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INTRODUCTION—HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

Without a biblical worldview, all the great teaching goes in one ear and out the other. There are no intellectual pegs . . . in the mind of the individual to hang these truths on. So they just pass through. They don't stick. They don't make a difference.

GEORGE BARNA

Centuries ago, when the Jews were in exile and in despair, they cried out to God, “How should we then live?”¹ The same question rings down through the ages. How shall *we* live today?

The year 2000 marks the beginning of the new millennium—an extraordinary moment for the Christian church. After two thousand years, the birth of the Son of God still remains the defining moment of history. Jesus founded a church that could not be destroyed—not by the deaths of his followers in the Colosseum, not by barbarian hordes or mighty Turkish emperors, not by modern tyrants or the power of sophisticated ideologies. After two thousand years, we can affirm that Jesus Christ is indeed the same yesterday, today, and forever. This alone should make the opening decade of the millennium a cause for jubilation, a time when Christians boldly and confidently recommit to engaging contemporary culture with a fresh vision of hope.

Yet my sense is that most Christians are anything but jubilant. And for good reason. We are experiencing some of the same sense of exile that the Jews did in the time of Ezekiel. We live in a culture that is at best morally indifferent. A culture in which Judeo-Christian values are mocked and where immorality in high places is not only ignored but even rewarded in the voting booth. A culture in which violence, banality, meanness, and disintegrating personal behavior are destroying civility and endangering the very life of our

communities. A culture in which the most profound moral dilemmas are addressed by the cold logic of utilitarianism.

What's more, when Christians do make good-faith efforts to halt this slide into barbarism, we are maligned as intolerant or bigoted. Small wonder that many people have concluded that the "culture war" is over—and that we have lost. Battle weary, we are tempted to withdraw into the safety of our sanctuaries, to keep busy by plugging into every program offered by our megachurches, hoping to keep ourselves and our children safe from the coming desolation.

Right after signing the contract for this book, and while still plagued by writer's remorse (was I really convinced that this book needed to be written?), my wife, Patty, and I visited old friends for a weekend and attended their local evangelical church, which is well known for its biblical preaching. I found the message solidly scriptural and well delivered. That is, until the pastor outlined for the congregation his definition of the church's mission: to prepare for Jesus' return through prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, and witnessing. In that instant, all lingering doubts about whether I should write this book evaporated.

Don't get me wrong. We need prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, and witnessing. But if we focus exclusively on these disciplines—and if in the process we ignore our responsibility to redeem the surrounding culture—our Christianity will remain privatized and marginalized.

Turning our backs on the culture is a betrayal of our biblical mandate and our own heritage because it denies God's sovereignty over all of life. Nothing could be deadlier for the church—or more ill-timed. To abandon the battlefield now is to desert the cause just when we are seeing the first signs that historic Christianity may be on the verge of a great breakthrough. The process of secularization begun in the Enlightenment is grinding to a halt, and many people believe that the new millennium will mark "the desecularization of world history."²

Do we sound delusional? Or like Pollyannas wearing rose-colored glasses? If you think so, consider just a few signs of the times.

First, several cultural indicators are at long last reversing, which suggests that some of the most destructive pathologies are beginning to decline. The divorce rate is down 19 percent since 1981; the birth rate among unmarried teens is down 7.5 percent since 1994; abortion is down 15.3 percent since 1990; and there has been an astonishing 37 percent decrease in people on welfare since 1993. Even crime is down, despite a surge in the teen population, the age-group that commits the most crime.³

Second, moral discourse is reviving. Just a few years ago, it was all but

impossible to discuss serious moral issues in public forums. In 1997, for example, I was invited to a popular week-in-review program where Washington talking heads dispense inside-the-beltway wisdom to the masses. In the course of the discussion, I suggested that the breakdown of the inner cities has a moral component—only to be greeted with incredulous stares. After an awkward pause, the host quickly changed the subject. But only a year later, as a result of the Monica Lewinsky–White House scandals, I was asked to appear on most major news shows in the country to discuss, of all things, the nature of repentance. For the first time in years, many people are actually willing to admit that private immorality has public consequences.

