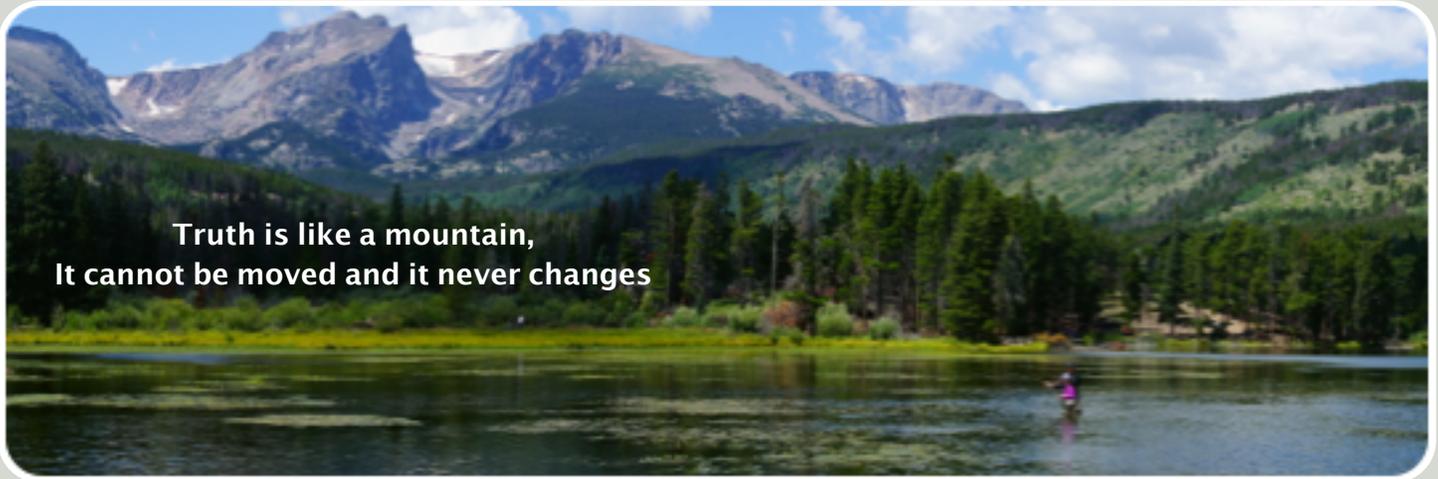


SEPTEMBER 2019

# "TRUTH"

**A SURE WORD  
FOR TODAY**



Truth is like a mountain,  
It cannot be moved and it never changes

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## UPDATE

Last month our subscribers were privileged to view the most beautiful columbine photos we have ever published. The response we received was so encouraging. Here is one: "Pastor John, the columbine pictures are gorgeous! We have seen columbine but never this vivid color - lovely! I can see the pollen on the petals - I don't know how you do it!"

Those who are not yet subscribed only got to see one photo, but our subscribers got to see a total of nine of these beautiful photos. And yes, on one of those photos you could actually see the pollen on the petals. Why not subscribe today!

**LOOKING AHEAD:** We want you to be looking ahead to our October issue of the Truth Newsletter. This issue will be dedicated to Bible prophecy. All three articles will cover things the Bible tells us are on the horizon.

You will not want to miss it.

## "PLEASE LET US WORSHIP!"

**WARNING: You are entering the "TRUTH ZONE". You may not like what you read. At times it may make you feel uncomfortable. That is not my goal. My goal is to speak truth that will provide spiritual guidance for you and your family in a time of great spiritual darkness.**

**You can be sure that what you read here will be TRUTH!**

**I cannot keep silent any longer!** I find myself wanting to scream, "Would you please just let me worship!" So, what on earth am I talking about? I am talking about the many times I leave church totally frustrated because I feel as if I have not even been given a chance to worship and praise the Lord. I wish this was a rare experience but it isn't, it happens far too often. But perhaps I need to slow up a bit and take you inside my head so you can understand where I am coming from.

I must start by telling you that there was a time when I was the worship leader at Rez. Many who attended during that time in the warehouse will confirm that the worship and praise was the best we ever experienced in the history of the church. The presence of the Holy Spirit was so heavy it was almost tangible. Miracles were common and people often came to the Lord right during our worship and praise time. I do not say this to boast, but rather to help you understand that I know what causes worship and praise to be special, and I know what ushers people into the presence of the Lord.

I fear that most worship leaders today do not have this understanding and this is confirmed by the fact that they continue to sing songs that fail to produce the results they desire. **The fact is, the songs you choose are what will make the difference.**

A couple of years ago I had breakfast with a young worship leader. In the course of our conversation, I asked him if he had observed that some songs produce worship while others don't. He knew exactly what I was talking about because he, too, had witnessed this. I then asked him, "Then why do you keep singing songs that you know have never led people into the presence of the Lord or caused them to worship?" He got a blank look on his face and said, "I guess I don't know." **Well, if you consider yourself to be a worship leader, you need to know. You need to get it figured out!**

Back when I was leading worship and praise, I had one rule I never violated. It was the **"three strikes you're out"** rule. I would give a new song three chances to produce intense worship and praise and if it failed, I would never use it again. No exceptions!

