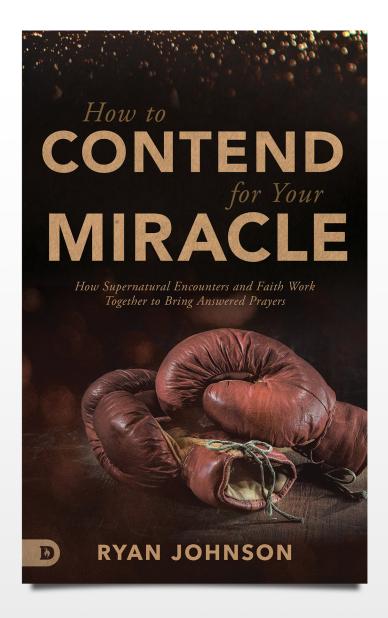
How to CONTEND for Your MIRACLE

How Supernatural Encounters and Faith Work Together to Bring Answered Prayers



RYAN JOHNSON



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ENDORSEMENTS

In this book Ryan equips you with practical tools to activate your faith and receive prophetic promises. You will discover how to bring the super into your natural.

JASON ARMSTRONG
Founder of Remnant Fire Ministries
Associate Pastor Summit Church
TN State Leader Heartland Apostolic Prayer Network

Ryan Johnson has woven together a tapestry in *How* to *Contend for Your Miracle* that will equip you in understanding the importance of faith, hope and trust in the Lord. From the richness of the Word of God to the first-hand personal accounts of faith in action, you will be blessed and empowered to stand firm in the prophetic promises of a faithful God over your life."

DAWN HILL Prophetic Writer and Blogger, The Lovesick Scribe

How to Contend for Your Miracle is more than a book on faith. It is the rendering of Ryan's real gift of digging deep into the unexplored caverns of the Word. These writings incorporate so much of the Word of God that one cannot deny the authenticity. Absorbing the contents of this book, will give exponential growth to new faith, breathe life into weakened or lethargic faith, and fortify

strong faith that will not be denied, as promises turn into provision! One cannot read it without gaining eyes to "see" the unseen!

BARBARA HENSLEY Pastor, The Upper Room Church

This book is a must read. Throughout this book, Ryan lays down a pathway for seeing the prophetic realized in your life. When you marry faith with the prophetic, the results are powerful! As you read this, allow the Holy Spirit to build your faith and watch how God moves in your life!

Joshua Gay Pastor, High Praise Orlando

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How Supernatural Encounters and Faith Work Together to Bring Answered Prayers

RYAN JOHNSON

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DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.

P.O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310

"Promoting Inspired Lives."

This book and all other Destiny Image and Destiny Image Fiction books are available at Christian bookstores and distributors worldwide.

Cover design by Eileen Rockwell

Interior design by Terry Clifton

For more information on foreign distributors, call 717-532-3040.

Reach us on the Internet: www.destinyimage.com.

ISBN 13 TP: 978-0-7684-5157-3

ISBN 13 eBook: 978-0-7684-5158-0

ISBN 13 HC: 978-0-7684-5160-3

ISBN 13 LP: 978-0-7684-5159-7

For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.

12345678/2423222120

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FOREWORD

A unique set of influences laid a foundation for my faith and my near-immediate introduction to prophetic ministry. My first church experience—if you can call it that—was an unexpected encounter with bold evangelists in a grim county jail consumed with the power of death. I was facing five years in prison for a crime I didn't commit and had hit proverbial rock bottom.

Amid the criminals arguing and correctional officers belting commands, the testimonies of these evangelists—former convicts and drug addicts—released the power of hope and courage for a new beginning. I listened intently as an evangelist laid out a clear path to salvation through Jesus and the promise of "all things new." The day I accepted Christ into my heart Jesus prophesied to me directly. In effect, He showed me I would

be released on the 40^{th} day of my incarceration—with complete vindication.

It never crossed my mind not to believe Jesus's personal prophecy. I only believed. Although I was facing a five-year jail sentence, this prophetic word—which was spirit and life—inspired faith in my heart to believe it. Like Abraham, I confessed those things that were not as though they were and they came to be. Yes, I faced challenges along the path to freedom, but I activated my faith with my words over and over again. I watched as the prophetic word came to pass. I was totally vindicated and released.

