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/ standing for Christ in a collapsing culture /

Erwin W. Lutzer

Bestselling author of *We Will Not Be Silenced*

“Erwin Lutzer’s powerful new book makes a compelling case for Christians to get off the sidelines and join the battle for our culture and faith. Seeking to separate the church from politics, leaders have allowed the politics of the world to seep into the church and influence the morality and worldviews of congregants. When the church compromises its mission and fails to declare God’s eternal truths to a dying world, it leaves a void that the wisdom of the world can never fill. Lutzer challenges Christians to rethink what it means to suffer for Christ. It is a choice we each have to make during these perilous times.”

**Dr. Carol M. Swain**

Distinguished Senior Fellow for Constitutional  
Studies, Texas Public Policy Foundation

“Once again, Erwin Lutzer helps answer the question: What does faithfulness look like in our collapsing culture? With biblical insight he deals with issues regarding collective demonization, race, propaganda, and the sexual revolution and its destructive agenda. He also describes his concern that the evangelical church is compromising its message because it has fallen into the trap of interpreting the Bible through the lens of culture. Read this book to be challenged and convicted, and above all, better understand why it is a joyful privilege to represent Christ despite growing opposition. After all, as the title of the book tells us, we have no reason to hide!”

**Dr. Tony Evans**

President, The Urban Alternative;  
senior pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

“In *No Reason to Hide*, Erwin Lutzer once again brilliantly brings together a biblical perspective on the unprecedentedly crucial issues we are facing as a culture. Important.”

**Eric Metaxas**

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author and host of the  
nationally syndicated *Eric Metaxas Radio Show*

“This book is a bold and necessary wake-up call. The cultural questions Erwin Lutzer answers are indeed the most pressing that Christians face today, yet many of us would rather go into comfortable hiding than confront them. As Lutzer so powerfully demonstrates, however, there is *no reason* to hide. Truth is on our side, and it’s time to take that seriously. This is a clear, relevant, and invaluable guide that I’ll recommend to Christians for a long time to come.”

**Natasha Crain**

Speaker, podcaster, and author of four books,  
including *Faithfully Different*

“Erwin Lutzer has been sounding this all-important alarm and calling us to sanity in a culture that has been running headlong toward insanity. In his newest book, *No Reason to Hide*, he shines the light and shows us a way out of the abyss of immortality. Read it, heed it, and share it with others.”

**Michael Youssef, PhD**

Bestselling author of *Hope for This Present Crisis*

“Erwin Lutzer’s book insightfully describes the cultural pitfalls threatening all Christians in today’s society and provides much-needed guidance on how to avoid and overcome them. Every Christian who wants to make sense of what’s going in our culture and continue to be an effective disciple of Christ should read this book.”

**Keisha Toni Russell**

Counsel, First Liberty Institute

“If you are beginning to feel overwhelmed by the ramped-up pressure to conform to the warped demands of today’s thought police, then this book is for you. It is a canteen filled to the brim with invigorating biblical wisdom designed to strengthen, embolden, and equip the thirsty hearts of embattled Christians who seek to remain faithful to their Savior. Erwin Lutzer has not only laid out timeless biblical insights but has deftly analyzed the moral crises of our day. Combining these has made for a profoundly important and timely book.”

**Dr. Mike Fabarez**

Host of *Focal Point Radio* and president of Compass  
Bible Institute, Aliso Viejo, CA

“Erwin Lutzer has once again given us an insightful perspective on the culture through the lens of the Bible. In a day when wokeness has unfortunately infiltrated the church, this book is a refreshing reminder of God’s unchanging truth.”

**Pastor Gary Hamrick**

Senior pastor, Cornerstone Chapel, Leesburg, VA

“In today’s culturally and politically divided climate, Erwin Lutzer has provided Christians with a course on how to navigate these turbulent waters and stay true to the biblical worldview. While terms like *tolerance*, *racism*, and *diversity* have been redefined and applied as accusations, Lutzer gives us clarity on what is happening and how to combat it. Using God’s promises, real heroes’ stories, and action steps, every believer can be equipped to stand for truth. This book is both timely and needful.”