Why are cultural trends shifting? Because modernity has played out its destructive logical consequences. All the ideologies, all the utopian promises that have marked this century have proven utterly bankrupt. Americans have achieved what modernism presented as life's great shining purpose: individual autonomy, the right to do what one chooses. Yet this has not produced the promised freedom; instead, it has led to the loss of community and civility, to kids shooting kids in schoolyards, to citizens huddling in gated communities for protection. We have discovered that we cannot live with the chaos that inevitably results from choice divorced from morality.

As a result, Americans are groping for something that will restore the shattered bonds of family and community, something that will make sense of life. If the church turns inward now, if we focus only on our own needs, we will miss the opportunity to provide answers at a time when people are sensing a deep longing for meaning and order. It is not enough to focus exclusively on the spiritual, on Bible studies and evangelistic campaigns, while turning a blind eye to the distinctive tensions of contemporary life. We must show the world that Christianity is more than a private belief, more than personal salvation. We must show that it is a comprehensive life system that answers all of humanity's age-old questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Does life have any meaning and purpose?

As we will argue in these pages, Christianity offers the only viable, rationally defensible answers to these questions. Only Christianity offers a way to understand both the physical and the moral order. Only Christianity offers a comprehensive worldview that covers all areas of life and thought, every aspect of creation. Only Christianity offers a way to live in line with the real world.

But if Christians are going to carry this life-giving message to the world, we must first understand it and live it ourselves. We must understand that God's revelation is the source of *all truth*, a comprehensive framework for all of reality. Abraham Kuyper, the great nineteenth-century theologian

who served as prime minister of Holland, said that the dominating principle of Christian truth is not soteriological (i.e., justification by faith) but rather cosmological (i.e., the sovereignty of the triune God over the whole cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible).⁴ The entire cosmos can be understood only in relation to God.

The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence. This failure has been crippling in many ways. For one thing, we cannot answer the questions our children bring home from school, so we are incapable of preparing them to answer the challenges they face. For ourselves, we cannot explain to our friends and neighbors why we believe, and we often cannot defend our faith. And we do not know how to organize our lives correctly, allowing our choices to be shaped by the world around us. What's more, by failing to see Christian truth in every aspect of life, we miss great depths of beauty and meaning: the thrill of seeing God's splendor in the intricacies of nature or hearing his voice in the performance of a great symphony or detecting his character in the harmony of a well-ordered community.

Most of all, our failure to see Christianity as a comprehensive framework of truth has crippled our efforts to have a redemptive effect on the surrounding culture. At its most fundamental level, the so-called culture war is a clash of belief systems. It is, as Kuyper put it, a clash of principle against principle, of worldview against worldview. Only when we see this can we effectively evangelize a post-Christian culture, bringing God's righteousness to bear in the world around us.

Evangelism and cultural renewal are both divinely ordained duties. God exercises his sovereignty in two ways: through *saving grace* and *common grace*. We are all familiar with saving grace; it is the means by which God's power calls people who are dead in their trespasses and sins to new life in Christ. As God's servants, we may at times be agents of his saving grace, evangelizing and bringing people to Christ. But few of us really understand common grace, which is the means by which God's power sustains creation, holding back the sin and evil that result from the Fall and that would otherwise overwhelm his creation like a great flood. As agents of God's common grace, we are called to help sustain and renew his creation, to uphold the created institutions of family and society, to pursue science and scholarship, to create works of art and beauty, and to heal and help those suffering from the results of the Fall.

Because we wanted to communicate a fuller sense of how we cooperate with God's common grace, Nancy Pearcey and I felt compelled to write this book. Our goal is to equip believers to present Christianity as a total

worldview and life system, and to seize the opportunity of the new millennium to be nothing less than God's agents in building a new Christian culture.

To that end, we have divided our discussion into five parts. In part 1, we explain what we mean by the term *worldview*, why it is important, and how to develop the skills to “think christianly” about all of life. In parts 2, 3, and 4, we take you through the contours of a Christian worldview: first, the *creation* of both the universe and human life; second, the *fall* into sin and how it marred God's good creation; and third, how God has provided a means of *redemption*.