When I was freed from jail I landed in an African-American Pentecostal church. It was a deliverance-oriented, prophet-led Holy Ghost congregation where prophecy was part and parcel of every service. As part of my personal wilderness experience, I landed in a Word of Faith church in a small Alabama town. Steeped in this "power of words" culture, I enrolled in Rhema Bible School and studied the works of Kenneth Hagin, Sr. and others from the Word of Faith movement. When God released me from the wilderness, I stepped square into the apostolic-prophetic movement.

After this blend of teaching, my perspective is this: Yes, we prophesy according to the proportion of our faith according to Romans 12:6. We've focused a lot on this in the early days of the prophetic movement, when believers around the world were activated to prophesy by my spiritual father, Bishop Bill Hamon. But what is also true is that you receive prophecy by faith, activate prophecy by faith, and see prophecy come to pass by faith. Put another way, personal prophecies are conditional—they are conditional on your faith and the actions your faith inspires you to take.

In *How to Contend for Your Miracle*, Ryan Johnson taps into this all-important vein—a vein that too few focus on or even understand. Many believers receive prophetic words as unconditional. They hear a prophecy at the altar, call their friends, and tell them about the wonderful word of the Lord they received, then forget about it as if it will come to pass all by itself. Ryan explains that you have to supernaturally partner with heaven to see your prophetic promises come to pass—then he gives you keys to cross the prophetic finish line.

I would urge students of faith not to brush off this book because you think you know everything there is to know about faith. There is always more to learn, more revelation to unlock—and the reality that we need to be reminded of what we know because sometimes we hear the Word and don't do it and end up deceiving ourselves. Faith is the currency of the kingdom and we need to continue studying it. Ryan has tied faith to prophetic

promises in a way I have never seen done. Many people tie faith to promises in the Word, but fewer have drilled into faith to walk out a prophetic word.

If you have unfulfilled prophetic words sitting in a drawer or "on the shelf," this book will help you cultivate and release the faith required to partner with God. As I always say, God won't do our part, but we can't do His part. The good news is God will do His part and our faith will empower us to take action to see our prophetic promises manifest, whether that's getting a passport, studying for a new career—or just waiting on the Lord like Abraham did.

Ryan's book shares practical stories, sound theology, and the inspiration you need to dust off the prophecies you gave up on and believe again. As you read this book, you will come into the understanding that it's never too late to believe God—and God is never late. Many times we think we're waiting on Him when He's actually waiting on us. So whether your part is to wait, war, or "only believe," you'll get the guidance you need to glorify God with the manifestation of His will for you as you read the pages of this timely book. Thanks, Ryan, for writing it!

JENNIFER LECLAIRE Founder, Jennifer LeClaire Ministries Best-selling author, *The Making of a Prophet* Senior Leader, Awakening House of Prayer

PREFACE

If a family and I were visiting with our extended families after the holidays because we lived in another state. The first Sunday of January we attended my parents' home church. I vividly remember sitting in the very back of the church with my dad while my mother was on the praise and worship team. My parents' church was very familiar to my wife and children; I had been a student pastor there for a number of years, while serving several different ministries. It was a ministry where we were able to call many our family and friends.

That day, there was nothing particularly special to the schedule. My dad and I were sitting in the back; my wife and children were sitting with friends they had been catching up with before the service began. The worship was in full measure, people were engaged, and the

Lord was moving that morning. In a moment, the Lord spoke something to me that I never anticipated. It forever changed my perception of how I was agreeing with the prophetic. The Lord whispered, "You don't understand *faith* the way that I need you to know it."

Faith was one of those areas that I took a lot of pride in over the years. People are always calling huge steps "radical faith," and I was always the one exclaiming that "radical faith" was only obedience. The only reason it seems radical is because it goes against out flesh, but in reality it is nothing more than obedience. It was this mindset that drove me to take those steps in obedience. Throughout many decisions, I had earned a bit of a reputation that I was willing to take big risks of faith. Honestly, I thought I had mastered faith, and then the Lord busted my bubble.

