

DO MORE BETTER

A PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO
PRODUCTIVITY

TIM CHALLIES

DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALL. DO MORE GOOD. **BETTER.**

I am no productivity guru. I am a writer, a church leader, a husband, and a father with many responsibilities and with new tasks coming at me all the time.

I wrote this short, fast-paced, practical guide to productivity to share what I have learned about getting things done in today's digital world. Whether you are a student or a professional, a work-from-home dad or a stay-at-home mom, it will help you learn to structure your life to do the most good to the glory of God.

In **DO MORE BETTER**, you will learn:

- Common obstacles to productivity
- The great purpose behind productivity
- 3 essential tools for getting things done
- The power of daily and weekly routines
- And much more, including bonus material on taming your email and 20 tips I have learned along the way.

It really is possible to live a calm and orderly life, sure of your responsibilities and confident in your progress.

You can do more better.

And I would love to help you get there.

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DO MORE BETTER

Tim Challies

CRUCIFORM PRESS | DECEMBER 2015

*Dedicated to Paul Martin,
the best kind of friend.*

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@CHALLIES

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AUTHOR

Tim Challies is a Christian, a husband to Aileen, and a father to three children aged 9 to 15. He is a book reviewer for WORLD magazine, a co-founder of Cruciform Press, and has written several books including *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* and *Sexual Detox*. He worships and serves as a pastor at Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Ontario and writes daily at www.challies.com.

CruciformPress

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We like to keep it simple. So we publish short, clear, useful, inexpensive books for Christians and other curious people. Books that make sense and are easy to read, even as they tackle serious subjects.

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These are books you can afford, enjoy, finish easily, benefit from, and remember. Check us out and see. Then join us as part of a publishing revolution that's good news for the gospel, the church, and the world.

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INTRODUCTION

I believe this book can improve your life. This is a bold claim, I know, but the book would not be worth my time writing, or your time reading, if I did not believe it. I wrote this because I want you to do more better and because I believe you can. That is true whether you are a professional or a student, a pastor or a plumber, a work-from-home dad or a stay-at-home mom.

I don't want you to do more stuff or take on more projects or complete more tasks. Not necessarily. I don't want you to work longer hours or spend less time with your family and friends. I want you to do more good. I want you to do more of what matters most, and I want you to do it better. That's what I want for myself as well.

I wonder if you know that uncomfortable feeling that you are being neglectful toward at least some of life's responsibilities. I know it well. I recently caught an old episode of *The Ed Sullivan Show* and watched a plate spinner performing his act. He got the first plate spinning well, then moved on to a second and a third and a fourth and on down the line. Then he glanced over at the first and saw that it was just beginning to wobble. No sooner did he fix that one, then he had to dash

back to the second, and back and forth and around in circles, all the while keeping a dozen plates spinning without crashing to the ground. Do you know that feeling in your life?

It does not have to be that way. It should not be that way. You—even you!—can live a calm and orderly life, sure of your responsibilities and confident in your progress. You can lay your head on your pillow at night and rest easy.

Thousands of years ago a man named Solomon, king of Israel, wrote these words:

It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives to his beloved sleep. (Psalm 127:2)

Even this king who ruled an entire nation, managed inconceivable wealth, and led spectacular building projects was able to free himself from stress and anxiety, to rest from his work, and to enjoy sweet slumber. So why do we find it so difficult with our little lives?

Over the years I have invested a lot of effort in understanding productivity and the skill of getting things done. I love to make the best use of my time and energy, and I am constantly fine-tuning the ideas, tools, and systems that help me to remain that way. From time to time I even get to teach these things to other people and to help them do more better. It is always a thrill to see them getting it and living it.

In this little book I will share some of what I have learned along the way because I believe it can help you learn more than

you know now about living a productive life. That is not to say I have mastered it all. I am still learning and making small tweaks as I go. But I can say with confidence that what I will teach you really does work. It has brought order to my chaos and direction to my meandering. It has worked for many others as well.

The best way I know to teach these principles is to open up my life and to let you in a little bit. I will show you what I have learned, how I use my tools, how I build my systems, how I get stuff done. I think you will get the best value from this book if you read, observe, and imitate—at least at first. Then, as time goes on, you will inevitably adapt those tips you find especially helpful and discard the ones you do not. If I can spur your thinking so that you can do more better, I will consider this book a great success.

