24, and 25–44. The reflections do not claim that religious disaffiliation causes suicide; the statistics are presented as parallel indicators of a broader struggle involving identity, belonging, meaning, and hope.
5. **America's Possible Religious Future.** Pew Research Center, *Modeling the Future of Religion in America*, September 13, 2022. Pew's projections are hypothetical scenarios, not predictions. Under its most aggressive religious-switching scenario, Christians would represent

approximately 35% of Americans by 2070. A separate 2022 Pew survey found that 47% of U.S. Christians believed humanity was living in the end times.

6. **Concern About Global War.** YouGov, "Many Europeans and Americans Think World War III Is Imminent," May 6, 2025. The survey found that 45% of Americans considered another world war likely within the following five to ten years. This finding measures public anxiety; it does not establish an eschatological timetable.
7. **Persecution of Christians.** Open Doors, *World Watch List 2025*. During its October 2023–September 2024 reporting period, Open Doors documented 4,476 Christians killed for faith-related reasons worldwide, with Nigeria accounting for approximately 69% of those deaths. Open Doors states that its figures are conservative because many incidents cannot be independently verified.
8. **The Apostles and Early Martyrdom.** The New Testament explicitly records the martyrdoms of James the son of Zebedee (Ac 12:2) and Stephen (Ac 7:54–60). Early Christian writers, particularly Clement of Rome and Eusebius of Caesarea, preserve traditions concerning the deaths of Peter, Paul, James the brother of Jesus, and other early witnesses. Later tradition maintains that most of Jesus' faithful original apostles died as martyrs, although the historical evidence differs considerably from apostle to apostle. Accordingly, the book identifies the number as Church tradition rather than an established historical count.
9. **Roman Persecution.** Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, together with standard histories of early Christianity. The Diocletianic or "Great Persecution" began in AD 303. Galerius issued an edict of toleration in 311, and the Edict of Milan established broader religious toleration in 313. Persecution varied by period, emperor, and region rather than continuing at equal intensity for three uninterrupted centuries.
10. **The Killing of Charlie Kirk.** Contemporary reporting from the Associated Press, Reuters, and Utah Valley University concerning Kirk's fatal shooting on September 10, 2025, and the subsequent criminal proceedings. As of this volume's completion, the accused had pleaded not guilty and the judicial process remained ongoing. References to the event reflect its effect on the author rather than a legal conclusion concerning disputed motives.
11. **Personal History.** Accounts involving military service, combat missions, decorations, corporate work, Middle East experience, the author's 1977 Christophany, Jobenomics, family history, and the creation of *Divine Analogies* draw on the author's personal experience, records, and recollections.

Research and statistical sources were reviewed through October 2026. Percentages may vary among organizations because surveys use different definitions, questions, samples, and methodologies.

Divine Analogies is a thought-provoking collection of spiritual reflections that explores timeless biblical truths through contemporary metaphors. In a world divided by competing truths, loyalties, and fears, these reflections ask a more personal question: What—and whom—do I really trust?



From the cockpit of a combat fighter in Vietnam to the pinnacle of American corporate power, this is not a story of conventional success—it is the testimony of a stubborn, skeptical man whom God refused to abandon.



Volume 6 of the planned seven-volume series explores the Church's life and future through 52 weekly reflections. It begins with Christ's wounded Bride and the sorrow that leads to repentance. It then examines Jesus, Christianity, the Holy Spirit, and the faithful Remnant as contrarian forces resisting the spirit of the age.

As cultural Christianity weakens, the distinction between the visible and Invisible Church becomes increasingly important. These reflections confront syncretism, spiritual atrophy, persecution, martyrdom, resurrection, the Rapture, and the return of Jesus—not to set dates, but to prepare believers to remain faithful.

From a dispensational perspective, Chuck asks whether the Church Age is approaching its culmination and how Spirit-filled believers should prepare for what lies ahead.

Written for believers, seekers, skeptics, the disillusioned, and those concerned about the Church's direction, Volume 6 offers warning without despair and urgency without surrender. Christ still disciplines His Bride, empowers His disciples, preserves His Remnant, and promises to return.

Divine Analogies, Volume 6, is ultimately a call to watch, prepare, stand firm, and remain faithful to Jesus Christ—until He comes.