I sat there in disbelief. How could I not understand faith? How could the Lord not recognize that my faith was strong and that I worked diligently to walk by faith and not by sight? The Lord had to be wrong. He had to have confused me with someone else, right? Prophetic dreams, visions, and words have been a part of my life for the majority of my life, and now it seemed that the Lord was calling me out on the one area that I had felt was structurally strong. What I did not understand in that moment was that the Lord was developing the prophetic by connecting the dots for me personally. We often hold

the keys that unlock doors, but we find ourselves standing before unlocked doors that remain closed. The Lord was revealing the authority to open the unlocked doors.

Fast-forward three months—my family and I were ministering at a revival in Virginia when my cell phone rang. It was my mother. When I picked up the phone, I immediately heard her crying. "Ryan, this is your mom. I'm calling to tell you that I have cancer. The doctors say I have breast cancer."

What my mom didn't know at that very moment was that the Lord had been preparing me for this phone call. When He spoke to me on that first Sunday in January, He had taken me on a specific journey. For those three months, the Lord was teaching me about the prophetic and how we are to fight for the promises that come through dreams, visions, and/or prophetic words. The Lord had prepared me for this moment, and it was then that I realized that the cancer was an attempt from the enemy to prematurely take my mother from this world. The enemy had a plan, but the Lord gave me a strategy.

Little did I know that the strategy would help me give so many others the key that unlocks the door that is before them. With this key, you will unlock what is before you and the Lord will give you the authority to open doors to your destiny!

CHAPTER 1

WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."
—Martin Luther King, Jr, as quoted in Atlanta Magazine, April 2008

everything about faith, and yet it's often the topic that we know the least about. So many individuals will define faith as believing in something or someone. Some people grew up having faith in Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, or the tooth fairy. We grew up believing in these figures because we knew that if we denied their existence,

it would be detrimental to our gift potential. The truth is that the majority of our faith is structured on this model. We are taught to believe in certain things or people in hopes that we will get something in return. The moment that we lose our faith, we begin to risk not getting what we feel like we deserve or should get just because we are who we are.

Whether voluntarily or involuntarily, we have developed our faith to be something that the Lord never intended it to be. Granted, we know the scriptures and we can often quote them verse by verse. That's not the challenge. The challenge is whether or not we can actually live by the standard of what the Word is actually saying. Not what we think that it says or what we want it to say—but what the Word of the Lord is really saying. We miss so much because we are easily swayed by our own flesh. In our weaknesses, we just do our best, and when we fail we create a concept of the Lord's Word that tells us we are doing good enough. We so desperately want to believe that when our faith fails us, the Lord is eagerly waiting to wink and nod with full understanding that we are mere mortals and He must be willing to turn His head and act like we never lacked in our faith.

WHAT BELIEF IS

From the very beginning of mankind, faith has always been a battle between what we know to be true and what we think we understand. We find ourselves in dire need. in circumstances that seem impossible to man, and in those moments we need the Lord to move in a way that we may have never seen or experienced before. The Lord begins saying things to us that make little to no sense within our natural minds. He reveals things to us, yet we fail to agree with His declarations because we need a tangible reality in the midst of our challenges. We think that our faith is a blueprint that builds us up spiritually to endure the test of time. We may not always understand the big picture or be able to see the entire structure, but we sincerely believe that we can live our life in faith because of the blueprint. But then there comes a day when we can no longer see the blueprint, and we are only given a dream, a vision, or a word through someone we barely know.

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Hebrews 11:6 is the ultimate faith verse. It's the defining word on faith, the value of faith in our lives, and how it correlates with the Lord. All of us would eagerly say that we have faith in our lives. We would quickly explain how our faith in the Lord is what keeps us striving to be the best kind of "Christian" we can be. We tell ourselves

that our faith must be maintained so that we will never be the person who fails to please the Lord. Each one of us wants to please the Lord.

However, a lack of faith is one of those things that we makes excuses for in the difficult times because it's just too hard, and surely God understands that I didn't have the faith to withstand that test. We write off our lack of faith, never questioning whether we have pleased the Lord. After all, we are just human, right? None of us are perfect, nor can we live a life without failures. Surely the Lord understands that some things are just more difficult and challenging to have faith for. Surely the Lord will view our weakness through the lens of humankind rather than through the lens of abiding in Christ.