**Skip Heitzig**

Author, speaker, and senior pastor of multicampus  
Calvary Church New Mexico

“No book in the marketplace as succinctly and clearly analyzes, from a biblical perspective, the major cultural issues confronting God’s people with such a sound scriptural response. May we heed what God has called us to do lest we face serious consequences both in the church as well as in our interactions with the culture.”

**J. Shelby Sharpe**

Constitutional lawyer



# **no reason to hide**

**Erwin W. Lutzer**



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*With this book I pass the baton to the next generation of believers, urging them to run the race of life, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).*

*Let us run with endurance, with courage and faith, and seek only the approval of our Lord, who will greet us at the finish line. May we earnestly pray that we will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”*



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Most of all, I pay tribute to my lovely and patient wife, Rebecca, who asked numerous times, “Isn’t the book finished *yet?*” Now I can reply, “Well, my dear, yes, it is *now* finished!”

Finally, I give all praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who saved me when I was in my teens and called me to preach the gospel. At His feet, I humbly bow in gratitude and worship.

*Soli Deo gloria.*

# Contents

Don't Stoop at Standing Time—H.B. Charles Jr. . . . .	11
1. Surrender, Sink, or Swim . . . . .	15
<i>When our boat is blown out of the water, we need heroes to swim for help</i>	
2. Will We Be Intimidated by Collective Demonization? . . . . .	33
<i>Standing for Christ often means being rejected by the culture</i>	
3. Will We Expose the Greatest Lie That Is Our Nation's Most Cherished Delusion? . . . . .	57
<i>When we put ourselves in the place of God, we must live with the dire consequences</i>	
4. Will We Encourage Unity or Create Division by Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? . . . . .	83
<i>The gospel shows us there can be genuine unity despite diversity</i>	
5. Can We Take Steps to Move Beyond Our History of Racism, Stolen Land, and Collective Guilt? . . . . .	115
<i>We must learn from our past but not be bound by it</i>	
6. Will We Be Deceived by the Language Used by the Propagandists? . . . . .	139
<i>Truth is never welcome in a pagan world</i>	
7. Will We Compromise with the Christian Left? . . . . .	167
<i>A false view of love can be an excuse for serious compromises</i>	
8. Will We Oppose the Fiction of a Gender-Neutral Society? . . . .	193
<i>When we destroy God's created order, we destroy ourselves</i>	

9. Will Our Children Be Indoctrinated by the Enemy? . . . . .	213
<i>Parents be warned: God holds us responsible for our children's education</i>	
10. Will We Submit to the Great Global Reset? . . . . .	233
<i>Someday politics, religion, and economics will be united under one global ruler</i>	
11. Will We Accept the Blessing of Gospel-Centered Suffering? . . . .	261
<i>We must rethink our view of what it means to suffer for Christ</i>	
Epilogue: Jesus Teaches Us How to Run Successfully All the Way to the Finish Line . . . . .	283
Notes . . . . .	289

## FOREWORD

# Don't Stoop at Standing Time

H.B. Charles Jr.

I was getting beat up as a young pastor in my first church. At some point, I concluded that enough was enough. It was time to give up and do something else. Anything else. I just had to get through one event.

We were celebrating the church's anniversary. My pastor (every pastor needs a pastor) was scheduled to speak at the event. The following Sunday, I would submit my resignation, effective immediately. I strategically hid my plan from my pastor. He would have tried to talk me out of it. Yet as he preached that evening, I felt like he was speaking directly to me and that I was the only one in the room.

Pastor Wade's sermon text was Daniel 3. As a preacher who listened to sermons as a student and a sinner, I was surprised. What would my pastor do with this Sunday school story? He entitled the sermon "Don't Stoop at Standing Time." I have forgotten most of the details of that message. But the Lord used it to save my ministry at a critical time.

I pray the Lord will use this book in your life and ministry the way He used that sermon in mine!

I hope and trust that it is not breaking news to you that we are living in “times of difficulty” (2 Timothy 3:1). The path of righteousness has been abandoned for the dead ends of sin (Proverbs 14:12). The straight and narrow way that leads to life has been ignored. Are people even looking for it? Every day, more and more are going the broad, crowded way that leads to death and destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). The treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found only in Christ have been cashed in for the worthless trinkets of sinful folly. Many are playing marbles with diamonds.

