



Watersprings
CHURCH

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AUGUST 2026

The Magic Box Mentality

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The Magic Box Mentality: Mistaking Religion for God

by Pastor Ty Orr

1 Samuel 4 is one of the darkest moments in Israel's history. It is a sobering reminder that religious activity can never replace a genuine relationship with God. The chapter opens with the reminder that **"the word of Samuel came to all Israel"** (1 Samuel 4:1), signaling that God had once again raised up a faithful prophet after generations of spiritual decline. Yet despite Samuel's presence, Israel marched into battle without first seeking the Lord. They possessed God's Word but ignored God's voice. The tragedy that follows is not merely a military defeat; it is the consequence of a nation attempting to accomplish God's work apart from God's guidance.

After an unexpected defeat by the Philistines, Israel's leaders asked the right question: "Why has the LORD defeated us today?" Unfortunately, they never waited for God's answer. Instead of seeking the Lord through Samuel, they assumed they already knew the solution. They sent for the Ark of the Covenant, believing its presence would guarantee victory. In their minds, the Ark had become less a symbol of God's covenant and more a lucky charm. They confused the presence of a sacred object with the presence of the living God. The Lord had never promised that carrying the Ark into battle would automatically secure victory. Rather, the Ark represented His covenant relationship with a people called to love and obey Him.

The deeper problem was never the Ark's absence from the

battlefield. The real problem was the lack of covenant faithfulness within the nation itself. Israel had tolerated corrupt leadership for years. Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, had openly abused their priestly office, dishonored the sacrifices, and exploited God's people. Their corruption had become so familiar that it seemed normalized. Rather than confronting sin, the nation simply carried on as though everything were fine. When crisis came, they looked for a religious solution rather than a spiritual one. They believed they could manipulate God's power while ignoring God's holiness and their need to obey the covenant.

So after their first defeat, when the Ark entered the Israelite camp, the soldiers erupted in a tremendous shout that shook the ground. Their confidence returned immediately. Yet loud enthusiasm is not the same as genuine faith. It is possible to stir emotional excitement without experiencing the presence of God. Worship



music, inspiring messages, crowded sanctuaries, and emotional moments are wonderful gifts, but none of them guarantees that hearts are surrendered to the Lord. Israel's confidence at this point solely rested in the Ark's symbolism rather than in the God the Ark represented.

Ironically, the Philistines showed greater reverence for the God of Israel than Israel herself. When they heard that the Ark had entered the camp, fear swept through their ranks. Although they misunderstood the Lord, viewing Him through the lens of pagan polytheism, they remembered His mighty acts against Egypt. Their theology was flawed, yet their respect for God's power was genuine. Rather than surrender, however, they resolved to fight courageously for their survival. Meanwhile, Israel assumed that God would fight their battles regardless of their spiritual condition. One army feared God without truly knowing Him, while the other claimed to know Him yet no longer feared Him.

The result was catastrophic. Israel suffered an overwhelming defeat. Thirty thousand soldiers fell. The army dissolved as every man fled to his own tent, symbolizing the complete collapse of Israel's military unity. Hophni and Phinehas were killed exactly as God had foretold through Samuel. For the first time in Israel's history, the Ark of the Covenant fell into enemy hands. The object that symbolized God's covenant presence was captured by a pagan nation. Yet even this shocking event demonstrated that God Himself had not been captured. The Lord refused to allow His presence to be used for human manipulation. His glory could not be confined to a wooden box overlaid with gold or controlled by religious ritual.

The news reached Shiloh through a lone survivor who had run nearly a marathon from the battlefield. His torn clothes and dust-covered head bore witness to the horror that had taken place. The city that had celebrated with triumphant shouts only hours before was now overwhelmed by cries of grief. Eli, now ninety-eight, waited anxiously by the roadside because, above all else, "his heart trembled for the ark of God." When he learned that the Ark had been captured, he fell backward from his seat, broke his neck, and died. His forty years of leadership ended exactly as God had declared. Samuel's prophetic word had not "fallen to the ground." God's judgment was complete.

