

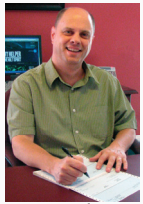
Let's Make A Difference
Together in

2017

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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How Can I Be Sure? by Ray Haynes

"It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God doesn't want our success; He wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements; He demands our obedience." Charles Colson

As America begins 2017, with the inauguration of a president who has promised to honor God, Christians who have longed for a time when justice and righteousness can prevail again are excited, or at least cautiously optimistic. Others are far from enthusiastic; many are still reeling from the shock of defeat. While the press, pundits, and pollsters all guessed poorly, God's prophets nailed it. One man began prophesying Trump's victory over ten years ago, and the public outrage that would follow. One man called him a "wrecking ball" and another compared him to the biblical King Cyrus, an ungodly king used mightily by God. Some Christians struggle with the idea of God calling and using a man with a questionable character and past. Ultimately, we all just want to be sure of where we will land before we step, but the Kingdom of God rarely gives us that option. It's built on prayer and faith, not on sight.

Occasionally we speak before we think. Such was the case with Zechariah, who along with his wife Elizabeth, had spent a lifetime praying to have children, only to grow old childless. They could only assume God had not heard their prayers. As the story begins in **Luke 1:7**, we find them with two significant obstacles, **"But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old."** (Some might also consider that an accurate description of the present day church.)

One day Zechariah was called to serve as priest, which placed him in the temple attending to the burning of incense. Suddenly the angel Gabriel appeared and told him, **"Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John..."**, and then the angel prophesied amazing things about this son's destiny. Zechariah was shocked and probably confused which led to an ill-timed question and the angel's stinging response, **"Zechariah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.' The angel said to him, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.'" Luke 1:18-20**

Ramifications can be tough. Zachariah thought God hadn't heard his prayer to have a son, and now he was old. But the angel said God had heard, despite what Zechariah could see. His punishment was to suffer the very thing he accused God of doing. For the full term of the pregnancy, Zechariah's voice would not be heard by anyone. It's a powerful lesson: God always moves in seasons according to His invisible plans. Revival is like that. We have prayed and seen very little, but the clouds are now filling the sky and rain is coming. Salvation is coming.

Back in the '90s Kelly and I had some very dear friends who taught us the card game Rook. It's a team game, similar to Bridge, and the highest card in the game is called the "trump", which means "triumph". Two couples compete in Rook, but they are not allowed to communicate with their partner. They simply have to anticipate what the partner is thinking and planning.

The better you know the partner, the better team you make, and the better you can fool your opponents. While I do firmly believe that God has called Donald Trump to be our president in this season, I also believe there is much more to the story. As a trump-et gets our attention because it's loud and brash and the trump-card brings triumph, often with surprise, so God's heart is near to America and He is holding the cards and ready to use willing men to bring triumph. In October, as the new Biblical Year of 5777 arrived with the Fall Feasts, and the presidential election followed right on its heels, I shared some of what I believe is coming in the New Year. (You can read it at blog.victory915.com). In Hebrew the pictograph for the number 7 is a sword, which makes 77 a double edged broad sword, and 777 a picture of God holding the sword. So, 5777 is a year when God's kingdom will be more visible on the earth. **Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."**

Back in the election of 2008, as Barack Obama campaigned on a promise of "hope and change", it wasn't a giant leap to guess that he might become the nominee, since the number 8 in Hebrew means "change". It's equally compelling to me that January 21st will be our new president's first full day in office, and Donald Trump's age will be exactly 70 years, 7 months, and 7 days. Yes, it's that same 777 showing up again. It's ironic to say the least. He campaigned on the promise to make "America great again". Some thought him to be boastful and brash, but his very name means "triumph".

Regardless of how you feel about the words of contemporary prophets, or the meaning of Hebrew words or numbers, we need not repeat Zechariah's presumption. He was looking for evidence he could weigh, and everything that cried out to him on a daily basis said, "God has not heard your prayers because He hasn't acted and it's too late anyways". When he suddenly encountered an angel who proclaimed a promise contrary to his world-view, he was shipwrecked with nowhere to find hope or faith. God founded America and He made it to be great so it could bring the Light of Jesus to the world. The good news is, He is still near to accomplish His vision and He has heard our prayers. His promise to Jacob in **Genesis 28** is still trustworthy, **"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."** Now comes the faith.