As troublesome as these realities may be, the idolatries of the cultural moment are not the most significant crisis we face. We often act and react as if the climate of the culture is the most critical factor of the day. It is not. The world is the world. And it is the height of absurdity to expect non-Christians to think and act like Christians. The world gladly bows before the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar has set up. The problem is that the church is stooping at standing time.

In *No Reason to Hide*, Erwin Lutzer urges followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to ignore the siren music that bids us to bow the knee to false gods. There are few voices in our day that are as clear and courageous as Lutzer’s. He is a true gift to the church. With godly wisdom, he understands the times in which we live. With biblical conviction, he addresses the contemporary philosophical shifts from a Christian worldview that contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. With a pastor’s heart, he speaks the truth in love—guilty of neither denying the truth in the name of love nor withholding love in the name of truth.

Decades ago, pastors were advised to preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Of course, there is flawed

and faulty logic in such an approach. The Word of God is timeless truth. The newspaper is fleeting propaganda. But the spirit of the statement was a clarion call to bring the truth of God's unchanging Word to bear upon the changing philosophies of the day. In classic Lutzer fashion, *No Reason to Hide* wisely counsels us to live in our faithless generation with heroic faith.

I am occasionally asked what challenges future preachers will face. While I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, I have a ready answer to that question. It is no sage reflection. The signs of the times are obvious for all to see if they would only pay attention.

I believe the enemy of our souls is at work to undermine the authority of Scripture. The veracity and authority of the sacred Scriptures are attacked to thwart and threaten the truth of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy seeks to sabotage the biblical proclamation of Christ to stop the advance of the message of the gospel to all the nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

I sincerely believe *No Reason to Hide* provides basic training for the spiritual warfare we must fight. If the Lord tarries His coming and spares us to live, every Christian will face the moment of truth when the rulers of the false value system of this world will begin to play their music. By God's grace, strength, and wisdom, do not bow down to worldly philosophies that are false gospels.

Be a hero who does not stoop at standing time.

—H.B. Charles Jr.



## CHAPTER 1

# Surrender, Sink, or Swim

*Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him  
in sincerity and in faithfulness...  
And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD,  
choose this day whom you will serve...  
But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

JOSHUA 24:14–15

There was a time in America—not so long ago—when Christians didn’t have to take sides in the so-called culture wars swirling around us. We could live in what someone called “the mushy middle,” keeping our views to ourselves. But when we did speak our mind, it was assumed we had a right to do so. We could say what we believed about a particular matter and move on.

No longer.

In today’s climate, tolerance no longer means a willingness to put up with different points of view; rather, tolerance now means joining the revolution, getting on board with the “right side of history.” Soon, and this is already happening, you will be expected (if not *coerced*) to declare what you believe about gender and racial issues



on job applications for positions in education, business, the arts, and more. And parents will face vilification if they refuse to allow their children to be indoctrinated in radical leftist orthodoxies. You will be subjected to racist-driven “diversity seminars.” And those who think they can simply remain neutral will be “doxed” (that is, called out by leftists who reveal private information about them online). As we will see later in this book, even churches are not exempt.

Today, those who claim to be *tolerant* actually seek to be *dominant*.

Truth is no longer viewed as a search for objective reality, but rather, as an individual choice not subject to outside scrutiny. Right or wrong, common sense or irrationality, genuine dialogue or vilification—all of these distinctions are lost in a maze of ideologies that are not to be questioned. Ideology even trumps science and known facts of history.

Be warned: America is no longer the country some of us remember it to be. A cultural tsunami has arrived, and there is no safe ground.

## THE NEED FOR HEROES

Surrender, sink, or swim to the shore.

Sometimes heroes are made because of their courage; sometimes they are made by their circumstances. Sometimes a person volunteers to become a hero; sometimes a person becomes a hero because necessity demands it.

During World War II, a 26-year-old lieutenant in the US Navy named John F. Kennedy was at the helm of a patrol boat that collided with a Japanese destroyer. The boat was damaged, and the crew was forced to swim three-and-a-half miles to a nearby island and set up camp. They were without supplies and terrified because of their proximity to the Japanese. A few days later, they ended up swimming to another island that offered minimal food and shelter.

