

The ultimate comeback

We like stories about an underdog. We are inspired when someone who has been counted out makes a comeback. Perhaps it's a player who has a bad start or a team that comes from behind at the last minute to win. We like to see someone succeed after they have been discounted.



SHANE WILLIAMS

It would be hard to pick a better comeback story than Jesus. In his "hometown" of Nazareth, the people who knew Jesus cast Him out of town and tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-30). The Jews tried to seize Him, stone Him and/or kill Him multiple times (John 5:18; 7:30, 44; 8:59; 10:31, 39).

When His time finally came to be killed, He was insulted, spit upon, slapped, whipped, beaten and then nailed to a cross. Immediately after His death, the Jews made Jesus' tomb as secure as they could. They even got Pilate involved, who told them to "make it as secure as you know how" (Matt. 27:65). A guard was even positioned at the tomb. How could anyone be more down than what Jesus was!?

Yet, as we know, this wasn't the end of Jesus. Not even close! He arose on the third day and appeared as the victor over sin and death. Death is swallowed up in victory. That victory is through Jesus (I Cor. 15:54-57). Christ was raised, never to die again (Rom. 6:9). He came to take away sins (I John 3:5). Through His death, He was able to "render powerless him who had the power of death,

that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Think about all that Jesus went through. Consider how hard so many people worked to put an end to Him. Yet, Jesus was the one victorious! It ultimately is not just His victory, as we are all able to succeed because of His sacrifice. Salvation is found "in Christ" (II Tim. 2:10). Have you put Him on in your life (Gal. 3:26-27)?

Beware of the Pied Piper of technology

Envy is a feeling of discontent, resentment, and begrudging, aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, or luck. It's simply desiring the resources and opportunities someone else has so that we can purchase and create the life we fantasize about. We may not want a person's specific home, vehicles, talents, or spouse, but we may want their finances and charisma so we can have a similar life. James chapter 3 and verses 14-16 allow us to see how this is a very serious spiritual problem.



BILLY HOLLAND
LIVING ON PURPOSE

"But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

We consider an envious person to be a materialistic and nosy busybody, trying to keep up with the Joneses. When we are walking or driving in a neighborhood, we check out every house to judge its landscaping and the color coordination of its paint, roof, and brick. At a stoplight, we look around and notice what people are driving, and when we are in a mall or a restaurant, we notice what people are wearing. Likewise, the internet, as a sneaky Pied Piper, provides the bait for the inquisitive. Let's face it, the real reason social media is so addictive is that the average person is not only super curious, but also easily influenced.

Though it seems that envy would be the same as jealousy, they are actually distinct emotions. Envy involves wanting what someone else has, while jealousy typically arises from the fear of losing something you already possess. Beyond sayings such as: "Envy is the personal agony over the good fortune of others", "Whoever envies someone confesses their superiority", and "Comparison is the thief of joy", we can realize that self-discipline is a critical factor in guarding and discerning our thoughts. Since our thoughts are shaping who we are, it does not take a Christian counselor to explain how important this is to our spiritual well-being.

It's disturbing how much time and energy people spend fantasizing about trying to be like others, but we seldom

hear someone say, "I wish I could live as close to God as that person." Take Mother Teresa, for example. She was not rich, did not live in a mansion, and did not have all the luxuries of life, but we can agree she was a wonderful and caring person who was determined to spend her life helping others and serving God. If this is not a success, what is? Is she a role model of what all of us should be? According to Jesus — yes! However, do we dream, pray, and beg God to help us live like that? Would we really give everything we have to become

totally detached from the luxuries of this world, and do what Jesus told the rich young ruler to do? Evidently not.

There is no doubt we are living in a time when it is more difficult than ever to live a holy lifestyle. I've been a Christian for over 50 years, and much of this time I've studied the subject of spiritual warfare. I can say technology can help in some ways, but where is the advancement and progression of our computerized society leading us? We can look around and see how the minds of the masses, including children, are being pulled into the vortex of artificial intelligence. Even the name itself is a red flag. Could the World Wide Web have something to do with why so many people are entangled with anxiety and depression? Is AI a dangerous wolf disguised in sheep's clothing? Where will the Christian draw the line and say I cannot continue to advance into this system? Are we like the frog in a pan that is adjusting to the slow increase of the water temperature? Aren't we already identified and constantly examined within the data centers?