And now, to work!

ONE

KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

You may be reading this book because your life feels chaotic and you long to introduce some kind of order. You may be reading this book because you have taken on far too much and are looking for advice on what to prioritize. You may be reading it because you are always on the lookout for another tip or trick that can increase your efficiency just a little bit. Those are all good reasons and, no matter which of them fits you, I think you will find something here that can help.

But before we can get to the really practical stuff, you and I have a little bit of work to do. Even if you find yourself tempted to skip this chapter, I would ask you to resist that temptation. A small investment of time and attention right now will help build a foundation for all that will follow. If you skip ahead to chapter 5 or 6 and get right to the good stuff, you may be proving that you are looking for quick fixes rather than lasting change.

So stick with me as we do some important work in the chapter ahead.

THE FOUNDATION

No one has ever accused me of being handy. I can handle the very basics—hanging pictures or putting a coat of paint on the walls—but I am completely dependent upon my father-in-law or contractors to do much more than that. When I hear my friends talking about taping drywall, tinkering with pipes and wires, or installing doorways, I just slowly back away from the conversation. I know when I'm out of my league.

I haven't ever peered inside the walls of my home, but I know that if I did I would find beams and posts and pillars. And if I went downstairs to the basement and pulled off the drywall there, I would find a foundation. These are the elements that hold up my house and hold it together. The house cannot be stronger than these elements. What follows in this chapter is the foundation of productivity. Productivity—true productivity—will never be better or stronger than the foundation you build it upon. So let's make sure we are building upon a strong foundation.

A PRODUCTIVITY CATECHISM

An understanding of productivity needs to begin with an understanding of the reason you exist. Productivity is not what will bring purpose to your life, but what will enable you to excel in living out your existing purpose.

I am going to lead you through a brief Productivity Catechism, a series of questions and answers. Only when you understand these foundational matters about your God-given

purpose and mission will you be ready to get to work. Here is the first question:

Q1. Ultimately, why did God create you?

A. God created me to bring glory to him.

This is the question every human being wonders at one time or another, isn't it? Why am I here? Why am I here instead of not here? Why did God create me? The Bible has an answer: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever" (Romans 11:36). All things exist to bring glory to God, and that includes each one of us. That includes you.

God created you so he could receive glory from you and receive glory through you. That is an astonishing truth to consider and a deeply humbling one. When you grasp it and apply it, it transforms everything about your life. The simple fact is, you are not the point of your life. You are not the star of your show. If you live for yourself, your own comfort, your own glory, your own fame, you will miss out on your very purpose. God created you to bring glory to him.

Q2. How can you glorify God in your day-to-day life?

A. I can glorify God in my day-to-day life by doing good works.

You may be comfortable with this idea that God created you to bring glory to him, but the question remains: what does it actually mean to do that? If you want to glorify God, do you need to quit your job and become a pastor? If you want to glorify God, do you need to pack up everything you own,

move across the world, and serve as a missionary in the farthest and most dangerous regions? Do you only truly glorify God on Sundays when you stand in church and sing the great songs of the Christian faith? Is God only honored through you when you read your Bible and pray? Or is there a way that you can glorify God all day and every day even in a very ordinary life?

Jesus answered this question when he said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Your good works are like a light, and when that light shines, it illuminates God. When people see that light, they aren’t meant to look at you and say, “He’s incredible” or “She’s amazing.” They are meant to look at God and say, “He is awesome.”

You do not glorify God only when you talk about him, or share his gospel with other people, or stand with hands raised in public worship. Those are all good actions, but they are not the only means through which you can bring glory to God. Far from it. You glorify God when you do good works. The apostle Peter wrote, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12). Your good works make God look great before a watching world.

Q3. What are good works?

A. Good works are deeds done for the glory of God and the benefit of other people.

You know now that good works are important and that they bring glory to God. But what are these good works? Are

they feeding the poor and adopting orphans? Are they giving money to the church, volunteering at the food bank, or visiting the elderly in their nursing homes? What are the good works you are called to do? The Bible assures you that good works are any deeds that are done for the benefit of other people and the glory of God.