Kennedy, who would later become the thirty-fifth president of the US, had always been at home in the water. He swam to still another island in search of resources to sustain his crew. There, he found help that put him in contact with other Allied forces and thereby saved his comrades. On the morning of August 18, 1943, they returned safely to the US base at Rendova Island.

Later, Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal and a Purple Heart for his valor and the injuries he suffered. When asked how he became a hero, he answered, “It was involuntary. They sank my boat.”<sup>1</sup>

When your boat is blown out of the water, you have a choice: allow yourself to be captured by the enemy, sink, or swim. If you refuse to surrender, you can disappear silently under the waves or muster the courage to swim to shore and become a hero. Perhaps a reluctant hero, to be sure, but a hero nonetheless. And through this courage, you can remain a faithful witness for Christ.

This moment in history calls for heroes, reluctant or otherwise.

You hold in your hands a book intended to help prepare us for a future already here. The moral and spiritual revolution taking place in America is proceeding rapidly and by coercion; those who oppose this revolution are already paying a heavy price. Our culture is closing in on us and there’s nowhere we can escape; we have to declare where we stand and be prepared to be vilified, cancelled, or shamed. All of this is an opportunity for us to prove Christ is more precious to us than our livelihood, our reputations, or even our families.

Surrender, sink, or swim.

Those are our options. Pressure is coming at us from a variety of sources—legal, cultural, educational, and political—and we have a choice we must make. Thankfully, God has lessons to teach us even as we find ourselves drifting in open waters we have never navigated before. Believe it or not, this actually is a book of hope.

## CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS

I've often been asked, "Should the church be involved in politics?" That depends on what we mean. Politics cannot be separated from morality, and morality cannot be separated from Christianity. And if the church has nothing to say to our politicized culture, all that is left are self-destructive secular ideologies. Our allegiance to Christ means we dare not remain silent.

The famous New England theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) believed, and I agree, that God made us dependent on political structures; God even made us dependent on our non-Christian neighbors. Edwards wrote that a failure to acknowledge our interdependence is "more suitable for wolves, and other beasts of prey, than for human beings."<sup>2</sup> This conviction stemmed from Edward's belief that God has distributed good gifts to all of humanity. Theologians refer to this as common grace.

Edwards also believed that Christians should join forces with non-Christians in the public square to work toward common moral goals. That's because God has engrained His laws on all human hearts. This conviction led Edwards to argue for equal rights for Native Americans and to insist that all Native American girls should be able to go to school. He wrote several letters to the Massachusetts Assembly, urging the colony to honor its treaty to the Housatonnuk Indians and that blankets and clothes should be provided for them.<sup>3</sup>

The bottom line: In our haste to put people into various camps, too often we as Christians have forgotten that common grace means we can work together on some matters. Sometimes we should support politicians, and sometimes we shouldn't; we can support some policies but not others. But at all times, we should reach beyond ourselves to offer hope and grace to a weary and angry world. The gospel of Christ is a special treasure we dare not lose or neglect.

Some Christians might remind us that Christianity has survived

under the worst political regimes. While this may sometimes be true, we need to consider the present-day difference between the church in North Korea and South Korea. When I spoke to some pastors from South Korea, I asked them about the church on the other side of the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone); they said they hear very little about the survival of their brothers and sisters to the north, but they do know that a remnant has survived despite horrid persecution. Families are divided, and believers are scattered and hidden underground. According to an annual watchlist put together by Open Doors USA, “being discovered as a Christian is a death sentence in North Korea. If you aren’t killed instantly, you will be taken to a labor camp as a political criminal. These inhumane prisons have horrific conditions, and few believers make it out alive. Everyone in your family will share the same punishment.”<sup>4</sup>

Historically, God has even allowed political regimes to crush His church. In the seventh century, Islamic invaders (Islam is an overtly political religion) extinguished the church all throughout North Africa. Once freedom is crushed, the church is either diminished, or worse, destroyed. Only a small remnant usually remains. Any fight for freedom involves politics in some form, but as Christians, our fight for freedom must always be for the cause of the gospel to be advanced.