The problem with this kind of thinking is that we never consider how faith may be the key to unlocking our prophetic destinies. We never make ourselves apply faith to the prophetic declarations in our lives. We have a dream, a vision, or a word that is steeped with a prophetic destiny for our life. We rarely consider the importance of applying faith to those words. We have the tendency to think that because we dreamed about it, had a vision for it, or someone prophesied it, those things will simply come to pass. We tell ourselves to agree and say amen so that we are connected to those words. When we have prophetic words revealed to us, we get so excited that

God is speaking that we fail to remember that there is an immediate spiritual battle engaged over those words. The enemy does not want to see the prophetic fulfilled in our lives. The enemy wants to see those words fail to reach full maturation. He celebrates our failures as we unwillingly help the enemy keep those words from maturing.

It's amazing how many times we have prophetic dreams but never write them down. We wake up, ponder those events, and then quickly move on with our day. We go about our daily lives, and suddenly we encounter a supernatural vision that alters our moment in time, yet we treat it the same as the dream. Just a moment in time. We attend our church services or special events and have a guest who receives a word of knowledge or has a prophetic word directly to us. We get excited, but like the dreams and visions, we go home with no intention of connecting those words with our destiny. I hear so many people talk about how they put those words on the shelf until they come to fruition. Truth is, we place them on the "hypothetical shelf," never to remember them except at the moment we feel like the Lord has failed to come through with what He promised to do.

We get angry with the Lord. We get frustrated, believing that the Lord lied or somehow is punishing us for our failures. We exclaim how we are hurting, and how could the Lord not move on our behalf? We think

that we know how the prophetic works, and yet we fail to see the prophetic fulfilled. How could the Lord make these prophetic declarations and then permit our lives to be a constant shadow of failure after failure? Does the Lord not care about whether or not the dreams come true? Why would He give us these visions only to never see them become reality? It had to have been a false prophet, or they were prophesying out of their flesh. These are the questions that we find ourselves asking. Yet we never ask ourselves whether or not we did our part in the fulfillment of the promises. It's always easier to blame others when we aren't willing to look at our own lives. We need someone or something to blame, but we can't be the ones who missed it.

Of course, we are quick to say that we receive these words or declarations, which means we are saying that we believe them, to an extent. But that's where it all stops. We say we believe, but do we really? Believing in something and having faith for something are two different things.

Let's take a look at the definitions of these two terms in Hebrews 11.

And without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must **believe** that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith (*pistis*): persuasion, credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness

of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession; by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself: assurance (Strong's #G4102).

Believe (*pisteuo*): to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), credits, by implication, to en*trust* (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ), commit (to trust), put *trust* in (Strong's #G4100).

When we look at the meaning of these two words, we find similarities in their definitions, and yet we also find distinctions. One of those distinctions is that the word *believe* is connected to *trust*. So many times we want to have faith in people, but we are hindered because the person has failed us before. With that in mind, we recognize that it's not that we simply don't have faith in them, but we are struggling to connect that faith with trust. Let me say it this way: we will be quick to say that we have faith in the Lord for our lives, but do we trust Him with our lives? Oh, I know that many will quickly respond that they trust the Lord, but their lives rarely reveal that trust.

We think that faith has the ability to stand alone, and because of that thought we have convinced ourselves that faith is nothing more than believing in the Lord. We rarely connect faith with trust and sincere belief

with faith. We have an equation. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, He died for our sins, and He was raised from death unto life so that we may receive Him as our Savior—and we call that faith. Occasionally we make the statement that we have "faith to overcome" or maybe the "faith to believe" for something that we are anticipating. I get it, and I am in no way implying that people are wrong to make those kinds of statements, because they are true. I am saying that we don't understand how faith really works.

How can this be? It is because we have made faith into the Santa Claus formula—believe in X in order to get Y. Many have inadvertently made prophetic promises following this pattern. If we don't believe or have faith in the promises (Santa Claus) then they won't come true. So we naturally say we believe the prophecy, and that's that. When we live the life of faith in this manner, we have a problem, because sometimes we see promises fulfilled and sometimes we don't. Why? We said we believed the word, right? Without realizing it, we start to feel like God is either good or bad based on whether or not the promises were fulfilled. We make His goodness and faithfulness conditional. We don't ask ourselves if we have done our part and cultivated those promises by trusting in the Lord with our lives or walking the promise out in faith. We forget that God cannot lie.