These categories provide the means to compare and contrast the various ideas and philosophies competing for allegiance in today's world, for they cover the central questions that any worldview must answer:

1. Creation—Where did we come from, and who are we?
2. Fall—What has gone wrong with the world?
3. Redemption—What can we do to fix it?

This method of analysis is indispensable, for it will enable each of us to discern and defend the truth of what we believe. For Christianity is, after all, a reasonable faith, solidly grounded in human experience. It provides a worldview that fits the structure of reality and enables us to live in harmony with that structure.

On a personal note, I can't help mentioning that preparing the section on redemption has been one of the most rewarding and exciting experiences of my writing career. The process of contrasting the various false claims of salvation that clamor for our attention turned out to be profoundly faith-affirming. And what became unmistakably clear as we studied and wrote is that only Christianity provides credible, defensible answers to life's most crucial questions, and only Christianity offers a reasonable strategy for how we are to live in the real world.

The final section of the book, part 5, applies the basic worldview principles—creation, fall, redemption—to the restoration of culture. It illustrates how we can use these principles as tools not only to critique the false worldviews holding sway today but also to build a new culture. Examining everything from politics to education to the arts, we give examples of the way the Christian worldview provides a more coherent and rational way of living in the world—examples that provide a rough blueprint for living out a biblical worldview and renewing the culture in whichever arena of life God has placed us.

While this book contains serious and sometimes weighty material, we have written it for laypeople in a style we hope is accessible. For this reason, we have included stories throughout the book to illustrate the principles in

action. If you are interested in a more scholarly, in-depth approach to worldview questions, you will find a good selection of recommended reading at the end of the book.

We will be delighted if you are inspired to read the works on which we have relied most heavily. Our controlling source, of course, is Scripture. Beyond that, we are indebted to many who have gone before us and upon whose shoulders we stand, especially John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, C. S. Lewis, and Francis Schaeffer.⁵ (For a more complete list, please see the recommended reading section at the back of the book: Or, if you are interested in deepening your understanding of this book by doing individual or group study, you may want to use the companion study guide published for that purpose.) We have seen our task not as a trailblazing effort to produce new theological revelations or to uncover hidden philosophical insights, but rather as an attempt to renew timeless and enduring truths. C. S. Lewis once wrote that though he was often celebrated for offering innovative thoughts, his only purpose was to present ancient truth in a form that the contemporary generation could understand. That has been our modest aim as well.

Is there yet time in this epic moment, at the dawn of the third millennium, to revive the church's sense of hope and to bear witness to the immutable truth of biblical revelation? Can a culture be rebuilt so that all the world can see in its splendor and glory the contours of God's kingdom? Emphatically yes. Pope John Paul II has urged Christians everywhere to work to make the new millennium a "springtime" of Christianity. We can indeed make the year 2000 the beginning of a new season for the faith.

For that to happen, however, we must first listen to the answer God gave his people when they cried out, "How should we then live?" Through the prophet Ezekiel, God admonished his people to repent—turn *from* their evil ways and turn *toward* him—and to show their neighbors that their hope was in his justice and righteousness.

God's word to us today is precisely the same. And to unfold what obedience to that word means, we begin our journey in an unlikely place, among unlikely people, where you will first descend into hell and later catch a glimpse of heaven. Our opening story reveals the pattern by which we must redeem the world around us.

Soli Deo Gloria

Charles W. Colson

Nancy R. Pearcey

April 1999

Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER I

A NEW CREATION

In Ecuador, the peaks of the Andes jut more than two miles into thinning air. Within their cratered throat, the green incisor-shaped mountains hold the old colonial center of Quito, its ornate Spanish architecture surrounded by poured-concrete high-rises. Puffy clouds drawn through high mountain passes drift low over the city. Beneath them, banks of pink and white houses scatter like petals over the base of the mountains.

From the air, Quito is an exotic jungle orchid, appearing suddenly amid the foliage. But in its center is a place where the two forces vying for allegiance in the human heart become dramatically visible in an allegory of good and evil, heaven and hell.