The chapter closes with one of the Bible's most heartbreaking scenes. Phinehas' wife, overcome by labor pains after hearing of her husband's death and the



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 PASTORS LIVE

capture of the Ark, gave birth to a son. Before dying, she named the child Ichabod, meaning "no glory" or "where is the glory?" Her explanation summarizes the entire chapter: "The glory has departed from Israel." More than military defeat, political disaster, or personal loss, the greatest tragedy was the apparent departure of God's glorious presence from among His people. The narrator uses the birth of Ichabod as a theological summary of what has happened. Israel's deepest crisis was not that they had lost a battle, but that they had lost the enjoyment of God's favor because they had abandoned covenant faithfulness.

Thankfully, this chapter does not leave us without hope. The apparent departure of God's glory prepares us to appreciate the New Testament promises even more. David later cried, **"Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me"** (Psalm 51:11), expressing every believer's longing for God's presence. Jesus fulfilled that longing when He promised His disciples, **"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20). Through

Christ, God's presence is no longer tied to a sacred object housed in a tabernacle but to His people through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The message of 1 Samuel 4 remains profoundly relevant today. We must never trade religious activity for genuine devotion. Church attendance, ministry involvement, cherished traditions, beautiful buildings, and meaningful symbols all have their place, but none can replace a heart that walks humbly with God. The Lord is neither manipulated by rituals nor impressed by outward displays of spirituality. He desires faithful hearts that love Him, trust Him, and obey His Word.

The big idea of this chapter is clear: God's presence is governed by His holiness, not by human control. The Ark was never meant to be a magical talisman, and God refuses to allow His glory to be used to serve human agendas. He is a personal God who desires a covenant relationship rather than empty religion. Perhaps the simplest way to summarize the lesson is this: If your god can fit inside a box, then your god can be stolen. And if your god can be stolen, he is not God at all. The living God cannot be contained, manipulated, or controlled. He graciously dwells with those who seek Him in humble faith and wholehearted obedience.

[FIND LOVE CENTERED THEOLOGY PT3 ON PAGE 18.](#)



MOBILIZE OUR MISSIONARIES

Vehicle Fundraiser for Brad & Haley



SCAN 2 GIVE



*all excess funds will go to future missions at Watersprings Church.



COFFEE WITH THE PASTOR



August 23RD • 1 PM
HOMESTEAD



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EMBRACE *grace*

Provide support and community
for pregnant young women.

YOU'RE INVITED to the Embrace Grace Baby Shower! **AUGUST 15TH**

You can participate by adopting a
mom/baby or by monetary donation,
scan a QR code to get started!
Gifts must be dropped off
at the Nest by Aug 8.

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SHOWER
ITEMS**



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WATERSPRINGS
EMBRACE GRACE**



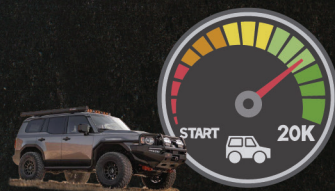
Aug 22
10am-4pm
Fellowship Hall



Men's Cut-a-Thon

\$15 for a men's or boy's hair cut.

All proceeds go toward
Mobilize Our Missionaries.



**MOBILIZE OUR
MISSIONARIES**

Vehicle Fundraiser for Brad & Haley

 **Watersprings
MISSIONS &
OUTREACH**

Seeking God in the Psalms

by Laurie Orr

When we struggle with hardship, fear, or regret, we are often encouraged to turn to the Psalms. We go to the Psalms for examples when we don't know what or how to pray. If we need help expressing our praise to God, we find inspiration there. The poetry, emotion, and raw honesty of the authors of the Psalms can resonate with each of us. We feel understood because our own hearts are mirrored in the cries of another across the ages.

The Book of Psalms is also a rich source within scripture to learn more about the character of God and who He is. Starting in Psalm 1:2, we are reminded that He gives us instruction in the form of His law. This is incredible! We have a God who desires to have a relationship with us as a father who instructs His children (Hebrews 12:4-11). He didn't leave us to our own devices to guess what is best, but He inspired people to write out His way of doing things in the world He created. Following His ways brings blessing and life. This shows He cares about us as His creation and His children.