WHAT UNBELIEF IS

In Mark 9, we find the story of a father longing for help concerning his son who is being tormented by a demonic spirit. The scriptures tell us how the demon spirit would throw this child into the fire in order to burn him alive. The demonic spirit would not stop there but would throw the young boy into the water in an effort to drown him. The torment resembled what we now would call epileptic seizures. This demonic spirit was vicious, causing the boy to foam at the mouth and gnash his teeth, and causing his body to become stiff as a board.

The father attempted to help his son by bringing him to the disciples. Unfortunately for the father, at that time the disciples were not strong enough to deliver the boy from the demonic spirit. The father made a desperate plea to Jesus for His help concerning his son. It's at this moment we see one of the more peculiar ways that Jesus could have responded to the father. Jesus addressed the father and the crowd that was gathered by calling them a "faithless generation." Then Jesus asked the question, "How long shall I be with you?" Jesus was literally asking how long should He put up with this faithless generation. At this point, Jesus does not sound like He cares for the boy, the father, and potentially the crowd. Honestly, in today's culture this is where an overwhelming majority would have gotten offended and walked out on Jesus.

Think about how this response would have caused many today to get mad at what appeared to be a lack of love from Jesus. Here is this father, hurting and in desperation for his son, pleading for Jesus to help him. And yet Jesus calls him faithless and ask how much longer He should put up with him.

It's easy to take offense in the midst of our battles. It's easy to be hurt by others when we are already hurting emotionally, mentally, and/or spiritually. However, do we take the time to consider what Jesus was trying to say to the father and the crowd? Do we take the time in the midst of our greatest trials to understand what others are saying to us? Or do we simply look for the answer to our problem without recognizing the challenge to see God (the Father) at work in us? Though it first appears that Jesus is being offensive toward the father, He is actually about to reveal what the father is capable of within himself.

When the boy was brought to Jesus, He immediately saw how the demonic spirit was tormenting the boy. Jesus asked the father how long it had been occurring, and the father told Jesus that this had been happening since he was a little child. Then, Jesus gave the father something to realize in his own life. Jesus said to the father, "If you can believe, all things are possible to those who believe." The father quickly responded with a statement that we

have repeated many times throughout the years: "I do believe, but help my unbelief."

Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

That single verse has been used by so many who are struggling with faith. We use it as an opportunity to acknowledge unbelief in our lives. Like the father, we quickly declare that we believe, yet as soon as we say that we often quickly follow it up with the acknowledgment that we also have unbelief. "I do believe; help my unbelief" has become such a prominent statement in our Christian language. Unbelief has become like a rite of passage allowing us to live our lives being okay with not having enough faith. We sincerely believe that if we admit our struggle in the area of lacking in faith, somehow God will wink and be okay with that.

We know from scripture that every person is given a measure of faith (see Rom. 12:3). That presents a very challenging problem for us. We can all agree that we have been given this measure of faith, but it would appear at times that the faith of others is greater than our own. Does the Lord give more "measure" to someone else and your measure is limited? That word *measure* is *metron* (Strong's #G3358); it means a limited portion. Over the years I have come to understand that the "measure" of faith that is being spoken of here is what the Lord gives

every person so that humankind will be able to one day connect their faith with the reality that Jesus is the Son of God. That measure of faith is enough to help us believe in Jesus, that He came to this world, died, and was resurrected for us. God positioned faith to already be activated within us.

Here lies the problem. We begin to tell ourselves that unbelief means that we believe partially, but that's okay because we are limited in our ability to fully believe. We had faith, just not enough faith; therefore the Lord understands our "unbelief." When we tell the Lord that we have unbelief, we are ultimately saying that we believe but our faith is weak and it's not where it should be.

Sadly, we have convinced ourselves that unbelief is okay. There is irony in telling ourselves that somehow God is okay with a lack of faith. Consider the times that Jesus rebuked the disciples for a lack of faith, and then ask yourself: "How do I get a pass and they did not?" Strangely, we have convinced ourselves that somehow the Lord is not displeased with us. We know Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him," yet we are quick to explain away our limited faith because of unbelief. Did we ever stop to ask ourselves if we are wrong, though? What if we have spent years acting like a lack of faith is

something that God just winks at (after all, we are just humans), and we have created an excuse because we aren't willing to trust the Lord?