Several years ago, a few of us religious leaders met with a member of Congress who pleaded with us, “You expect us to pass righteous legislation here in Washington, but how can we do that if you don’t send us members of Congress who believe in righteousness?” Food for thought.

In fact, can you name a single political or cultural issue that isn’t based on some worldview, whether secular, nominally religious, or biblical? Most such issues touch on biblical teachings or principles. As a pastor, I have never endorsed a political candidate or party, but

if we hold to a biblical worldview, we must speak even on those matters that many see as “purely political.”

Let those who think it’s okay to be indifferent about politics ask the Christians who lived under Nero or Nazi Germany whether they thought politics was important. Ask the Christians today in North Korea, China, Russia, and dozens of other countries, and they will tell you that politics is *very* important! For these believers, faithfulness to God continues to require their very lives.

I understand the tension we as Christians feel. We would prefer not to become involved in politics or culture wars. We want to be known as loving and caring, and we want to be known for what we support, not for what we are against. We want to be known as being apolitical for a reason; we don’t want to allow what appears to be secondary disagreements to divide us. We don’t want to erect needless stumbling blocks for the gospel. I agree that sometimes neutrality is best; but at other times it’s not possible. Sometimes political issues force us into a moral corner where we must choose sides.

So, in this book, I will speak about issues that affect politics: freedom of religion, biblical teachings about the inherent value of every human being (including the unborn), about gender and sexuality, about marriage, racism, and the like. The right of parents to have some say in their child’s public education is now a political issue. All of these issues factor into our political differences. More broadly, we must deal with the question of whether there are transcendent values that apply to all cultures, or if there are only relative values that can be individually chosen or discarded. And sometimes our choices are not easy.

Let’s not act as if we can watch America being destroyed without dire consequences for us and for the world. We must remember that a large percentage of missionary work worldwide is supported by American dollars. Numerous countries look to the US as the last

bastion of hope for freedom and opportunity. There is much at stake in this critical cultural moment.

But—and I need to emphasize this—as we approach these matters, we must always be gospel-driven; biblical redemption must lie at the heart of our motivation. Our goal is not that our lives will be less stressful or filled with more comfort, but rather, that we have more freedom to point beyond ourselves to Christ, who redeemed us. Even our collapsing culture must always be seen through the lens of our gospel witness.

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Always remember that the opposition we  
experience often positions us for new  
opportunities to witness about our faith.

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In the Old Testament book of Esther, we read of how the pagan king, Ahasuerus, signed a decree to kill all the Jews in his 127 provinces. Esther's cousin Mordecai convinced her to appeal to the king for her life and the lives of her people. Mordecai didn't have to be convinced that politics was important; he knew the policies of a politician had serious consequences. Esther risked her life by appealing to the king, and the Jews were spared certain death.

Like Esther, *we have come to the kingdom for such a time as this!*

We must stand against the political and moral winds blowing against us, but always remember that the opposition we experience often positions us for new opportunities to witness about our faith. We must always use the opposition we receive to show that our love of Christ is greater than personal advancement and the applause of the watching world.

In the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” Martin Luther wrote,

Let goods and kindred go,  
this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still;  
his kingdom is forever!

In Christ, we have the strength and courage we need at this present moment. But we also need each other as the currents of our culture swirl around us. As believers, we are on this boat together. Surrender should not be an option.

### **THE CHURCH IS FACING A DAY OF RECKONING**

It is time for those of us in church ministry to look in the mirror and ask: Are we really training our people for the days ahead, or are we doing church as usual? We should also ask: Why are so many Christians “deconstructing” their faith and leaving Christianity altogether? As people look at us, do they see more anger than repentance? Are we self-righteous? Are we hypocritical, denying with our lives what we profess with our mouths? Or do people see a loving, courageous, and humble witness to the gospel? What kind of a legacy are older believers leaving for those who are coming behind? Are we leaving them some heroes to follow?