I was convinced that many contemporary Christian songs were designed to be sung by a Christian artist in a concert setting where the applause of the audience was more directed toward the artist than the Lord. I have no problem with songs like this, providing we understand that this is not true worship and praise. What we had at Rez was, and therefore these types of songs just didn't fit. I am also convinced that nothing has changed.

When we retired, we began visiting many different churches and witnessed something that was amazingly consistent. There are songs that never seem to lead people into the presence of the Lord and it doesn't matter what church they are sung in. At the same time, there are others that never seem to fail. **This has caused me to start asking, "What is the reason for this?"**

This brings us to the heart of this article. What is it about some songs that cause us to be filled with intense love and praise for our Lord, while others leave us empty, cold, and disengaged? The answer is really very simple. **Many songs we sing today contain absolutely no worship or praise.** Just because we sing them during the time we call our "worship and praise time" does not mean they contain any worship or praise. Because of this, people like me often feel like we are not even being given a chance to worship.

Are you confused? If so, I need to put some meat on this bone by giving you some examples. The first example I can think of are songs that are on the bottom rung of the worship and praise ladder. These songs invite God to come and fill the house with His presence. I want to be kind, but this is a total waste of time.

We do not need to ask God to join us! Let me assure you, God is more faithful in church attendance than any of us are. He has promised that where two or three are gathered in His name, He will be there with them. **So why do we feel the need to beg Him to come to church?**

Then there are songs that cry out to the Lord for help. These songs talk about us and how needy we are. We cry out for God to come and rescue us. I challenge you to start paying attention to just how many songs are like this. You might be shocked by what you find. **I promise you, “it’s all about me” songs contain no true worship or praise nor will they ever produce either of them.**

It is good for us to recognize our need and to cry out for God’s help. However, this is neither worship nor praise...it is prayer. **Again, I emphasize, prayer is good but songs like this are neither worship nor praise, they are prayer.**

Then we climb up one more rung on the ladder to another type of song that is better, but still isn’t true worship or praise. These are songs where we make a declaration of our faith. We sing about God’s power, faithfulness, and love. Certainly, this is far better than songs that focus on us and the mess we may be in. But when we sing them, we still have not been given a chance to worship or praise. **We are singing about God, but we are not worshipping or praising Him.**

All the songs I have talked about have one thing in common; they give people absolutely no chance to worship. They may be good and I am not saying that they should not be sung. What I am saying is that worship leaders should be sure to include some songs in every worship service that are actually worship or praise and that God’s people need to learn to recognize the difference. The next time you are in a so-called “worship service” ask yourself, “What words in this song are actually words of praise or worship?”

**WARNING:** You may find yourself upset and frustrated because you aren’t even being given an opportunity to worship!

Thank God, there are still some songs being written that are true songs of worship and praise. Every time they are sung, you see God’s people lift their hands and begin to worship. It is both consistent and very predictable, and it happens no matter what church is singing them. I love songs like this not only because of the words, but mostly because they allow me to express great praise to my King. These are the songs that are on the top of the worship and praise ladder because they are actual praise and worship.

**Before I conclude I must mention one other transgression that some worship leaders commit.** Thank God, this does not happen often but when it does, it makes me want to call the police to report a theft. I refer to worship leaders who feel the need to talk on and on between each song. This absolutely makes me crazy! These people are stealing time that has been set aside for worship and are using it to preach or whatever else it is they think they are supposed to be doing. **They are thieves who are stealing from God the worship time He deserves.**

How can they be so blind to their transgression? This is so simple that no one should ever need it explained. Here is how it works: **We are there to worship and when they are talking, no one is worshipping.** Let that sink in! Would you please shut up and let us worship! I know that is deep, but they need to try and wrap their head around it.

Do I have a bad attitude and am I being too critical? Do you think I need help? Well, you can help me by singing songs that actually contain worship and praise. Please let me worship!

I want to conclude by challenging you to not settle for anything less than the real deal. Feel free to take this article to the worship leader at your church, ask them to read it, and then talk with them about what I have said. Could God be getting ready to pour out a fresh anointing of true worship and praise? If so, churches that flow in it will explode in growth. Why? Because...

**We have all been created to praise the Lord!**



## A MINUTE WITH MISS LINDA



### ***“ARE YOU FOCUSED?”***

I am sure it will come as no surprise to anyone when I say that taking photos of wildlife has become one of our favorite things to do. We feel so blest to be

able to capture God’s beautiful creation and then share it with each of you. It is like a kiss from God!

We love all of His creation, but we especially enjoy the challenge of photographing birds of prey. While pursuing them, we began to notice a specific trait that we found totally fascinating. As they hunt for their next meal, they have an amazing ability to be totally focused. In fact, because of this many times you can get very close to them.

