

# LIVING WITH HOPE AS FAITHFUL WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH

A DEVOTIONAL FROM THE BLACKSTONE LEGAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



## A VERSION OF THE DEVOTIONAL YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ

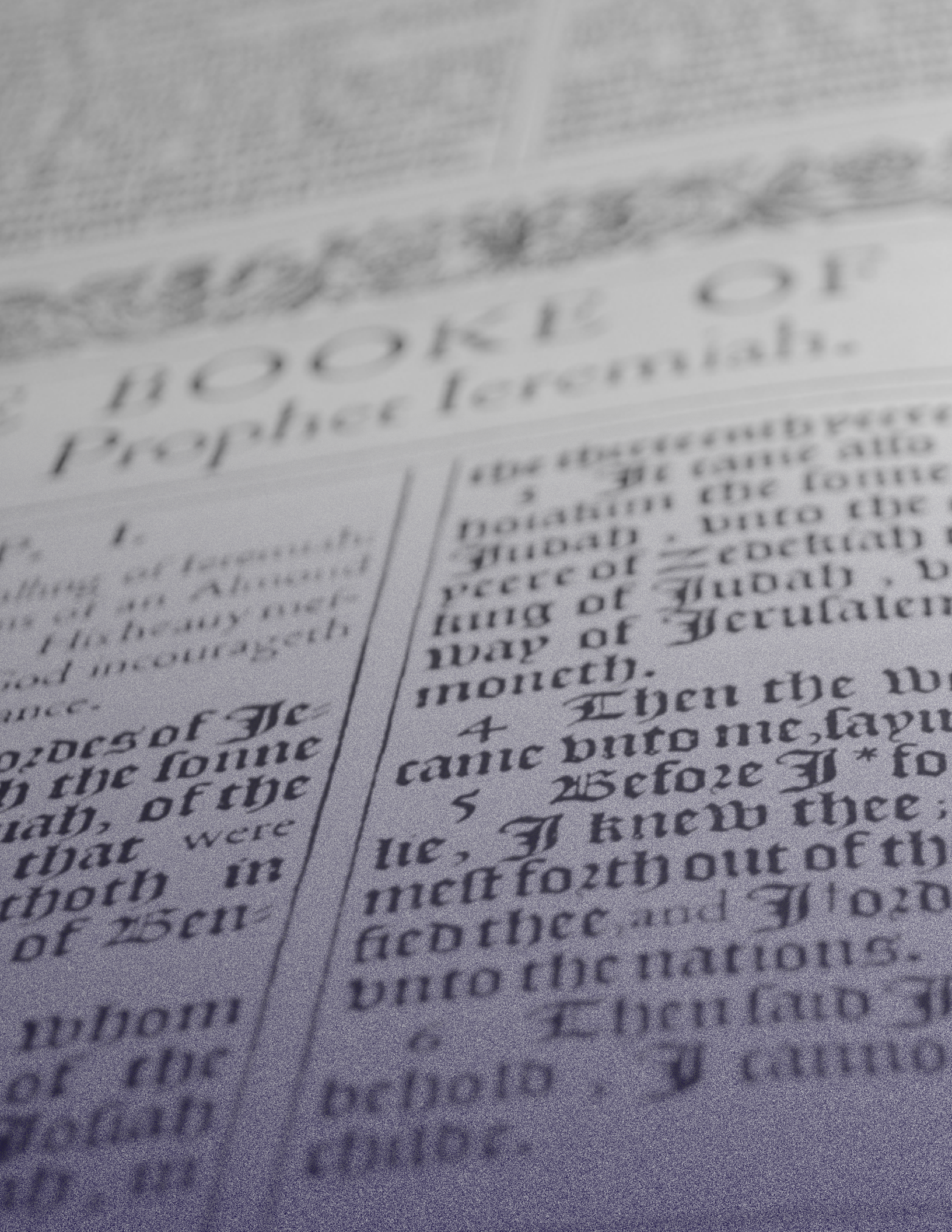
WAS GIVEN BY DR. ANDREW T. WALKER TO THE 2024 CLASS OF THE BLACKSTONE LEGAL FELLOWSHIP.