As we continue reading in Psalm 1:6, we see that **"the Lord knows the way of the righteous."** This shows another facet of the immense and intimate care of God toward us. This is not a far-off knowing about but an intimate knowledge that includes a continual watching

and guarding of our paths. When we connect this with Psalm 23:1-3, we see a beautiful picture of God as our Shepherd who leads us on the right paths. If we read further, Psalm 119:105 tells us that His word lights our paths. This gives us a picture of God as the one who is with us as we progress in our life's journey and guides us and protects us. He is our Good Shepherd revealed in Jesus who lays down his life for the sheep in John 10:11.

This picture of who God is in Psalm 1 can overwhelm me. When I see His beauty, I desire to draw closer to Him and know Him even more. I see His care for me, and I want to trust Him more and follow His instruction and leading.

Asking questions as we read the Psalms helps us to notice these details and in turn helps us to know more about God.

- Who does the Psalm say the Lord is? (The Lord is... Lord, You are...)
- What does it say the Lord does? What does this show about His character or who He is?
- What does the author ask the Lord to do? Is this within His character?

Meditating, or thinking deeply, on what we learn about who He is and His character helps us to understand Him more. Again, we can use questions to help us think carefully.

- How have I seen this facet of who God is in my own life? How has He worked in my circumstances?
- How do I desire for Him to work in this way in my life now and in the future?

After considering who He is and how we see Him working in our lives, we can draw closer to Him through prayer. This can be as simple as talking with Him about it as our beloved and trusted friend. We can tell Him what we learned and how we see He has worked in our lives and then thank Him and praise Him for it. We can ask Him to continue to work in our lives in ways specific to what we have learned. This type of prayer could look something like this:

Lord, I am reminded in Psalm 1 that You have given me Your instruction through Your law, Your word. Thank you, Lord, for telling me what is good and what You desire.

Thank You for teaching me like the loving Father You are. Thank You for how You instruct me daily to walk in Your ways, especially today when Your teaching about being hospitable opened the door to talking with Julie, inviting her to church, and seeing her give her life to You! Lord, I am continually amazed at how simple acts of obedience bring such blessing! Would You continue to teach me Your ways? Continue to give me wisdom and instruction in following You more closely. Please continue to work in my life in extraordinary ways.

The Psalms are such an incredible resource for knowing God more and growing closer to Him. We are honored to offer a new edition of *Cultivate* for the women of Watersprings on how to study the Psalms personally. This one day seminar will help ladies to understand the language and poetry of the Psalms and to draw nearer to the Lord through application, journaling, and prayer. You can register for *Cultivate: Unlocking the Psalms* at watersprings.net and join us on Saturday, September 12th in the Fellowship Hall.

A poster for a Ladies Ministry Interest Meeting. It features a white central box with text, surrounded by a decorative border of roses in yellow, purple, and pink. A small black circular logo with a white flower-like symbol is in the bottom left corner.

Ladies  MINISTRY

Interest Meeting

August 14 at 7pm

Register @ watersprings.net

See what we are all about
and how to join the fun!

A poster for the 'Cultivate' seminar. It features a background image of hands holding soil with small green seedlings growing from it. The text is in white and gold colors.

September 12

Cultivate
Ladies  MINISTRY

UNLOCKING THE PSALMS

 9am-3pm
FELLOWSHIP HALL

Go deeper into the background and
poetry! Grow in our spiritual lives.

WATERSPRINGS.NET



Age 2 - 12th Grade

Awana is a Bible-Based Club that focuses on discipleship, learning God's word and having lots of FUN!

Awana meets every Wednesday from September to May. We are a weekly, fun, Bible-based club where kids earn rewards learning scripture, for ages 2 years old through High School. Awana includes age-appropriate curriculum, weekly Bible lessons and of course games!

Time to register for Awana! Receive a **10% discount** for early registration in the month of August.

Awana Parent Night will be
Tuesday, September 1st from 5:30-7:30pm.

If you would like to help raise up the next generation we want you on our Awana team. Email awana@watersprings.net or fill out the volunteer ministry application on the church website.