You are already very good at doing things that benefit you. We all are. From your infancy you have become adept at expending effort toward your own comfort and survival. But when God saved you, he gave you a heart that longs to do good for others. Suddenly you long to do good to other people, even at great cost to yourself. After all, that is exactly what Christ did on the cross. It is what Christ did, and he calls on you to imitate him.

Good works, then, are any and all of those deeds you do for the benefit of others. If you are a mother and you simply cuddle and comfort your crying child, you are doing a good work that glorifies God, because you do it for the benefit of your child. If you are a student and apply yourself to your studies, you are doing a good work that brings glory to God, because what you learn can and will be used someday to benefit other people. If you work in an office environment and do your job with consideration to your clients and coworkers, you are doing good works that bring glory to God, because you are living outside yourself, doing what benefits the people in your life.

There is no task in life that cannot be done for God's glory. Again, this is what Jesus calls for in these simple words from the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your light shine before others,

so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Q4. But you are a sinful person. Can you actually do good works?

A. Yes. Christians are able to do good works because of the finished work of Christ.

As a Christian you are aware of your sin. You know that your motives are never perfectly pure, that your desires are never perfectly selfless, that your actions are never perfectly just. Sometimes you do not even know your motives, and sometimes you do not even want to know them. If all of that is true, can you still do deeds that are good?

Yes, you can do good works. In fact, this is the very reason God saved you: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). It is simple: God saved you so that you could do good works and in that way bring glory to him. Paul amplifies it even more in his letter to Titus: “[Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). Christ gave up his life for you so that you could have a genuine zeal to do good works. Paul calls upon Christians to be good works zealots or good works extremists—to be absolutely committed in every way to doing good for others.

Take heart! You can actually do works that delight God. God is genuinely pleased when you do these works, even when

you don't do them as perfectly or as selflessly as you might wish, or even when you are uncertain about your motives. Though even your best deeds are far from perfect, God is pleased with them and accepts them with joy.

Q5. In what areas of life should you emphasize good works?

A. I ought to emphasize good works at all times and in all areas of life.

If you *can* bring glory to God in all areas, you *should* bring glory to God in all areas. There is no area of your life where you have no ability to do good to others and where you have no ability to bring glory to God. Paul said, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). To Titus he said, "The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people" (Titus 3:8). To Timothy he wrote specifically of women and said, "Women should adorn themselves...with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10), and to the church at Galatia he explained, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). Peter even tells you that God has supernaturally gifted you so that you can do even more good to others.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever

speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

The Bible is clear: At every time and in every context you are able to do good to others, and so you should do good to others.

Q6. What is productivity?

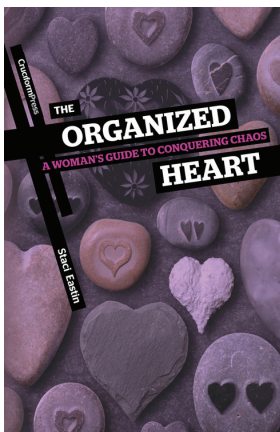
A. Productivity is effectively stewarding my gifts, talents, time, energy, and enthusiasm for the good of others and the glory of God.

Now we come to it: what is productivity? Productivity is *effectively stewarding your gifts, talents, time, energy, and enthusiasm for the good of others and the glory of God*. Productivity calls you to direct your whole life at this great goal of bringing glory to God by doing good for others. This call involves using your gifts, the spiritual gifts you were given when the Lord saved you; it involves deploying your talents, those areas of natural strength; it involves managing your time, those 24 hours God gives you each day; it involves making use of your energy, the strength or vitality that ebbs and flows through the day and the week; and it even involves your enthusiasm, the passion and interest you can bring to those works you love to do. God calls you to take all of that and to apply it carefully, faithfully, and consistently to the great goal of doing good to others.

YOUR PURPOSE

I trust this maxim establishes your purpose: to glorify God by doing good to others. There is no better plan and no higher ideal. So, ultimately, here is what productivity is all about and, therefore, what this book is all about: doing good to others.

Are you a stay-at-home mom? This is the measure of your productivity. Are you a CEO with a corner office? This is the measure of your productivity, too. Are you a teacher, a toolmaker, a doctor, a driver? The same is true of you. Even while we are talking about tools, software, and systems, you need to remember this high and noble purpose behind it all: bringing glory to God by doing good to others.