Dr. Walker serves as Associate Dean in the School of Theology and Associate Professor of Christian Ethics and Public Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, while also directing the Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement. Dr. Walker is also a fellow in Christian Political Thought at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and serves as the Managing Editor of WORLD Opinions.

He is the author of four books, including *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say about Gender Identity*, and writes regularly for *National Review*, *First Things*, *Newsweek*, *WORLD Opinions*, *The Gospel Coalition*, and other outlets.

We hope you are encouraged  
by what Dr. Walker has to  
say about living as faithful  
witnesses to the truth in our  
current cultural moment!





“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’”

**Jeremiah 29:4-7**

# Given the state of our current culture,

this may sound incredibly counterintuitive and even bordering on the absurd: At this present cultural moment, there has never actually been a better time to be a socially conservative Christian.

You might ask, given the advanced state of moral decay and moral debauchery in mainstream America and mainstream American institutions, how can I possibly say something like that?

Because truth finds a way to reassert itself when we learn the consequences of what is false.

So, when we look at declining marriage rates, the rise of “the loneliness epidemic,” the transgender madness transgressing the very limitations of reason and nature, the increase in suicidal ideation, the fact that pre-born human beings are discarded as medical waste—we see the reality of cultural chaos settling in.

When we see the pornification of culture and the objectification of women, drag queens passed off as the new normal, criminals pillaging former great cities, “deaths of despair” springing from increased drug usage—we are confronted with the reality that human beings desire more than what secular progressivism can actually offer.

When we look at our culture today, I would venture that we have a purpose deficit, a stability deficit, a community deficit, and a meaning deficit. But, fundamentally, underneath all of those deficits is a truth deficit. But this is also a time when I think many are starting to question the false ideologies of this age. They’re wondering if there’s an alternate view of human flourishing than what secularism offers.

A lot of public discourse is taking place with cultural figures like Joe Rogan, Jordan Peterson, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Russell Brand, Louise Perry, and Douglas Murray. Most of them are not Christians.

But they are all recognizing that secularism and progressivism are exhausted. These philosophies don’t have the internal coherence to sustain a vibrant and meaningful culture.

I believe secularism’s rule is in steady decline. As the saying goes, the emperor has been shown to have no clothes.

And why is that? Because our society is learning the consequences of shedding the truth and the claims of its Christian inheritance.



# SO, WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH JEREMIAH 29:4-7?

This passage demonstrates what we are called to do in a time of exile—when truth seems to be in retreat.

Israel has been taken from its promised land, which it has long awaited and finally reached, and now it's being driven into exile—into a place of foreignness. And the Israelites are wondering, what do we do?

The temptation is to take Babylon back for God. But what does God call those in exile to do?

He calls them back to  
the creation truths of  
Genesis 1.

Jeremiah calls his listeners to marriage, family, cultural development, vocation, and rootedness. All of these things are embedded in Genesis 1.

Even in a state of exile, Jeremiah insists all of those commands set forth in Genesis 1 are still normative and they're still binding. And it provides a framework for what exiles are to do in a place of great hostility. Jeremiah

says that as we pursue alignment with how God created the world, we are witnessing to the world what is true.

You might be familiar with the language “seek the welfare of the city.” That's a really popular phrase. It has traditionally been used to argue for a view of Christian cultural engagement that calls us to command the most elite segments of culture. Because in our hearts, all of us want to be a Churchill, a Reagan, a Zuckerberg, or an Elon Musk.

But here's the reality. Chances are, you and I aren't going to be figures like that. And so you can set yourself up for disappointment. You can want to despair and view your mission as a Christian, wherever God may have you, as futile.

That's not what I think Jeremiah has in mind when it comes to seeking the welfare of our city.

CS Lewis said, “Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth ‘thrown in’: aim at Earth and you will get neither.” You can only understand earth by looking first to the divine horizon. But it's by looking to that divine horizon, ultimately, that we understand what this world is really about.

And this defines, I think, the crisis of our age.

Our society is enamored with earthly gratification but is missing its fullest horizon, which is in God.