In December 1995, I traveled to Quito with a group of Prison Fellowship friends to visit the deteriorating García Moreno Prison, one wing of which had been turned over to Prison Fellowship. We were met at the airport by one of the most remarkable men I've ever known: Dr. Jorge Crespo de Toral, the chairman of Prison Fellowship Ecuador.¹

Though now seventy-five, Crespo remains an imposing figure, tall and patrician, with silvery hair and ruggedly handsome features. Born into aristocracy and educated in the law, he seemed destined for a life of affluence and power. Instead, Jorge Crespo became a labor lawyer and took up the cause of the poor, battling the monopolies that enslaved the workers and filled the pockets of the ruling elite. He became so well known as the

champion of the poor that during one case an owner shouted at him, “So, Dr. Crespo, you are our guardian angel?” Indeed he was, although the industrialists were unwilling to admit it.

During Ecuador’s tumultuous transition from military rule to democracy, Jorge Crespo was twice arrested and imprisoned. But the democratic forces ultimately prevailed, and in the 1960s, he was selected to help draft Ecuador’s constitution. He was also a candidate in the nation’s first presidential election, finishing a strong third. In the midst of all this, Crespo found time to write and publish poetry as well as literary criticism, winning a well-deserved reputation as a writer and a statesman.

But it was not his literary or political accomplishments that drew me to Ecuador. By the time I met him, Jorge Crespo had forsaken a personal career in politics and was engaged in what he considered the most important task of his life: reforming Ecuador’s criminal justice system and its prisons.



I WILL NEVER forget the moment we arrived at García Moreno Prison in the center of Quito. The sights and smells are seared indelibly in my memory.

The prison’s white baroque bell tower hovers like an evil eye, while its heavy dome seems to be collapsing into the sprawling old building. Jorge Crespo elbowed his way through the ragged crowds clustered outside—families waiting in hope of a brief visit—and led us to the front entrance, a small doorway at the top of a few steps. On each side of the steps were huge mounds of garbage, decaying in the heat, and the putrid odor was nearly overpowering. The uneven steps were slippery in places, the top step splattered with fresh blood.

“Someone was beaten and then dragged over the threshold,” said Crespo, shaking his head. Such things were routine at García Moreno, he added.

We passed from the sun-drenched street into the dim, narrow passageways in the first section of the prison, known as the Detainees Pavilion, where Crespo pointed out several black, cell-like holes in the concrete walls. These were the notorious torture chambers. They were no longer in use—thanks to his work—but still they gaped there, grotesque evidence of their bloody history. Knowing that Crespo himself had twice been cast into this prison, I watched him, wondering what horrors this sight must bring to his mind. At one point his self-control slipped when he told us about a torture cell that was actually a water tank; prisoners had been kept there until

their flesh began decaying and sloughing off the bone—a means of extracting confessions.

As we moved along, we seemed to be descending into darkness, our eyes straining to make out the contours of the narrow passageways, until we came to a series of cells that were still in use. They were eerily illuminated by narrow shafts of light penetrating downward from tiny orifices high on the mold-covered limestone walls. From the walls of each cell hung four bunks, which were nothing more than iron slabs. Twelve inmates shared each cell, so the men had to sleep in shifts or stretch out on the floor, thick with grime and spilled sewage. There was no plumbing, and the air was fetid. Water was brought into the cells in buckets; when empty, these same buckets were filled with waste and hauled back out.

I was stunned. I've been in more than six hundred prisons in forty countries, yet these were some of the worst conditions I had ever seen. Worse than Perm Camp 35, one of the most notorious in the Soviet Gulag. Worse than prisons in the remotest reaches of India, Sri Lanka, and Zambia. Even more startling, the prisoners here had not been convicted of any crimes. The cells in the Detainees Pavilion were for men awaiting trial. In Ecuador, as in much of Latin America, there is no presumption of innocence nor any right to a speedy trial. A detainee can wait four to five years just to come to trial—and sometimes even longer if no one outside is agitating for his rights, knocking almost daily on some prosecutor's door, or paying off some official. There are palms to be greased at every level. In such a system, the poor are powerless, cast into dungeons and easily forgotten.