I believe that in the days ahead, we are either going to see a renewed all-around commitment to exalt Christ above our expected comforts, or the church will lose its witness through more compromise, more apostasy. Increasingly, Christians are finding it difficult to stay in that “mushy middle.” The fearful are going in one direction, the faithful are going in another. The wheat is already being separated from the chaff.

I have a friend in Germany who said he attended a concert that

included a piece played by a handbell choir. In the middle of their performance, a drunk walked up and pulled the cloth from the table, upsetting the handbells, but the music kept playing uninterrupted! As it turned out, the embarrassed musicians were just going through the motions as the preprogrammed music played over the loudspeakers. *Handbell sync!*

As a pastor, I have often asked myself, *What if God wanted to do something in the church that wasn't listed in the bulletin? Are we making music or just acting as if we are? Are we, as pastors, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit? Or are we just depending on the past without fresh wind for the present and the future? Are our people being delivered from their addictions? Do we see marriages being put back together? Do we see ourselves and our members making hard and painful choices in favor of Jesus?*

My friend pastor Gary Hamrick says there are three kinds of churches. Some will be *complicit*, participating in the culture without standing against it; some will be *complacent*, disagreeing with the culture but not actively opposing it; then there are those that will be *courageous*, saying what needs to be said and doing what needs to be done, and accepting the consequences without self-pity or anger. Let's adopt the attitude of the apostles, who, after they were beaten for their witness, "left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:41).

T.S. Eliot, who wrote a poem titled *The Rock*, asked, "Have you built well?" adding, "The Church must be forever building, for it is forever decaying within and attacked from without."<sup>5</sup> Yes, we must be "forever building" because the church is "forever decaying." And if the foundation is destroyed, should we be surprised that the building is collapsing?

The great prophet Elijah, who powerfully confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, later ran 300 miles and hid in a cave,



fearing the wrath of the pagan queen, Jezebel. We read, “There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ He said, ‘I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts... And [God] said, ‘Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD’” (1 Kings 19:9–11). Only when Elijah obeyed and came out of the cave did he receive further instructions.

Many of us are content living within our isolated bubble, our cave, impervious to the cultural realities we are facing, but our children and grandchildren are facing a frightful future. And we are all expected to play by the rules that have been set out for us. We just might be sleep-walking toward a concealed but very dangerous precipice.

## BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

We are not the first believers who have sought a place to hide.

Someone has pointed out that today’s church is in the same place as the disciples were when they thought Jesus was dead: “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, *the doors being locked* where the disciples were for fear of the Jews...” (John 20:19).

Locked doors! Fear of others! Uncertain about the future! Hiding for fear of persecution! They were silent, wondering who would make the first move. Calculating what sharing their commitment to Christ would cost. Feeling alone and abandoned. Just like we might feel when we take a stand against the onslaught of our culture.

Then suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, “Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’” (verse 19).

The presence of Christ changed everything. The disciples had been acting as if Jesus were dead. But now His presence gave them the assurance that they could unlock the doors and walk into a hostile world with Him on their side. They were not on their own! Christ wasn’t

dead after all. If He was alive—and He was—they could become the heroes the times called for. Most of them would end up martyred for the faith. No matter. Because Jesus lived, they would live also!

In the introduction to his book *Knowing God*, Dr. J.I. Packer writes that we are small Christians because we have created a small God.<sup>6</sup> As John Stott considered this statement, he wrote, “We need above all a fresh and true vision of Jesus Christ—not least in his absolute supremacy.” Then he added, “Where should we be but on our faces before him?”<sup>7</sup>

Small Christians have created a small Christ!

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Jesus is the true hero who can inspire  
His own to follow in His footsteps.

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After the ascension, the disciples would no longer see Jesus with their eyes, but they didn’t need to. They knew He was with them because of His promises and the presence of His Spirit. Physical sight is not necessary when we have His Spirit in our hearts.

Let’s stop our whining and cowering. As the early church did, let us remember that Jesus is not dead, and we don’t need to see Him with our eyes to believe He is with us—even until the end of the age.

We can be cancelled by men, but through faith in Christ we have the assurance that we will never be cancelled by God. Jesus is the true hero who can inspire His own to follow in His footsteps.