[The Organized Heart](#)

A Woman's Guide to Conquering Chaos

by Staci Eastin

Disorganized? You don't need more rules, the latest technique, or a new gadget.

This book will show you a different, better way. A way grounded in the grace of God.

bit.ly/OHeart

“Staci Eastin packs a gracious punch, full of insights about our disorganized hearts and lives, immediately followed by the balm of gospel-shaped hopes. This book is ideal for accountability partners and small groups.”

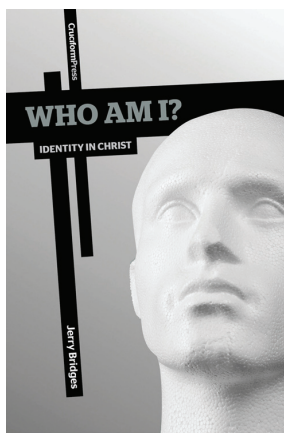
Carolyn McCulley, blogger, filmmaker, author of Radical Womanhood and Did I Kiss Marriage Goodbye?

“Unless we understand the spiritual dimension of productivity, our techniques will ultimately backfire. Find that dimension here. Encouraging and uplifting rather than guilt-driven, this book can help women who want to be more organized but know that adding a new method is not enough.”

Matt Perman, Director of Strategy at Desiring God, blogger, author of the forthcoming book, What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done

“Organizing a home can be an insurmountable challenge for a woman. The Organized Heart makes a unique connection between idols of the heart and the ability to run a well-managed home. This is not a how-to. Eastin looks at sin as the root problem of disorganization. She offers a fresh new approach and one I recommend, especially to those of us who have tried all the other self-help models and failed.”

Aileen Challies, Mom of three, and wife of blogger, author, and pastor Tim Challies



[Who Am I?](#)

Identity in Christ

by Jerry Bridges

Jerry Bridges unpacks Scripture to give the Christian eight clear, simple, interlocking answers to one of the most essential questions of life.

91 pages bit.ly/WHOAMI

“Jerry Bridges’ gift for simple but deep spiritual communication is fully displayed in this warm-hearted, biblical spelling out of the Christian’s true identity in Christ.”

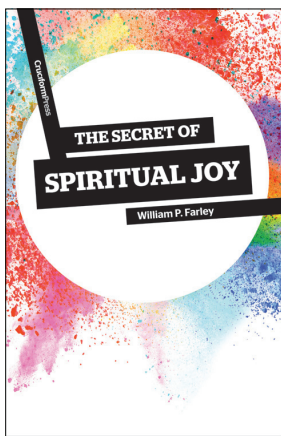
J.L. Packer, Theological Editor, ESV Study Bible; author, Knowing God, A Quest for Godliness, Concise Theology

“I know of no one better prepared than Jerry Bridges to write *Who Am I?* He is a man who knows who he is in Christ and he helps us to see succinctly and clearly who we are to be. Thank you for another gift to the Church of your wisdom and insight in this book.”

R.C. Sproul, founder, chairman, president, Ligonier Ministries; executive editor, Tabletalk magazine; general editor, The Reformation Study Bible

“*Who Am I?* answers one of the most pressing questions of our time in clear gospel categories straight from the Bible. This little book is a great resource to ground new believers and remind all of us of what God has made us through faith in Jesus. Thank the Lord for Jerry Bridges, who continues to provide the warm, clear, and biblically balanced teaching that has made him so beloved to this generation of Christians.”

Richard D. Phillips, Senior Minister, Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC



[The Secret of Spiritual Joy](#)

by William P. Farley

There really is a guaranteed path to greater joy.

The secret is gratitude.

To strengthen your confidence in this truth, read this book.

93 pages

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“Is there really one thing, above all else, that can be demonstrated to be the secret? Bill Farley has made his case and it is compelling. Oh, what biblical wisdom is contained in this brief book. Reading it has given me greater earnestness to pursue the path of joy Farley has here mapped so skillfully. May God be pleased to use this book to do the same for innumerable other Christian pilgrims.”

Bruce A. Ware, author; Chairman, Department of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Continuing his explorations of how the biblical gospel both fuels and shapes the cultivation of Christ-like virtues, Bill Farley turns his attention to the joy that sadly seems to elude so many believers. He interweaves solid theology with practical illustrations so that all who read this short but powerful book can emerge with a trustworthy and clear understanding of how to recognize and experience this gracious blessing from the Lord.”