The guards urged us onward from the cells to a courtyard, where we could see inmates milling about in the open air. The yard was bounded by high-walled cellblocks and monitored by armed guards patrolling the parapets. As we gazed into the courtyard through a barred iron gate, the image was so surreal that I felt I had been transported to a scene of human desperation out of a Dickens novel. The men shuffled around the yard, many dressed in rags and wearing a vacant look of hopelessness on their pale, drawn faces.

A group of garishly made-up women huddling together against one of the walls caught my attention. "What are the women doing in there?" I asked Crespo.

"There are no women in García Moreno," he replied. "When we first started working here, the fathers sometimes brought their children in with them, even little girls, because there was no one else to take care of them. But now we have a home for the children."

Puzzled by his answer, I nodded toward the wall. “Over there. Those women.”

“Oh,” said Crespo. “Those are transvestites and male prostitutes. They usually stay together for protection from the other inmates.”

My heart sank. Truly this was a kingdom of evil. Hell on earth.

Crespo began talking with the official standing at the gate, and he appeared to be arguing with him. Finally Crespo turned to me, shrugged his shoulders and said, “I’m sorry. The guard says it’s impossible to enter the compound. Much too dangerous.”

“Tell him we insist, Jorge. Tell him the minister of justice promised us access.”

No doubt there was a bit of bravado mixed in with my adamant persistence, but I was certain that God had brought us here for a purpose. Crespo resumed his animated conversation with the guard until finally the man, shaking his head in disgust, unlocked the gate.

In the New Testament, Jesus described the gate into heaven as narrow, but this gate into hell was narrow as well. We could pass through only one at a time. Crespo stepped briskly into the yard before I could even collect my thoughts. My heart racing, I moved in behind him.

As we walked to the center of the compound, conversation ceased, and the inmates turned to watch us. I prayed a silent prayer for grace and started speaking. As I did, the men began shuffling toward us. Several were limping; a man who had only one leg had to be helped along by another prisoner. Directly in front of me was a man with an empty eye socket and open sores spotting his face. Several men had scarves covering most of their faces, perhaps to cover sores or to filter the vile smells.

Suddenly, despite the wretched scene before me, I felt the same freedom I’ve known thousands of times in the past years, whether in palaces, universities, or television studios—but especially in prisons. It is that special anointing God gives us to communicate his boundless love to even the most pitiful souls. I will never know who responded to the invitation to receive him that day, but afterward, scores of men reached out to us, many smiling. Yet no one broke the sacred canopy of silence, the sense of God’s presence, that seemed to settle over the courtyard.

As I shook hands or just reached out to touch the shoulders of the men clustered around us, I kept thinking of the time John the Baptist asked whether Jesus was the Messiah. “Tell him,” Jesus replied, that “the blind see, the lame walk, . . . and the Good News is being preached to the poor” (Matt. 11:4-5, NLT).

■ ■ ■

THE HOLY SILENCE held as the guards led us out of the yard and through heavy iron gates into another darkened corridor. Crespo told us that we were approaching the prison area that had been turned over to Prison Fellowship. We walked through a wide door and were ushered into a huge, triple-tiered cellblock.

All at once, we stepped out of the darkness and into a radiant burst of light.

“This is Pavilion C,” Crespo said proudly with a wide smile.

At the far end of the corridor was what looked like an altar, with a huge cross silhouetted against a brightly painted concrete wall. Gathered in an open area before the altar were more than two hundred inmates, who rose up out of their seats, singing and applauding. Some were playing guitars. All were glowing with joy and enthusiasm. Within seconds, we were surrounded, and the prisoners began embracing us like long-separated brothers.

In Pavilion C, Prison Fellowship volunteers and inmate leaders provided rigorous instruction in Christian faith and character development to inmates who were brought out of the other pavilions, including the Detainees Pavilion. Regular worship services were led by a variety of priests and ministers. This was a holy community, a church like none I had ever seen.

Yet Jorge Crespo was quick to point out that Pavilion C was only a stop on the way, a place of preparation. The ultimate destination was Casa de San Pablo (St. Paul’s House), so named because of Paul’s imprisonment in the Philippian jail (see Acts 16:22-34). This was a prison wing for those who had been received into full Christian fellowship and who ministered to the rest of the prisoners. Crespo hustled us on to see it.