**REGISTER AT
WATERSPRINGS.NET
OR SCAN ME!**





Connect



Grow



Serve

by Pastor Dave Coleman

As summer comes to a close, families settle back into their school-year routines, and many of our classes, small groups, and ministry opportunities will begin meeting again in late August and early September. Whether you're new to Watersprings or have been here for years, there's a place for you to connect, grow, and serve.

Connect

FIND YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Every journey begins with a connection. If you're new to Watersprings - or simply want to get to know our church family better - you are strongly encouraged to attend **Coffee With the Pastor**, a relaxed gathering held once each month on a Sunday afternoon in the Watersprings Homestead, with Pastor Ty and his wife, Laurie. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet them personally, hear their testimonies, learn about the vision and culture of Watersprings, ask questions, and discover how God may want to connect you with the life of this church family.



Grow

BECOME A DISCIPLE

God never intended for us to grow alone. That's why Watersprings offers a variety of opportunities to help you mature in your faith and build meaningful relationships. Our **LIFE Class** is a five-week introduction to the foundational beliefs, vision, and culture of Watersprings. You'll discover what we believe, how God is working through this fellowship, and where you might become involved.



Throughout the week, our **House-to-House (H-2-H) Groups** meet in homes around the valley, providing an encouraging environment to discuss the weekend message, ask questions, pray together, and develop authentic Christ-centered friendships. If you would like to host or lead one of our H-2-H Groups, please get information at the Connect Center in the Watersprings lobby. For those seeking freedom from addiction or other life-controlling struggles, **Pure Word** meets Tuesday and Thursday evenings, offering biblical hope, accountability, and encouragement through the transforming power of God's Word. In addition, we offer a variety of **On-Campus Classes and Groups** designed for different ages, stages of life, and areas of spiritual growth.



Serve

USE YOUR GIFTS FOR GOD'S GLORY

As we grow in Christ, He also calls us to serve one another. Watersprings offers numerous **Ministry Groups**, providing opportunities to use your God-given gifts in areas such as personal evangelism, outreach to our military community, hospitality, children's ministry, worship, and many other ministries throughout the church. If you'd like to become involved, we recommend beginning with Coffee With the Pastor. From there, simply complete a **Ministry Volunteer Application** at watersprings.net, and we'll help you discover where the Lord can use your gifts to bless others. Whether you're looking for community, spiritual growth, or a place to serve, we encourage you to take your next step this fall. For more information about any of our classes, groups, or ministries, stop by the Connect Center in the church lobby. We'd love to help you find your place in the Watersprings family.





A MAJOR WAKE-UP CALL FROM A MINOR PROPHET

by Pastor Dave Coleman

When most Christians think about Bible prophecy, they usually turn to Daniel, Ezekiel, Matthew 24, or Revelation. Yet tucked away among the twelve Minor Prophets is one of Scripture's clearest calls to personal revival and spiritual readiness: the prophet Joel.

The Minor Prophets may be called "minor," but their message is anything but minor. The title simply refers to the length of their books rather than their importance. In fact, the twelve prophets appear as a single collection in the Hebrew Bible known as *The Book of the Twelve* (Hindson & Yates, 2012, p. 365). Joel, whose name means "The LORD is God" (MacArthur, 2007; Hindson & Yates, 2012, p. 378), ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah during a time of spiritual complacency, misplaced priorities, and growing disobedience. His message could easily have been written for our own generation.

Joel opens with the devastation of a massive locust plague that stripped the land bare. Whether describing an actual invasion of locusts, an invading army, or both, the disaster becomes a vivid illustration of God's call to awaken a spiritually sleeping people. Drought, famine, fire, and darkness remind us that God often uses difficult circumstances—not to destroy His people, but to draw them back to Himself.

Yet Joel's prophecy reaches far beyond his own day.

Like many Old Testament prophets, Joel speaks with both an immediate and a future perspective. His



warnings addressed Judah's present crisis while also pointing ahead to the coming Day of the LORD—that future time when God will judge the nations, restore Israel, and establish His righteous kingdom. Peter would later quote Joel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:15–21), declaring that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning of Joel's prophecy, while its complete fulfillment still awaits Christ's glorious return and the restoration of Israel (Hindson & Yates, 2012, p. 382; cf. Revelation 6:12–17).