## WHY THIS BOOK?

I don’t know who said it first, but one of the most sobering comments I have heard recently is that evil never retreats on its own; it

only retreats when a greater force is applied against it. Obviously, the only force that is greater than evil is God Himself. And He works through the church, the bride of Christ, whose head is our triumphant Lord. With Paul, we must pray that we might know

what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:19–23).

In response to Paul's prayer, this book is written not to reclaim the culture, but to reclaim the church and its rightful authority to stand for righteousness in the midst of our collapsing culture. I want to encourage believers to stop running and hiding, to swim rather than surrender, and to make it successfully to the shore rather than be dragged under by the waves of today's political, cultural, and legal undercurrents. It is not written to stir up anger, to lash out, or to unnecessarily divide us in our already-polarized culture. My desire is for the true church to be united rather than divided, welcoming rather than self-righteous, witnessing rather than complaining.

We cannot keep hiding behind locked doors.

When Russian armies were invading Ukraine in 2022, Vasyl Ostyri, a pastor near Kyiv, was asked if he might flee, but he assured his people he would stay with them, and then added, "If the church is not relevant at a time of crisis, then it is not relevant in a time of peace."<sup>8</sup>

The American church is also facing a time of crisis—a different

kind of crisis, to be sure, but a crisis nonetheless. May we not be found fleeing, but fighting for the truth of the gospel despite opposition and personal suffering. We have been called to this hour; this is our moment in God's timeline. This book is intended to inform us about some of the cultural and spiritual challenges we are facing today, while, at the same time, giving encouragement and direction for the days ahead. It is a call for all of us to be *in* the world but not *of* the world, to confront the culture yet not be contaminated by it. It is a call to remind us that it's not about us, but about Christ. And a reminder that we are His representatives.

Like the early church, we must be attractive to the world and also expect to be hated by it. Unbelievers should be attracted to us as a loving community but repelled by our biblical standards of holy living. People should be able to grudgingly admire our courage even as they accuse us of bigotry and intolerance. Our humility should be disarming even as our commitment to biblical doctrine is despised for its perceived narrow-mindedness. We must always see ourselves as spiritually needy before we speak to the needs of others.

Obviously, our task is more than we are able to do on our own. Our only hope is that Christ, who loved the church, will fulfill His mission as stated in Ephesians 5:25–27: "...and gave himself up for her [the church], that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

I have spoken in various churches on the general topic of the role of the church in the world. A question I am frequently asked is this: "My church is like an evangelical bubble carrying on as usual, oblivious to the fact that the culture is collapsing around us. What can I do as an individual to stand my ground and refuse to bow to the pressures directed toward me and my family?"

Or another somewhat similar comment I often hear is best expressed by a friend who sent an email in which he wrote, “We are really sad, but we have left our church and our friends because our church has surrendered to ‘wokeism.’ We constantly hear sermons on social justice, urging us to bow the knee to cultural pressures that keep us divided. How can we worship Christ together in the midst of racial finger-pointing, blaming, and shaming?”

Because the word *woke* will be used frequently in this book, let me explain what I mean when I use it. Originally the term meant an awareness of injustice, specifically racial injustice. But the word has also expanded over time to describe an ideology that is hypersensitive to perceived injustices. In this book, I am using *woke* to speak of a radical leftist interpretation of human and civil rights that results in extreme political correctness. In chapter 7, a detailed description is given of how a church goes woke.

In response to those who ask how they should personally respond to these cultural challenges, this book is focused not only on the church at large, but also on individuals; it is directed to those who need examples of inspiration and courage. Courage doesn’t need a crowd, just a conviction. As the song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” says, “Though none go with me, I still will follow.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, I want to challenge all of us to live faithfully wherever we are and accept opposition as a badge of honor.

Second, I want to remind us that God is with us in our misgivings and fears. God is still sovereign even when our elected officials seek policies that divide us, demoralize us, or even destroy us. For the most part, our challenges are not new in church history. Kingdoms have come and gone; churches have been birthed and gone out of existence; Christians have been celebrated and martyred. But God’s eyes are always on His people for good, and besides, “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Each chapter in this book will end with a story about a hero we can celebrate, followed by an action step we can take in our lives. What we learn must be translated into action.