Like Pavilion C, Casa de San Pablo was spotlessly clean, with the added beauty of tiled floors and separate dormitories, furnished with wooden bunks made by inmates. Beneath a flight of stairs, the inmates had partitioned off a small prayer closet containing only a bench with a cross on it. Because of the low ceiling, the men had to stoop down upon entering the room, then remain on their knees inside. The prayer closet was in use all day.

Pictures of Christ and other religious symbols were everywhere, and I momentarily forgot that we were in a prison. In fact, it wasn’t called a prison, but “the Home,” and it was populated not by prisoners but by “residents.”

The means by which the Home came into being is nothing less than miraculous. When Crespo first approached authorities about taking over a wing of the prison, these facilities were considered unfit even by García Moreno standards. The bright and airy main room where we now stood,

Crespo told us, was once scarcely more than a cave, dark and unlit, shrouded with spiderwebs. Once he got the go-ahead, however, Christian inmates and an army of volunteers from local churches went to work with shovels and tools. Tradesmen volunteered their services, as did local contractors. Many churches raised money. And overseeing it all was the tall, imposing figure of Jorge Crespo himself, the visionary who could see what others could not—a church inside a prison. It took several years of sweat and sacrificial labor—and no end of Crespo’s cajoling the officials—but eventually the vision became a reality.

That afternoon, as we assembled with residents in the meeting room, I noticed that the windows were barred on only one side: the side facing the main prison compound. The windows facing out to the street were open—a powerful symbol of trust and hope.

The meeting room was dominated by a huge mural, painted across the main wall by the prisoners themselves, depicting the emerging freedom of life in Christ. On the left, a ragged figure huddled in a blue shadow of despair. The next figure turned to the rising sun, and the next traveled toward it. Finally, a figure lifted his hands to heaven in praise of his Creator. The men in this room knew exactly what those symbols meant, for once they had been just like the men in the Detainees Pavilion, without hope and left to rot like garbage. But now they were new creatures in Christ.

As we worshiped together, several men gave stirring testimonies. “Coming to this prison is the best thing that ever happened to me,” said one man, who had been a high-ranking operator in a drug cartel. “I found Jesus here. I don’t care if I ever leave. I just want others to know that this place is not the end. There is hope. God can change us even here—*especially* here.”

The inmates included both Protestants and Catholics, but they drew no distinctions. Bible studies were led by Protestant ministers and by Father Tim, the resident Catholic chaplain. They loved the same Lord, studied the same Word. It was the kind of fellowship one longs for (but seldom finds) in our comfortable North American churches. Perhaps only those who have plumbed the depths of despair and depravity can fully appreciate the futility of life without Christ and can thus learn to love one another in the way Jesus commanded.

Father Tim summed it up best, speaking in his charming Irish lilt. “I never learned about God in seminary,” he said, embracing Jorge Crespo. “I learned about God through this man.”

We, too, had learned about God from this man and the transformation he had helped work in this place. From the time we entered García Moreno, we had not traveled far in physical terms—mere yards. But in spiritual terms

we had made a great journey: from the hell of the Detainees Pavilion to Pavilion C, an analogy of the church here on earth with its struggles, and then to the Home, a foretaste of heaven. A world transformed within a single building. It was nothing short of miraculous.



HOW WAS SUCH a miraculous transformation possible? It all began several years earlier as Jorge Crespo was leaving his career in politics. One Sunday at church, his wife, Laura, was moved by something the priest said in his homily.

“What if we really lived by what we say we believe?” she whispered to her husband.

Crespo smiled, for of late he had been pondering similar questions. And for the first time it struck him full force that his faith was not just a personal matter but a framework for all of life. Everything he did—his literary work, his political work, and his work on behalf of the poor—had to be motivated by God’s truth.

An opportunity to put his convictions into action came in 1984 when Javier Bustamante, the Prison Fellowship regional director, visited Quito and urged Crespo to begin a ministry bringing Christ to prisoners and reforming Ecuador’s criminal justice system. One walk through the Detainees Pavilion at García Moreno convinced Crespo. He was appalled by the filthy, inhumane conditions, by the darkness, hopelessness, and despair. Against the cautions of the authorities, he demanded entrance to some of the punishment cells, where the men quickly recognized him and surrounded him with pleas for help. Most had been there many months, some for years.