Joel's prophecy is also beautifully crafted. Old Testament scholar Robert Chisholm notes that Joel builds his message toward a dramatic climax while repeatedly weaving together urgent calls to repentance with the hope of God's mercy (Chisholm, 1990). Even in judgment, God's heart is restoration.

That makes Joel especially appropriate for us to consider during the Hebrew month of Elul, which begins this year on August 14, on our Gregorian calendar. On the Hebrew calendar, Elul is a month devoted to repentance, self-examination, and prayer as God's people prepare for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In many Jewish communities, the shofar is sounded each morning throughout the month, serving as a daily wake-up call to seek the Lord while there is still time.

Although Christians are not bound by Israel's religious

calendar, Elul beautifully echoes the very heartbeat of Joel's message. **"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart"** (Joel 2:12). Joel's appeal resonates throughout the New Testament as well. Paul exhorts believers, **"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith"** (2 Corinthians 13:5). John the Baptist prepared people for the coming King through repentance (Matthew 3:1-3). James reminds us of God's gracious invitation: **"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you"** (James 4:8).

God's warnings are never merely intended to frighten us—they are invitations to return to Him. Throughout Joel, divine judgment is consistently balanced by divine mercy. The Lord stands ready to forgive, restore, and pour out His blessings upon those who humble themselves in genuine repentance. That truth has never changed.

As we look at our world today—with increasing instability, moral confusion, and growing hostility toward biblical truth—it is tempting to focus exclusively on prophecy charts and current events. Joel reminds us that God's first concern is not merely that we understand the signs of the times, but that we respond to Him with sincere hearts. Before God's people can become a light to a dark world, we must first allow His Spirit to search our own hearts.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Perhaps the greatest lesson Joel teaches is that every warning from God is also an invitation to experience His mercy. As the trumpet of Elul calls Israel to prepare for the coming Holy Days, Joel's message calls every believer to prepare for the coming King. Whether Christ returns in our lifetime or calls us home individually, the question remains the same: Are our hearts ready?

May this month be a season of renewed repentance, deeper devotion, and fresh expectation as

we draw near to the Lord. **"Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness"** (Joel 2:13). There could be no more fitting invitation for August—or for any season of our lives.

References

Chisholm, R. (1990). *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
Hindson, E., & Yates, G. (2012). *The Essence of the Old Testament: A Survey*. B&H Academic, Nashville, TN.
MacArthur, J. (2007). *Hosea Introduction*. Grace to You. Retrieved from https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/macarthur_john/bible-introductions

SEPT 25

dinner & movie night

STARTS 6PM

MEAT

★ WITH ★

MISSIONARIES

fundraiser

Register!

BBQ Dinner followed by a showing of End of the Spear.

Register for details and pricing.

Registration ends September 20th.

All proceeds go toward Mobilize Our Missionaries!

MISSIONS & OUTREACH



Walking with Purpose

by Katheryn King, Head of School

While many assume things quiet down over the summer, our campus is actually already buzzing with activity as we prepare for the upcoming school year! Alongside our active summer child care program and athletic activities, we are busy welcoming wonderful new families and sprucing up our hallways and classrooms with fresh paint and clean carpets. Behind the scenes, newly arrived curriculum and supplies are being delivered to classrooms while our administrative team finalizes handbooks and prepares a comprehensive Teacher In-service to ensure we are fully ready for day one.

One of my absolute favorite tasks each summer is to prayerfully seek the Lord's heart for our theme for the school year. This theme becomes the heartbeat of our school year, woven into every aspect

of our program - from chapels and discipleship groups to daily conversations in our classrooms, hallways, lunchroom, gym, and playground. Over the last few years, our themes have been "Rooted," "Be Ready. Be Bold. Stand Firm," and "Chosen. Loved. Called." This year,

guided by Micah 6:8, I am thrilled to share our theme for this school year: "Walking with Purpose."

