

by k. askin (promise keepers new zealand)

take the initiative

promise keepers continues its fight to develop strong male leaders in new zealand

for the eyes of
the lord run to and fro
throughout the whole
earth, to show himself
strong on behalf of
those whose heart is
loyal to him.
2 chronicles 16:9 (nkjv)

'I WAS 19 years old and had just recently become a Christian when I overheard my Hindu parents talking. My dad's accounting business was in dire straits and he wanted to sell the house. I stepped in and told him not to sell the house as I would come in and help him. I boldly told him that my God would provide for us all. My dad was reluctant, but through my persistence, he agreed that I could start in the business.

'When my family and friends heard what I was doing they told me that I knew nothing about business and I would fail. Undaunted, I responded that they were right and I did not know much; but I knew one thing, and that was that if I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ he would direct my paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

'I remember getting down on my hands and knees in my father's office and crying out to God to bless me in this business so that my parents might see and be saved. God answered my prayers, and as a huge financial blessing flowed into their business, my parents could not deny the work of the Lord and gave their hearts to Jesus five years later.

'2 Chronicles 16:9 tells us that God wants to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are blameless toward him. I believe that if I had chosen to just sit back and not do anything when my dad shared about the dismal state of our business, we could have lost everything. Even more importantly, my parents could have missed the opportunity of receiving the greatest gift ever—salvation in Christ. It was only through taking the initiative and being bold in my stand of faith that God blessed my father's business and set all this in motion.'

Myan Subrayan's story is a powerful illustration of the impact men can have when they reject passivity and take risks based on their faith in God. Myan will be sharing some of his life story at each of the Promise Keepers 'Leave No Man Behind' men's events this year.

➤ ivan bezzant: make a difference

Another Promise Keepers speaker, Salvation Army officer Major Ivan Bezzant, knows what it means to take risks for God as well. Ivan is often confronted with situations of abuse and poverty, and has had the choice throughout his life to turn a blind eye to the realities of this world but has chosen instead to make a difference. His personal motto is 'To raise an army that will make a difference in the midst of the battle.'

For Ivan, being a Christian means being captivated with the mission that Jesus Christ had: getting 'heaven to invade earth'. His belief is that people are looking for transformation. For change. 'As Christians and the army of God, we carry the tools and equipment to bring transformation to our society,' he says. Ivan has seen men that were formerly broken being freed from bondage and generations of addiction now coming into lives of purpose and transformation.

'It's about standing together and bringing men out of isolation. We are called to be warriors and to be connected,' he says, 'standing shoulder to shoulder, united by heart connections and trained and equipped to advance the rulership of God in our homes, communities and nations. A lot of guys today feel church is irrelevant. For us, it's about finding life and identifying truth. We encourage men to seek churches where there is that life.'

One of the most powerful things Ivan has seen is men transformed from the feeling that 'this is the way life is for me' into a sense of destiny where they realise their decisions today can impact tomorrow's generations. Men can help chart the waters and leave a legacy that will impact their children and their children's children, he says. This turns their lives from helpless passivity to a sense of purpose and action. As Henry David Thoreau comments, 'Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around.'

➤ live a life of purpose

Living out a life of purpose in God will look different for every man. Myan took a courageous step of faith in volunteering in a business field he knew nothing about. Yet this stand saw

his family members saved, his relationship with God grow deeper and his character grow in strength. For Ivan, his walk with God has led him to serve on the front lines as a Salvation Army officer for 27 years.

Myan and Ivan's stories are remarkable because of their simplicity. They remind us that living a life of purpose is about men and women coming before God, submitting their lives to him and working with passion towards his call and mission in this world.

Leadership is difficult. It often involves pushing against the cultural current. Both Myan Subrayan and Ivan Bezzant would testify to this. Great things can happen when men reject the temptation to passivity and rise instead to the challenge of being leaders. In Harold R. McAlindon's words, 'Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.'

➤ follow william wilberforce's example

William Wilberforce's life is a powerful illustration of this. Initially, he was an unlikely candidate for heroic leadership, but in God's hands Wilberforce became a vessel for unprecedented social change in the 1700s and 1800s.

A member of the British Parliament at age 21, Wilberforce was more well known for his 'eloquence and charm' than for any deep-seated commitment to a social cause. He was more interested in pursuing a political career and enjoying his inherited wealth. Yet an encounter with God in 1785 changed all that.

Wilberforce's life was revolutionised and he became a strong proponent of human rights. British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson exposed Wilberforce to the horrors of the African slave trade and persuaded him to take action, using his position in Parliament as a springboard to fight slavery.