Randal Roberts, President, Western Seminary

“Bill Farley wants to obliterate our propensities for grumbling and self-pity. This may prove to be a dangerous book for those who wallow in dispositions that are antithetical to the Christian gospel.”

Art Azurdia, Senior Minister, Trinity Church (Portland, OR); Director, Doctor of Ministry Program, Western Seminary

Inductive Bible Studies for Women by Keri Folmar



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“It is hard to imagine a better inductive Bible Study tool.”

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Keri's studies have been endorsed by..

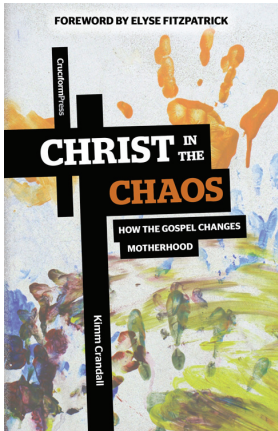
Kathleen Nielson is author of the *Living Word Bible Studies*; Director of Women's Initiatives, The Gospel Coalition; and wife of Niel, who served as President of Covenant College from 2002 to 2012.

Diane Schreiner – wife of professor, author, and pastor Tom Schreiner, and mother of four grown children – has led women's Bible studies for more than 20 years.

Connie Dever is author of *The Praise Factory* children's ministry curriculum and wife of Pastor Mark Dever, President of 9 Marks Ministries.

Kristie Anyabwile, holds a history degree from NC State University, and is married to Thabiti, currently a church planter in Washington, DC., and a Council Member for The Gospel Coalition.

Gloria Furman is a pastor's wife in the Middle East and author of *Glimpses of Grace* and *Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full*.



[Christ in the Chaos](#)

How the Gospel Changes
Motherhood

by Kimm Crandall

MOMS: Stop comparing yourself to others. Stop striving to meet false expectations. Stop thinking your performance dictates your worth.

Look to the gospel for rest, joy, sufficiency, identity, and motivation.

112 pages bit.ly/Christ-in

“Although Kimm Crandall’s message would revive any soul longing for the breath of the gospel of grace, I am especially eager to recommend this book to that heart who strives to know God and to make him known to the little ones who call her ‘Momma.’ Kimm is a candid and gracious fellow sojourner, faithfully pointing to God’s immeasurable steadfast love and grace in the midst of our mess.”

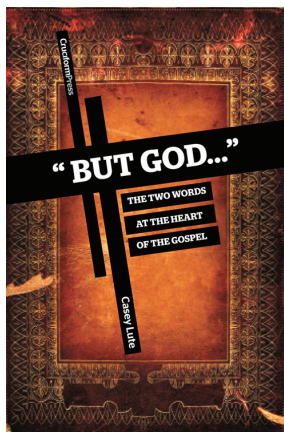
Lauren Chandler, wife of Matt Chandler (pastor of The Village Church), mother of three, writer, singer, and speaker

“What an amazingly wild and wise, disruptive and delighting, freeing and focusing book. Kimm’s book is for every parent willing to take the stewardship of children and the riches of the gospel seriously. This is one of the most helpful and encouraging books on parenting I’ve read in the past twenty years. This will be a book you will want to give to parents, to-be parents, and grandparents.”

Scotty Smith, author; Founding Pastor, Christ Community Church

“Kimm Crandall has discovered that chaos can be the perfect context in which to experience God’s liberating grace. She is a wise, practical, gospel-drenched guide for anyone navigating through the wearisome terrain of parenting.”

Tullian Tchividjian, author; Pastor, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church



[“But God...”](#)

The Two Words at the Heart of the Gospel

by Casey Lute

Just two words.

**Understand their use in Scripture,
and you will never be the same.**

100 pages bit.ly/ButGOD

“Keying off of nine occurrences of “But God” in the English Bible, Casey Lute ably opens up Scripture in a manner that is instructive, edifying, encouraging, and convicting. This little book would be useful in family or personal reading, or as a gift to a friend. You will enjoy Casey’s style, you will have a fresh view of some critical Scripture, and your appreciation for God’s mighty grace will be deepened.”