"...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8 (NIV)



As a ministry of Watersprings Church, we humbly ask that you partner in prayer with us for this upcoming school year:

- **For Our Students:**
Pray for open, receptive hearts as they step into a new school year and that they would grow in their walk with Jesus.
- **For Purpose:**
Pray that our students and staff walk intentionally and with purpose in the unique calling God has established for each of our lives.
- **For Families:**
Pray for families deciding if Watersprings School is right for their child, and that finances would not hinder anyone from receiving a Christ-centered education.
- **For Staff:**
Pray for wisdom for our administrative team and for our teachers as they participate in professional development and pray over the students – some they have yet to meet.

We cannot wait to see how the Lord moves in the lives of our students, staff, and entire school community! Thank you so much for your partnership and especially for your prayers.



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Watersprings Church

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to be a Watersprings Warrior!

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Elementary
Aides

Kitchen Staff

Part-time
Elementary PE
Teacher

Part-time
Middle School
Art Teacher

Wonder



We wander from God to do things our way. And still, God is faithful. He invites us to repent—to think again—about our sinful choices, to think again about who He is. Sound familiar? It's a pattern God's people know well. This series explores five Old Testament stories of people who wander from God. Cain kills his brother and people build a tower to reach God on their terms. Later the Israelites worship a golden calf, complain in the desert, and experience God's mercy through the judges. God invites His people to think again. And every time, He is faithful.

WORD OF WONDER

**God is faithful. That's who He is.*

—2 Timothy 2:13

***Early Childhood**

FAMILY WONDER QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time when you did something you shouldn't have done and had to think again and make it right.
2. How have you experienced God's mercy?
3. Why do you think the Israelites worshiped an idol while Moses was on the mountain? How did God respond to their idol worship?





At-Home Bible
Story Video



Spotify playlist

FAMILY SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- **Tower of Praise:** The people in Genesis 11 built a tower to make themselves important, and the people in Exodus 32 built an idol to worship in place of God. But throughout the Bible, many people built something else: They built altars for sacrifice and worship. Work together to build a tower of praise. Put rocks or blocks (or even cups!) in a stack and each time you stack an item, say a praise to God or thank Him.
- **Prayer of Confession:** The people in every story from this series disobeyed God and sinned. We all sin too, but the good news is that God forgives us when we ask. Confession is admitting our sins. Take some time as a family and reflect on the ways you have disobeyed God. Then confess your sins to God, telling Him you're sorry and asking Him for forgiveness. You can confess to one another as well. Pray together and thank God for His mercy, forgiveness, and faithfulness.

**EVEN IF WE ARE NOT FAITHFUL,
HE REMAINS FAITHFUL. HE
MUST BE TRUE TO HIMSELF.
-2 TIMOTHY 2:13**



SERIES OVERVIEW

Bible Story	Bible Passage	Wonder Truth
Cain and Abel	Genesis 4	God Redeems *God Makes Us New
The Tower of Babel	Genesis 11	God's Plan Is Enough *God Is the Best
The Golden Calf	Exodus 32	God Is Worthy of Worship *We Can Worship God
The Bronze Snake	Numbers 21	Only God Saves
The Judges	Judges 2-3	God Is Merciful



THE STRONG BLUE LINE



WINNING A GUNFIGHT... *SECOND EDITION!*

It's here! *Winning a Gunfight, Second Edition*; here's the preface:

Ten years, one decade, that's a long time. Much can change in ten years; and much has changed since I first wrote *Winning a Gunfight*.

When we think of change, we often think about technology. Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) think about the tools of their trade. Communications, vehicles, new less lethal take down and restraint devices, and of course firearms.

Perhaps the most significant change in the last ten years is proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI). Artificial intelligence is at the forefront of almost everything, including policing. It will write reports and save agencies millions in overtime pay. Facial recognition technology and automated license plate readers, generated by AI, are used to identify suspects, find missing persons, alert officers to suspect vehicles, detect gunshots, and issue traffic citations. Again, saving agencies in personnel costs and even generating revenue.