Unbelief (*apaistia*): faithlessness, (negatively) disbelief (lack of Christian faith), or (positively) unfaithfulness (disobedience) (Strong's #G570).

Looking at this particular definition should shake us up because part of the meaning of unbelief is *disobe-dience*. And yet, it doesn't seem like it's enough to help us overcome our unwillingness to walk in faith. What's interesting is that this word *apaistia* is actually from another Greek word, *apistos* (Strong's #G571). This word means *untrustworthy*. It's important that we get this because it reveals to us that the father of the epileptic boy was telling Jesus that he believed that Jesus could heal his son, but he did not *trust* Jesus enough to heal him. He may have lacked trust because of the disciples' earlier failure; even so, we have to see the true meaning behind the statement of unbelief.

Please allow me to reiterate the importance of what I am saying about "unbelief" and how we use it. When we determine that having little to no faith is okay with God, we just make ourselves feel better about our circumstances or situations. I recognize that there will always be times in our lives when we may struggle in our faith. When we are greatly tested in the midst of a storm, our

faith can become weak and even seem as though it is not there. This should be why we reach out to the Lord for help and reach out to our brothers and sisters in Christ who can pray for us and with us. The beauty of the family of God is that we are not required to walk this alone. We call upon the Lord and we call upon others who can help strengthen us in our weakest moments.

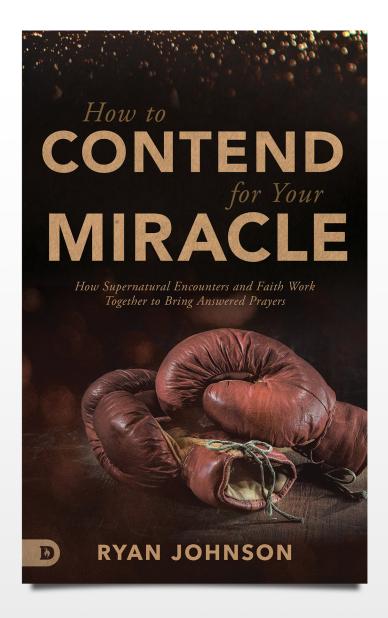
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Trust in the Lord completely, and do not rely on your own opinions. With all your heart rely on him to guide you, and he will lead you in every decision you make. Become intimate with him in whatever you do, and he will lead you wherever you go. Don't think for a moment that you know it all (Proverbs 3:5-7 TPT).

We need to recognize that the root of our problem with faith is often our inability to *trust in the Lord*. We say that we have faith in prophetic dreams, visions, and/ or words from the Lord. Yet many times our hinderance is not a lack of faith; we just don't trust the Lord to see the promises fulfilled. We fail to have faith in the Lord because we aren't willing to trust Him with the process

What We Think We Know

of fulfillment. What we think we know is often not what we know at all.



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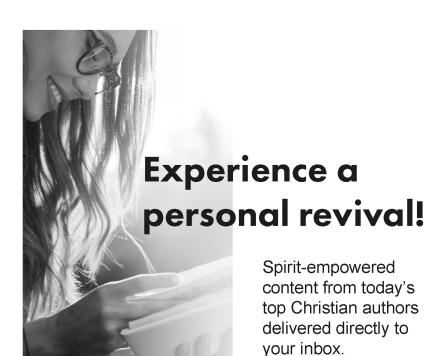
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ABOUT RYAN JOHNSON

Ryan is dedicated to helping equip the Body of Christ to awaken the nations with a prophetic call of a rising Ekklesia. He is a son of God, husband, and father of four. Ryan is a prophetic voice devoted to the righteousness of Christ, with the demonstration of the Father's Heart in regions, individuals, and the Church across the world.

On November 30, 1997, Ryan gave his life to Christ and immediately began serving the Lord. Ryan has served as a senior pastor, associate pastor and students pastor. Ryan is now a full-time itinerant minister traveling throughout the United States and many different nations. Ryan and his family now reside in Panama City, Florida, where he also serves as an overseer for High Praise Leadership School of Ministry with High Praise Worship Center.

For more information about Ryan, please visit: www.ryanjohnson.us



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