The photo on the next page is a perfect example of what I am talking about. I took this photo from only about 50 feet. The hawk knew I was there but he didn’t seem to care. He was totally focused on getting his next meal. **His survival depended upon his ability to stay focused.**

I think there is something we can all learn from this. It appears to me that this is a time when there are so many things vying for our attention. A list would include phone calls, news stories, pop-ups on our phones, iPads, and computers. Add to this the endless number of emails we receive each day. (I could go on and on.) I am very sure you all can

relate because this is just how life is. Because of this we all need to realize that we must take control of the distractions if we want to experience God’s best for our lives. In fact, like the hawk, our spiritual survival may depend upon our ability to stay focused. Here is a scripture that speaks about this.

#### **Colossians 3:2 (AMP)**

“Set your mind and **keep focused** habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value].”

This verse is simple and straightforward, so it ought to be easy enough to follow. But it’s not. Every situation must be evaluated individually and a decision must be made as to what it is God wants us to focus on. I will give you an example.

Many times, as a pastor’s wife, I would get phone calls from gals seeking counseling. I wanted to help, but in some instances, it seemed I would hear the same stories and problems repeated over and over, week after week. I came to the point where I knew I needed to focus on my children and that I was to be very careful to guard that focus. My family had to be my primary focus and that is why I had to cut many calls short. Many pastors have failed to keep their focus in this area and have paid a terrible price.

Any article on distractions would not be complete without mentioning that some of our biggest distractions are actually caused by our attractions. What am I talking about?

**“ARE YOU FOCUSED?”**  
**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

It is so easy to become consumed with our clothes, how we are made up, how physically fit we are, etc. If we are not careful, these things can become the focus of our life. I cannot tell you how many times I have seen this type of thing happen and how grieved I get when I see it. **This is especially dangerous because these things are not bad, but when they become what we are focused on, they become very destructive to our spiritual life.**

I guess we need to go back to what we read in Colossians 3:2: “Keep focused on heavenly things.” It might surprise you to know that “heavenly things”

can be very down-to-earth. Certainly, God’s plan for your life is a heavenly thing. The role you are to play in the life of your children should be considered a heavenly thing. Are you getting the picture?

God knows how life works and has given us great wisdom through His Word. We would be wise to heed it. Life here on earth is short. When we are young, we don’t always realize that what we are focused on will affect the rest of our lives. I pray this article will cause all of us to rethink this very important admonition.

**Keep your focus!**



AND THAT MY FRIENDS IS THE TRUTH

# P R O P H E C Y   U P D A T E

## “EZEKIEL 38 UPDATE”

It has been nearly a year since I gave you an update on current events as they relate to Ezekiel 38. This is not because I had nothing new to report, but rather because I was beginning to feel as if I was focusing too much on this situation. However, things continue to be extremely volatile and could explode at any time, so I want to be sure you are updated.

Back in December 2018, things came very close to a major conflict breaking out between Israel and Russia after Israel attacked Iranian bases in Syria. In response, Russia fired several missiles into Israel that Israel said posed a threat to commercial airlines. Russia then issued more threats which Israel ignored as they continued to attack Iranian military sites.

This standoff became the status quo for the region until Iran shot down an American drone in June, and President Trump considered an attack in retaliation. At that time Russia took Iran's side and even went so far as to say that Iran had a right to establish a military presence in Syria.

Russia's chief national security adviser, Nikolai Patrushev, clarified his country's support for Tehran's accusations against the US and also said he backs their current military presence in Syria, which Israel considers to be a threat to its national security.

The Times of Israel reports that during a press conference held in the Orient Hotel in Jerusalem, Patrushev rejected the opinion held by both the US and Israel that Iran is “the main threat to regional security.” He said that Israel's airstrikes in Syria that target Iranian forces and its proxies were “undesirable.”

In response to all this, a senior Iranian lawmaker threatened that Israel would not survive if the United States attacked his country. Speaking on Al-Alam TV, Mojtaba Zonnour, chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of

the Iranian Parliament, said, “**If America attacks us, Israel will survive for less than half an hour.**” This is the first time that a threat has been made that would indicate that Iran has nuclear weapons. Such a threat could only become a reality if Iran actually possesses nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them.

**All this chest-beating only serves to remind us that this situation is very dangerous and is not going to go away.** I liken it to a bomb with a lit fuse; sooner or later it is going to explode. Many so-called experts feel as if it may all explode in a major Middle East war before the end of the year.

While all this may be quite upsetting, we need to remember that God is still in complete control. You who love Israel and the Jewish people need to be reminded that the same fate awaits those who would attempt to destroy Israel today as happened to those foolish enough to think they could carry out such a feat in the past.

**God's word is very plain and it will never fail!**

### **Ezekiel 38:18; 21-23 NIV**

“This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord.

21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22 I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. 23 And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations...

**...Then they will know that I am the Lord.”**

AND THAT MY FRIENDS IS THE TRUTH