There's no doubt, crime fighting technology has come a long way. Yet, the good guys (and gals) always seem to be behind the curve. Because no matter how much technology changes, humanity

Winning a Gunfight

Second Edition



has remained the same. As the wise King Solomon wrote some 3,000 years ago:

"What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9, ESV)

If the police have the technology, you can be assured the criminals have the technology (or are developing it) to circumvent, break through, or disable whatever an agency deploys. Law enforcement officers are making the same calls they have since the founding of our country. From domestic violence calls to fatality accidents to serving arrest warrants.

On January 3, 1791, New York Constable Darius Quimby, with arrest warrant in hand, pursued Whit Sweeting on foot. The warrant was for trespass, a minor property crime, yet Sweeting vowed not to be taken alive. He ran into the snow-covered woods, jumped on a large rock, and threatened to kill the first man who touched him. Undaunted by the threats, Constable Quimby came up behind Sweeting and pulled him from the rock to take him into custody. The two men engaged in a brutal fight. Sweeting overpowered the officer and struck him down with a fatal blow. The New York constable was the first American law enforcement

¹ Officer Down Memorial Page, ODMP.org

² Federal Bureau of Investigation, Statistics on Law Enforcement Officer Deaths in the Line of Duty from January through August 2024. (2024). Retrieved on May 27, 2026, from: <https://le.fbi.gov/cjis-division/cjis-link/statistics-on-law-enforcement-officer-deaths-in-the-line-of-duty-from-january-through-august-2024>.

officer killed in the line of duty. Since that fateful night, more than 27,000 American LEOs have died in the line of duty.¹ By far, most officers who die by felonious assault, are killed with a firearm.²

Winning a Gunfight was written to help LEOs win gunfights ethically, mentally, and tactically. The purpose of this second edition remains the same. And because human nature hasn't changed, neither has much of the content. The grammatical edits make for easier reading, and the updates reinforce that the principles laid out in the first edition are enduring. The big change is the addition of a new chapter. The chapter is an introduction and brief overview of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Moral Injury. These two psychological injuries have come to the forefront in American policing over the past decade and I would be remiss not to mention them in a book on winning—body, soul, and spirit.

Winning a Gunfight, Second Edition is available online and at TheStrongBlueLine.org for bulk orders.

BRINGING HOPE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Strong Blue Line Foundation—at no cost to officers or their agencies—brings hope to LEOs with training seminars that help them navigate a myriad of issues they deal with. In the “Moral Injury in Policing” seminar and book, officers learn how to deal with guilt and shame brought on by moral injury. Please partner with us to make strong officers with strong relationships by giving them real hope for complete victory! To help, go to TheStrongBlueLine.org and click on the “Donate” button.

ON THE ROAD

Last month, Sherry and I were in Spokane, WA teaching chaplains at the International Conference of Police Chaplains' Annual Training Seminar (ATS). This was the third ATS I've been invited to teach at and always enjoy networking with law enforcement chaplains from around the world. Next month, I'll be in San Antonio, I've been invited back to my old police department to speak at the Chief's Inner Circle Prayer Group. The remainder of this year, we'll be focused on the Adopt a Cop initiative, writing and updating books and curriculum.

Pray for your police.

THE REV
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Pastors LIVE

TUNE-IN

Weekdays 9am & 5pm

Podcast drops at 10am

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Love-Centered Theology

by Pastor Ty Orr

DEFINING OUR TERMS: COVENANT LOVE (*HESED*)

So before exploring God as the source of love, we should also pause to consider *hesed* as a picture of Biblical or covenant “love.” I note that this is not devoid of emotion but rather represents “love” understood as covenant loyalty or committed faithfulness. This is the kind of faith that works, as James writes about (James 2:14-26). John says, **“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth”** (1 John 3:18). *Hesed* appears in the Old Testament two hundred and forty times, often in the poet’s heart for and about Yahweh Psalms.¹ William Barber and Frank Thomas note that it is one of the most important terms in Hebrew theology, uniting the strength, steadfastness, and love of God in supporting the human enterprise through His power and faithfulness.²

Hesed means faithful covenant love that is at the center of the LORD’s holy nature. God, proclaims His name to Moses and said, **“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness [*hesed*] and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression**

and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7). Paul also alludes to this when he asks, **“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”** (Romans 2:4, emphasis added).