Wilberforce took up the challenge and became the parliamentary leader of the abolition movement in 1787. He then spent 18 years bringing anti-slavery motions before Parliament. Frequent bouts of illness and the rigorous assignment of gaining scores of signatures gave Wilberforce the perfect reason to give up. Yet his dogged determination and commitment to God made him refuse to back down from this momentous task.

Wilberforce's testimony is an awe-inspiring story of what one man with dedication and purpose can achieve. >>

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>> At that time, England was a world that dealt in slaves—they formed a key part of the nation's economy. To any onlooker, to challenge the notion of slavery was to challenge the very fabric of life itself. It was an impossible goal.

But Wilberforce had a vision. And he was not prepared to give up that mission until he saw victory. His commitment and determination were finally rewarded in 1807 when the slave trade was triumphantly abolished. Wilberforce witnessed the final milestone three days before his death in 1833 when all slaves in Britain were declared free. *The victory was won.*

Men today need to know that same passion and purpose. They need a vision for the future that says their contribution is vital to turn the tide. And they are needed everywhere. New Zealand is facing an unstable economy, families are breaking down and communities are feeling the effects of rising crime. We need men who are willing to pay the price and stand firm. Men who will fight in this spiritual battle for the lives of their friends and families and leave no man behind.

Myan Subrayan, Ivan Bezzant and William Wilberforce all faced a choice. They could make a stand for what they believed was right and what they were called to do, or they could be passive and declare the task too difficult. They each made the right choice. Each believed God's promises and were willing to take a risk. Wilberforce's tenacity saw the abolition of the British slave trade, while Myan and Ivan have witnessed the changed lives of their families and of men in their community.

Like them, let's stand against passivity and take the initiative to see lives transformed in the power of God ■

Myan Subrayan and Major Ivan Bezzant are both speaking at this year's Promise Keepers 'Leave No Man Behind' Events. See www.promisekeepers.org.nz for details.

CULTURE



TOBYMAC Alive and Transported cd/DVD set

TOBY MCKEEHAN HAS been on the Christian music scene for almost 20 years now, but not as an R&B artist. His fame began in 1989 when DC Talk, comprised of McKeehan, Kevin Max Smith and Michael Tait, released their first album and gained wild success throughout the 90s. It wasn't until the band members announced they were leaving DC Talk behind to each pursue solo work that the tobyMac as we know him today was birthed.

Since the release of his first album in 2001 and the following releases of two more albums, the last of which debuted at number 10 on the Billboard 200, tobyMac brings his first live concert CD/DVD into the mix.

Featuring songs from all three albums and including two DC Talk selections, 'Alive and Transported' is an excellent mix of tobyMac's unique R&B pop mix style and a fantastic stage performance.

tobyMac knows his audience well and caters to their expectations throughout his set. Using the impeccable talent of Mike Allen as DJ, De Shon Bullock on vocals, Dave Wyatt as music director and keyboardist and many other fantastic musicians, he creates an electric atmosphere that buzzes with creativity and an authentic spirituality.

Though I prefer tobyMac's studio work to the CD half of the set, his live performance as shown on the DVD surpassed my expectations both in stage performance and in an intense desire to worship God through musical talent. With thousands of hands raised in worship while tobyMac sings, it isn't hard to understand why MacKeehan's influence continued past the DC Talk legacy. **Reviewed by Cara Wood**



HILLSONG This Is Our God

I DON'T THINK that these guys have been off their game since their debut album 'The Power Of Your Love' in 1992. 'This Is Our God' is no different.

Including mostly new material with only a few of the songs featuring on this year's earlier Hillsong United release 'The I Heart Revolution: With Hearts As One', Hillsong prove once again their passion for promoting authentic worship to the glory of God.

'This Is Our God' is a testament to the strong musicianship of the band, with creative guitar riffs, tight transitions and an unlimited attention to live improvisation. The vocalists are continually strong, and the harmonies are spot on throughout the album.

Songs like 'Run' scream out the strong desire to bring unadulterated praise to God with strong beats and surging excitement, while songs like 'Healer' proclaim and reaffirm our belief that 'nothing is impossible for you' to passionate choruses, tasteful repetition and a beautiful attention to simple, strong vocals.

The live aspect to the album adds singular power to the songs. As the crowd cries out with the band, claps their hands in praise to God and backs the musicians like an invisible army of angels, you can't help but feel the power of the unfiltered worship to God and want nothing more than to join them in praise.

Hillsong as a band does not let performance get in the way of worship, and it is this, accompanied with another set of undeniably great worship songs, that continually causes Hillsong to stand out as the innovators of Christian worship music of our day. **Reviewed by Cara Wood**



Let's Talk

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