If it turns out that you disagree with some of what I've written, just know that I don't pretend to have all the answers. And historically, Christians have differed as to how we should respond to the present culture. Some of the more recent differences we've struggled with are these: Should our church buildings have remained open during the pandemic lockdowns? Should we have worn masks or not? How should we have considered other matters related to the COVID-19 vaccine? How should we respond to the racial divide? What constitutes biblical justice?

We can discuss these issues, but they need not divide us. This book is a modest attempt to shed light on present-day cultural issues that concern all of us, no matter what political party we endorse or what church we attend. I hope to explore these issues both through the lens of the Bible as well as by giving examples from those believers who have gone before us and fought similar battles. In short, I want to address issues that we as Christians can no longer ignore.

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God is calling us to a level of commitment  
we've not experienced before.

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If you want to be known as a Christian who doesn't want to stir up any discontent—if you want to live and let live—you probably need not read these pages. But if you would like to think through what living for Christ really means in a culture that, for the most part, is shaking its fist in God's face, I pray this book will be of help.

If you are a deeply committed Christian living in the so-called public square, hiding is no longer an option.

As I see it, the challenge for us today is this: *Will we interpret the Scriptures through the lens of culture, or will we interpret culture through the lens of Scripture?* Which of these will be our ultimate authority? Pressure is building for us to surrender to culture and tailor our teaching to make it compatible with the spirit of the times. I believe that God is calling us to a level of commitment we've not experienced before.

Jesus predicted days like this would come.

This cultural moment calls for heroes from all races and from all areas of life. We need heroes from blue states and red states. We need fathers and mothers and children who are heroes. We need to rise together and say that Christ means more to us than the approval of culture; He means more to us than our salaries and reputations. "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat" (1 Corinthians 4:12–13). Jesus is worth anything we risk for His name.

This book asks ten questions about whether we will submit to the culture or stand against it—whether we will joyfully let our light shine or try our best to hide, bemoaning our fate. Ours is a choice between anger or optimism, fear or courage, self-pity or joy.

Even a stowaway must either swim or drown when the boat in which he's hiding has been torpedoed. Neutrality is impossible.

Surrender, sink, or swim.

There is no reason to hide.

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## **A Promise to Carry with Us**

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The prophet Isaiah declared a promise God gave to Israel that we can borrow for ourselves: “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off; fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (41:9-10).

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## **A Hero Who Found No Reason to Hide**

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Volunteering to be a hero doesn't make you one!

The first hero I've chosen for this book is the apostle Peter because he bravely volunteered to be a hero, but within hours, lost his ardor. At first, he said, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33). Then that very evening, just a short time later, he ended up swearing and denying that he ever knew Christ. A failed hero.

Weeks later, after Christ ascended into heaven and sent the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter was utterly transformed into a courageous witness, to the point of considering being flogged a privilege if done for His Master (Acts 5:40–41). He wrote words like these: “Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4:13–14).

After a long and faithful ministry, Peter was martyred. According to tradition, he bravely asked to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the same way as his Master had died. The self-assured would-be hero actually became one!

Jesus attributed Peter's initial cowardice to the influence of Satan: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may



not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31–32). Peter’s transition from cowardice to courage was due to two factors: the prayers of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He learned that we can mean well, but we are weak; only Jesus is strong. To volunteer to be a hero is one thing; to actually be one is another. We all want to volunteer to be a hero when we are not in danger; it is another matter when faithfulness requires that we walk toward the fire of public vilification and economic ruin. Or worse.

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### Action Step

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Let us all pause and take time to repent of our fears, asking God to show us how weak we are, and trusting Him to be our strength. We are in a war that cannot be won simply by human determination, but only by divine strength. It is only as repentant heroes that God can empower us to do what human determination cannot do. God is looking for heroes who know their own weaknesses and are reliant on His strength.

We are called to be humble heroes.

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### A Time to Pray

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Pray this prayer that a friend sent me:

Fight for us, O God, that we not drift numb and blind and foolish into vain and empty excitements. Life is too short, too precious, too painful to waste on worldly bubbles that burst. Heaven is too great, hell is too horrible, eternity is too long that we should putter around on the porch of eternity.

We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.