So, what if the goal of the Christian life is not necessarily to change the world but to be faithful and to simply witness to the truth regardless of our success?

When you go back to Jeremiah, there's no promise of conquest or victory built into Jeremiah's language to the exiles. Anyone who knows their Scripture knows that the exiles were in exile for a long time. That means our witness often is going to rely upon a patient firmament and slow-plotting faithfulness where God has placed you.

It's in pursuing routine things that we actually truly do seek the welfare of our city, by witnessing to what is true about God's world and then fundamentally living it out ourselves.



# SO THAT RAISES THE QUESTION:

What does being a faithful witness to the truth look like?

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There are **six truths** we can draw out from Jeremiah 29 in terms of living as a faithful witness to the truth in our age.

# 1 | GOD'S CALL FOR WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH IN YOUR LIFE IS GOING TO LOOK VERY ORDINARY.

Seeking the welfare of the city is done through extremely ordinary things. Family formation, finding a place to call home, vocational faithfulness, getting embedded in your community. Things that might seem trivial and unimportant. But as you get older, you realize these small acts of faithfulness begin to build up into something bigger.

In times of exile, God calls his people to spectacularly routine and normal things.

Very few of us have the chance to change the world. But we can all change the culture of our dinner tables, local school boards, or even the experience of a friend walking through a season of loneliness.

We all work very long hours—hopefully doing something we love. But we must have a horizon through which to understand our everyday actions.





## 2 | CULTURE AND THE WORLD'S PURSUIT OF TRUTH IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING, BUT GOD'S MISSION AND GOD'S CALL IS NOT.

None of us know what the future holds.

In 2012 and 2013, as I argued in the public square for the truth about marriage, I remember thinking: *Why am I doing this? Why am I willing to stake my reputation and my friendships on holding fast to certain truths that I think are important?*

Today, I know. It's because they're actually true. And when you give yourself to something that you really believe is true, it provides an anchor that will outlast the varying changes of culture from one generation to the next.

Now, is American culture still widely accepting of same-sex marriage? Yes, but according to certain polls, support for same-sex marriage and the broader LGBT movement are actually in decline, even among Gen Z.

And why is that? The ideology has moved faster than the morality. And a lot of individuals are finally coming to grips with this.

In fact, for instance, recent polling reports a higher number of people beginning to reaffirm the truth that gender is based on biological sex and not on psychology.

Nature, reality, and truth find a way to strike back.

Our arguments and warnings stand vindicated as the effects of the sexual revolution have washed over our shores. The successes and consequences of the sexual revolution have become its own counterarguments.

You never know what is going to change in the culture. That's why we don't do ethics by licking our finger and putting it in the air to figure out which way the wind is blowing. No, you stay anchored to biblical truth. That is your one fixed anchor.

# 3 | BE A FAITHFUL WITNESS TO THE TRUTH, NOT JUST A FAITHFUL PRESENCE FOR THE TRUTH.

“Faithful presence” alone misunderstands the assault of sin and decay on what truth is. In a fallen world, we have to actively contend for the truth.

It’s not enough to just be a faithful presence. You have to be a faithful witness, which requires action. “Faithful witness” denotes an active willingness to state the truth.

Christianity is a religion of truthful assertion that Jesus Christ is Lord, and everything stems from that central reality.

It’s Christ or chaos—always. Those are the two options before us. One is a vision of the world imbued with divine order, purpose, and design. Morality is imposed upon us from a benevolent, kind, and intimate God. The other is a worldview of randomness. Morality is determined from the ground up rather than from the top down.





# 4 | THE PURSUIT AND DEFENSE OF TRUTH IS VALUABLE FOR ITS OWN SAKE.

I oftentimes get asked, “What gives you hope?”

When Christ says, “I’m the way, the truth and the life,” He’s not speaking conditionally. He’s stating a matter of fact. This means witnessing to the truth for its own sake is intrinsically valuable and gives you a reason to get out of bed.

Our society suffers from a truth deficit, but it is not so with Christians. That’s why the goal of Christian cultural engagement is the same as it was as it has always been, which is witnessing to the truth.