When he and Bustamante stepped out into the sunlit street, he said, “All right. I’ll lead the effort.”

Jorge Crespo’s great work had begun. He was sixty-one years old.

Crespo began by campaigning within the national legislature for criminal justice reform. In Ecuador the saying was “The wheels of justice grind slowly, and sometimes they need to be lubricated,” meaning most detainees had to bribe the judges just to see their cases come to trial. The judges reasoned that because they were underpaid, they deserved such rewards. But the legislature, noting the corruption, refused to vote the judiciary better salaries. Thus, those arrested found themselves in a catch-22, and those unable to pay the bribes simply languished in jail for years.

Crespo argued that the right to a speedy trial constitutes one of the hallmarks of democracy, and his persistent advocacy finally paid off when

legislation was passed to guarantee every detainee a trial within three years. (This law has yet to be consistently observed, but its passage gave prisoners throughout Ecuador a significant legal victory.) Yet his crowning accomplishment, as we have seen, was the creation of a prison based on Christian principles.

Pavilion C was a “spiritual boot camp,” preparing its residents for life in Casa de San Pablo, or the Home. And there were no guards within the Home; security was maintained exclusively by internal and external councils. Prisoners were allowed to leave the facility on temporary furlough passes for medical appointments or other urgent business; they also helped carry on the work in Pavilion C and among the prison’s general population. Crespo believed that the transforming power of Christ could so change former criminals that they would even accept responsibility for their own imprisonment.

But Crespo’s experiment was not without its opponents. Many of Ecuador’s “experts” in rehabilitation, the bureaucrats who ran the prison system, bridled at the unflattering comparisons now evident between Prison Fellowship’s work and their own. Furthermore, the guards who ran García Moreno’s black markets rebelled at having their day-to-day activities exposed to the Christian volunteers who constantly trekked into the place. How long would it be before their lucrative enterprises were exposed to something more than inadvertent scrutiny? As a result, the guards began harassing volunteers and confiscating supplies.

Trouble of this sort had been brewing since Crespo’s first efforts in the prison. But with the opening of the Home, the campaign to sabotage the work became far more aggressive.

In early 1995, guards greeted two residents of the Home, a Canadian and an Israeli, returning from a morning’s furlough granted for medical appointments, and marched them to the warden’s office. There, they were told that the Home had been closed and that they were being returned to the regular prison.

The two men were horrified. The warden suggested that they take the easy way out and simply leave. The men refused, demanding to see Crespo, but the warden grimly began filling out a form.

“I’m filing the report of your escape,” he said and had the two residents thrown out of the prison. The men had no option but to “escape.”

Within a short time a manhunt was underway. The Canadian and Israeli embassies were drawn into the matter, guaranteeing this would be no minor incident. But the warden’s real intent became clear when the police report named Crespo as an accessory to the escape, charging him with negligence for allowing the prisoners to leave. Hostile authorities took advantage

of the opportunity to suspend the in-prison ministry, threatening that the residents would be cast back into the Detainees Pavilion.

The warden had done his work well, and all the official reports lined up. It seemed to be an open-and-shut case.

Providentially, the testimony of a released inmate, a man who had been led to Christ by Crespo, created the first break in the solid phalanx of officials who were determined to scuttle the project and put Crespo behind bars. The inmate, it turned out, was a friend of a high government official, and word soon spread that Crespo was not implicated after all. Negotiations began with the police chief, the minister of government, and the prosecutors.

It was during those negotiations that I made the visit to García Moreno described earlier in this chapter. At that time Crespo told me that he fully expected to be sent to prison; yet not for a moment did he consider backing down, either in his human rights campaign or his ministry in the prison.

“I know why Jesus Christ lives among the poor,” he told the residents at the Home during those tension-filled days. “I know why he became poor in order to serve humankind. Only the poor are rich in mercy. Only the poor possess nothing—nothing but gratitude.