We've been saturated with the message of God loving us, but He also knows what we are thinking about, including how much we love Him. He also knows that for many, technology has become an idol. Like an undisciplined child who only wants to eat candy, the Pied Piper loves to trade pleasure for control. We have free will to obey God and be saved, or to live in rebellion and destroy ourselves. Let's try reducing social media and entertainment, and replace it with seeking Him with all of our hearts.

Dr. Holland is an ordained minister, chaplain, and Christian author. Read more about LIVING ON PURPOSE at billyhollandministries.com

In Parton's theology, God and acceptance shared the same stage

BY KRISTA FAURIA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — In her 1994 memoir, Dolly Parton recounts in vivid detail the place where she found God.

It was an abandoned church, in rural Tennessee where she grew up, that had become known as a haven for sex, drugs and violence. Rather than see the used condoms on the floor, the out-of-tune piano left behind or the explicit drawings on the walls as a hindrance to her religious encounter, Parton spoke fondly of the setting where she went to pray as a young girl.

"I would sing hymns to God for a while and look at dirty pictures for a while and pray for a while, and one day as I prayed in earnest, I broke through some sort of spirit wall and found God," she wrote.

"Here in one place was God, music and sex."

The country music icon was known for blurring the line between Sunday morning and Saturday night, a window into her theology that captivated people across political and denominational lines.

As news broke this week that the 80-year-old country music icon died of cancer, social media was flooded with quotes and interview clips of Parton proclaiming her Christian faith, something she wore on her sleeve even when her relationship to church was complicated.

But for many Christian members of the LGBTQ+ community who struggled to reconcile their sexuality and gender identity with the intolerant beliefs they were taught, Parton's public support helped them keep their faith in some cases, and trans-



Jonathan Short | Invision

Dolly Parton performs at Glastonbury music festival, June 29, 2014.

formed their understanding of how God sees them in others.

"Her approach to solidarity was inspiring for me as a young, queer Christian girl realizing I was gay," said Ciara Jones, a 32-year-old workplace consultant from Oakland, California. "For queer Christians, experiencing another queer Christian — or another queer-affirming person that is Christian — is important to your journey. Dolly, for me, was one of those lights."

PARTON WAS A TRAILBLAZER IN LGBTQ+ ACCEPTANCE

Long before same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide, Parton made acceptance a recurring theme of both her music and public persona, which has contributed to long-running support from the LGBTQ+ community.

"I got a huge gay following and some really macho-looking women," Parton told Andy Warhol for a 1984 cover story for Interview Magazine.

When Warhol told her she would make a great preacher, Parton responded: "What do you mean? I am a great preacher."

American Christianity spans the theological spectrum on sexuality

and gender identity, with some remaining firmly committed to a conservative view. As society has shifted, so have some Christians' beliefs on things like same-sex marriage, though there is a widening partisan divide on certain issues, particularly regarding transgender people.

Parton, whose grandfather was a Pentecostal preacher, said her support for LGBTQ+ people was rooted in her Christian faith. "We are all God's children," she told Larry King in 2016. But she also did not try to convince others of her beliefs, sometimes to the frustration of fans who thought she ought to be more vocal.

"Some are preachers, some are gay / Some are addicts, drunks and strays / But not a one is turned away / When it's family," Parton sings on the song, "Family," from her 1991 album "Eagle When She Flies."

"I don't condemn nor condone anything," Parton once told The Associated Press regarding the song. "I just love and accept people where they are for who they are."

Some queer people who were raised in religiously conservative homes push back against the notion that Parton was not political enough.

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The license premises will be located at 325 Main St., Benton, KY 42025-1137. Gauralbhai Patel, residing at 801 Sunny Lane, Murray, KY, 42071, is the owner of Discount Tobacco Benton, Inc.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that DCS Investments of 160 Wood Trace, Benton, KY 42025 has filed an application with the Energy and Environment Cabinet to build a 24'x40' single family home on a concrete slab foundation. The property is located in the city of Benton at 400 West 8th Street, Benton, KY 42025 next to Straw Branch creek. Any comments of objections may be submitted via email to DOWFloodplain@ky.gov, Kentucky Division of Water, Floodplain Management Section, 300 Sower Blvd., Frankfort, KY 40601. Call 502-564-3410 with questions.