Dan Phillips, Pyromaniacs blog, author of The World-Tilting Gospel (forthcoming from Kregel)

“A refreshingly concise, yet comprehensive biblical theology of grace that left this reader more in awe of the grace of God.”

Aaron Armstrong, BloggingTheologically.com

“Casey Lute reminds us that nothing is impossible with God, that we must always reckon with God, and that God brings life out of death and joy out of sorrow.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“A mini-theology that will speak to the needs of every reader of this small but powerful book. Read it yourself and you will be blessed. Give it to a friend and you will be a blessing.”

William Varner, Prof. of Biblical Studies, The Master’s College



[The Company We Keep](#)

In Search of Biblical Friendship

by Jonathan Holmes

Foreword by Ed Welch

**Biblical friendship is deep, honest,
pure, transparent, and liberating.**

It is also attainable.

112 pages

bit.ly/B-Friend

“Jonathan Holmes has the enviable ability to say a great deal in a few words. Here is a wonderful primer on the nature of biblical friendship—what it means and why it matters.”

Alistair Begg, Truth for Life, Senior Pastor, Parkside Church

“Jonathan has succeeded in giving us a picture of how normal, daily, biblical friendships can be used by God to mold us into the likeness of Christ. If you want a solid, fresh way of re-thinking all of your relationships, read this book.”

Dr. Tim S. Lane, co-author, How People Change

“A robust and relevant GPS for intentional and vulnerable gospel-centered friendships...a great book not only for individuals, but also for small groups...a significant contribution to the Kingdom.”

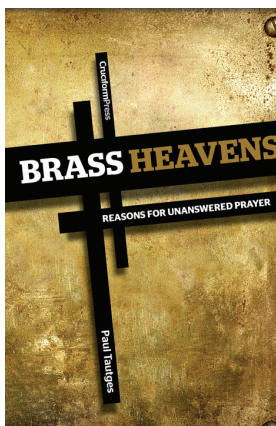
Robert W. Kelleman, Exec. Dir., Biblical Counseling Coalition

“Short. Thoughtful. Biblical. Practical. I’m planning to get my friends to read this book so we can transform our friendships.”

Deepak Reju, Pastor of Biblical Counseling, Capitol Hill Baptist

“Filled with answers that are equally down-to-earth, nitty-gritty, and specific...taking us where we need to go with warmth and wisdom.”

Wesley Hill, author, Washed and Waiting



[Brass Heavens](#)

Reasons for Unanswered Prayer

by Paul Tautges

Does it ever seem like God is not listening?

Scripture offers six clear reasons why your prayers may go unanswered.

Learn what they are and what you can do about it.

bit.ly/BRASS-H

“Paul Tautges scatters the darkness of doubt. He blends biblical teaching with practical illustrations to challenge and comfort us when the heavens seem as brass. Read this to revive your prayers, to melt the heavens, and to increase your answers.”

David Murray, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

“Some things in the Scriptures are conveniently ignored...but this book will not let us continue to bury Scripture’s clear teaching, or continue to ignore the ongoing rebellions, unrelinquished resentments, and unconfessed sins in our lives that may be hindering our prayers.”

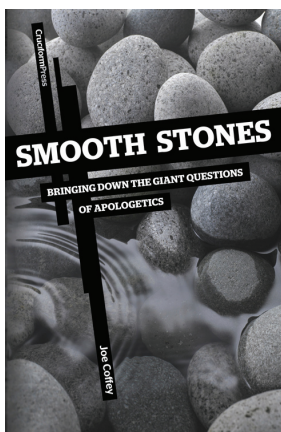
Nancy Guthrie, author, Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament

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"*The Most Encouraging Book on Hell Ever* is also one of the wisest. This book is crammed with hilarious quips, but the message is deadly serious. Losing the doctrine of hell isn't trivial. It means losing truth, righteousness, and grace. Ultimately it means losing God. Thor's book uses humor to disarm readers just enough to deliver this crucial and timely message."

Drew Dyck, managing editor of Leadership Journal, a Christianity Today publication

"Praise God for Thor! The end must be getting near as Christians are actually getting funny. After a few pages, you'll realize this ain't your grandma's book about hell... but she'd love it just the same. Because it's only funny in the right places."

Stephen Baldwin, actor, author, radio host