Paul says in Galatians 6:9: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

The assumption behind Paul’s statement is that truth exists, but it can get exhausting to keep trying to witness to it in the face of opposition. When you have forces mounted against you that are acidic on the truth, it causes you to get beat down.

What does the Apostle Paul say at the exact moment? “Let us not become weary.”

In due time, we will reap a harvest. None of us may live to see it, but it is still worthwhile.

The great reformer Martin Luther was once asked what he would do if he knew the world was ending tomorrow. He replied, “Plant a tree.”

What I think Luther is getting at is that the Christian is called to preserving and cultivating the created order according to God’s timetable, not ours. We may not be around to taste the tree’s fruit, but the presence of the tree is a commitment to our trust in the goodness of the world that God has created and upholds.

Christians are called to witness to the truth for the sake of the truth as its own end—regardless of outcome or consequence.

We have an obligation to speak and defend what is true, uphold what is beautiful, and walk in justice to protect the weak and the vulnerable.

# 5 | PURSUE HOLINESS AND MAKE AND BUILD BEAUTIFUL THINGS THAT WILL OUTLAST YOU.

Truth is always worth sharing. But if that truth is not evident in our own lives, it's mostly in vain. Our lives should be holy and reflect that truth in our lives. The holiness of our lives will give firmer and ratifying integrity to the truth we proclaim.

The Cologne Cathedral in Cologne, Germany, took 632 years to build. That flabbergasted me when I read it. What began in the 1200s was finished in the 1800s. Men helped build things that they would never see the end result of themselves.

This is a helpful metaphor for us to realize that all of us are trying to build something that will outlast us. We are temporary.

When I perform marriages, one of my favorite parts is to tell the couple that the purpose of their marriage is for it to actually outlast the very lives of those who are in the marriage.

At some point, the couple's great, great-grandchildren will likely not know their names. Our goal is to build a Christian legacy that will live beyond us.





# 6 | WE MAY BE EXILES, SOJOURNERS, OR A REMNANT, BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT BABYLON BELONGS TO GOD.

Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”

This is what Israel had to keep reminding themselves. Babylon might think that Babylon is in charge. Babylon’s not in charge. Babylon is a temporal empire. And guess what? Temporal empires crumble.

What lasts are those truths from Genesis 1 that Jeremiah 29 reaffirms. And fundamentally, this recalibrates how we see what our task is as Christians in this world. It means that we are not proposing an alien ethic on the world. We are not asking the world to agree with Christians per se.

We are telling the world that a failure to conform itself to the design and pattern of creation is to go against the grain of the universe, as it was ordered and created by God. What we are trying to do is to tell the world what is true about itself, regardless of whether it wants to hear it or not.

So, this reminds us that in our time things are going to look bad. There’s going to be an opportunity for despair to run rampant.

But despair is contrary to the Christian imagination because we have hope. We

have hope in a resurrected Christ. And the resurrected Christ transcends all cultures and all times, all geographies and all empires. He is triumphant and has overcome the world.

He says in John 16 that all that is required of us is to be faithful and obedient in the context that he has placed us. It means to not give up.

GK Chesterton once said, “The one perfectly divine thing, the one glimpse of God’s paradise given on earth, is to fight a losing battle—and not lose it.”

It may look like we’re going to lose, but if you set your horizon on God’s terms, we’re never going to lose.

If we really believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then defending Him in this culture should be a source of joy, even amid the challenges of bearing reproach in his name.

And why is that? Because the Bible says that bearing insult in Jesus’ name produces joy. You are never on the right side of history if you’re on the wrong side of truth.

If we have the truth, let us live it and bear witness to it.

# HOW YOU CAN RESPOND



## PRAY

Please pray for the law students who just completed the summer training program of the Blackstone Legal Fellowship—and for all those who are currently considering the program. May they serve as faithful witnesses to Christ throughout their careers in the legal profession.



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## GIVE

The Blackstone Legal Fellowship gives the next generation of Christian leaders the education and tools they need to advance your right to live and speak the truth—whether it be in the courtroom, in the halls of government, or in other leadership positions. But this is only possible with God's blessing (John 15:5) and your faithful support. Your generous gift today will help make this training possible for more law students!