In **John 7**, Jesus warned those who thought they were right to, **"Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."** And **Isaiah 11** described Jesus as one who, **"Will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth."** We can try to judge the fruit that a man will produce, but it's also important to consider the soil he has been planted in, as well as the soil he will be moved to, because it is God who gives the increase. It's a new day and there is new man and new soil in the White House. Pray all the more now for America. And believe past the waiting to the answer.

When John was born and Zechariah's tongue was finally loosed, it wasn't doubt that flowed out, but the joy that flows from answered prayer, **"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as He said through his holy prophets of long ago). Luke 1:68-70**

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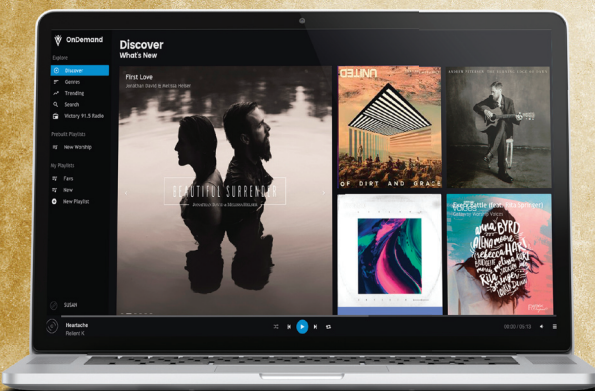
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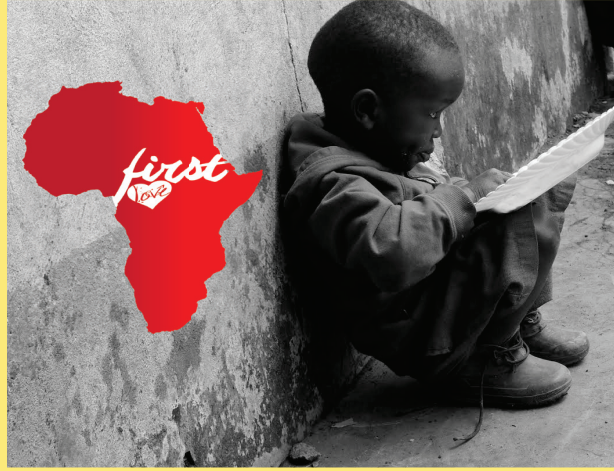
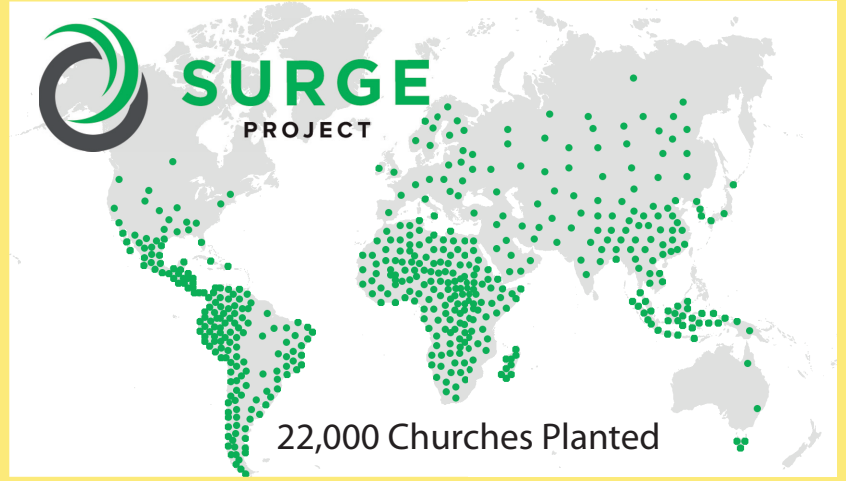
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Let's Make A Difference Together in 2017!