Again, Barber and Thomas say *hesed* involves “mutual rights and obligations between the parties to a relationship, such as Yahweh and Israel.” We might add Jesus to the Church and husband and wife as Paul does (Ephesians 5:21-33). “This covenant love is not based on obligation, but in generosity.”³ It is a choice. As we see in Exodus 34, God was proclaiming His very name as abounding in loyal love and covenant faithfulness to a bunch of Golden-Calf worshipers. Based on several other texts (John 3:16; 13:34; Eph. 5:2, 25; 1 John 4:9-10), Steven Cole notes that *“Biblical love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.”*⁴ This is what we see God doing at Passover, in Exodus at Sinai, and at the Cross of Calvary.

For it seems from the narrative of Exodus that God was not *“in love,”* as we might understand love, with His people at the time because of their sin, but He chose to love them through *His* covenant faithfulness. Consider the picture of Hosea and Gomer.⁵ God did ask Moses to “let Me alone” (“step aside”) so that His anger could destroy the rebellious people (Exodus 32:7-14), who had broken the covenant they had agreed to at Sinai just a few weeks before. The place of their vow to God is where they are now breaking that vow (Exodus 19:5-8).

But Moses intervenes, relying on and trusting God’s covenant faithfulness [*hesed*] while interceding for the people (Genesis 15:12ff), pleading with God for mercy based on His faithfulness, not the people’s faithfulness (Exodus 32:11-14), and then asking for God’s presence based on divine favor – a picture of grace, undeserved favor (Exodus 33:12-16). I had not put this together before, but we see that God makes the first move towards restoring a relationship with His people, for He relents as Moses intercedes for them, while they were still worshiping the Golden Calf. Paul said, **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8).

Paul tells Timothy, **“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself”** (2 Timothy 2:13). Jeremiah writes, **“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”** (Numbers 23:19). God keeps His covenant faithfulness [hesed] because He said He would. **“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness”** (Lamentations 3:22-23, cf. Deuteronomy 7:9). How great is the love and faithfulness of the Lord!

Yes, Israel paid a high price for their faithlessness to the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 32:25-35), just as we do when we live according to the flesh (Galatians 6:8-9; Romans 1:32, 2:3). But God kept His covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because of His loyal love and faithfulness. Not their upright behavior. Paul writes about Jesus our

Savior, **“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us”** (2 Corinthians 1:20). God’s love has been expressed and revealed in Jesus (John 1:1-3; 14-16).

This is why this conversation is so important today, in how we communicate “how love works” in our preaching and teaching as we seek to bring about Gospel Transformation into our context. If God has loyal love and is faithful to us even when we blow it, we must choose to love Him as He has loved us, then love our fellow Christians as He has commanded, the stranger, and even our enemies, all in the context of loyalty, allegiance, and covenantal faithfulness towards God, which is worked out towards others. If we are to *be like* God, we need to *choose* to love *God’s way*, and this necessitates the sacrifice of self. I could see this topic leading to writing a book titled *“The Hesed Marriage”* and another titled *“The Hesed Community.”*

¹⁻³ William Barber II and Frank A. Thomas, *How to Preach a Dangerous Sermon*, A SERMON OF THE MORAL IMAGINATION: “DID HEAVEN MAKE A MISTAKE?” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2018).

⁴ Steven J. Cole, “Lesson 19: Why We Must Love (1 John 4:7-11),” in *1 John*, Steven J. Cole Commentary Series (Dallas: Galaxie Software, 2017), 1 Jn 4:7-8.

⁵ God tells the prophet Hosea to marry Gomer, a woman who is unfaithful, as a symbol of how Israel has been unfaithful to God by worshiping other gods. Even though Gomer betrays Hosea, he continues to love and redeem her. This reflects how God still loves Israel and calls them to repent and return to Him. God judges sin, but His love and mercy call people back to repentance and restoration.

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- AUG 23 **Life Class Begins***
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