“Whatever happens, whether I am imprisoned once again, whether I am separated from my family as you have been, whether the work is damaged and we are separated from each other, we shall never be separated from the love of Christ. Neither height nor depth, nor any human power, can separate us from that love!”



IN THE END, the conspiracy to destroy Crespo’s work and put him behind bars was exposed, and in May 1997, all charges against him were dropped. And in the years since our visit, García Moreno Prison has become an even more striking parable of God’s kingdom at work in the midst of a fallen world. Although guards and government officials continue to harass Crespo (the work was even suspended for a second time), enormous progress continues to be made.

By nurturing the flower of justice in what was once the most evil of gardens, by living out the reality of being a new creation in Christ, Jorge Crespo has helped to create a whole new world for others. And the forces of hell are being conquered by the power of heaven.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

1. Ezekiel 33:10, KJV.
2. Richard John Neuhaus, “The Religious Century Nears,” *Wall Street Journal*, 6 July 1995.
3. Richard Nadler, “Glum and Glummer: Positive Change in U.S. Culture Helped by Conservatives,” *National Review* 50, no. 18 (September 26, 1998): 26.
4. Abraham Kuyper, from his Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton in 1898, now abridged as *Christianity: A Total World and Life System* (Marlborough, N.H.: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1996), 46.
5. The challenges Kuyper poses, especially in his masterful Stone Lectures on Calvinism, remained uppermost in our minds through the two years we labored over this manuscript. The Christian “does not for a moment think of limiting himself to theology and contemplation, leaving the other sciences as of a lower character, in the hands of unbelievers,” Kuyper writes. On the contrary, “looking upon it as his task to know God in all His works, he is conscious of having been called to fathom with all the energy of his intellect, things terrestrial, as well as things celestial” (*Christianity: A Total World and Life System*, 84). As Kuyper put it, not one square inch of the universe should remain outside the claim of Christ. This is surely what the apostle Paul meant when he told the church at Corinth to take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NASB).

CHAPTER 1

A NEW CREATION

1. In addition to my trip to García Moreno Prison, we obtained information for this chapter from later interviews with Dr. Jorge Crespo de Toral and from records he supplied. Additional background for the story was provided by Prison Fellowship staff members and by Ellen Santilli Vaughn’s pamphlet on the work in Ecuador, *Lights in the Darkness: The Church behind the Wall in South America*, published by Prison Fellowship.

RECOMMENDED READING

WORLDVIEW

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HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY GUIDE

The lessons that follow are designed to guide you through a detailed and practical study of *How Now Shall We Live?* which we think you will find to be a provocative and informative, disturbing and hopeful, challenging and inspiring book. It is a call to arms for the members of the Christian community to break free of the intellectual and spiritual constraints that have pushed the church to the margin of society. The goal of this book is to equip us to begin the work of renewing and restoring the culture.

Session 1—the first thirteen lessons—covers the three worldview questions:

- Where did we come from, and who are we?
- What has gone wrong with the world?
- What can we do to fix it?

It explores the Christian worldview and demonstrates its superiority to the opposing worldviews of naturalism, Darwinism, moral relativism, multiculturalism, pragmatism, utopianism, existentialism, and post-modernism.

Session 2—the second set of thirteen lessons—addresses the follow-up question: How now shall we live? It challenges us to take seriously our responsibility to engage the world and be God's redeeming force to influence the family, education, the neighborhood, work, law and politics, science, the arts, and popular culture.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN EACH LESSON

With the exception of the last lesson, all the lessons follow the same format. The section marked **Observe** is designed to lead you in your reading of the assigned parts of *How Now Shall We Live?* Read through the questions *before* you begin reading the book because they will guide you in knowing what to look for in the chapters.

The section headed **Reflect** will take you through a study of one or more Scripture passages that will help you to think biblically about the subject, and to ensure that your growing Christian worldview is firmly established on the foundation of God's Word.

The section marked **Apply** will help you to think about what the ideas in the chapters mean for your life. Here you will have an opportunity to be honest about your own needs for Christian growth and to chart paths for a more powerful experience of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The final section, marked **Notes/Questions**, gives you space to record notes about the chapter, insights or observations you may have, or unanswered questions you would like to share with a group.

The final lesson in Session 2 is designed to help you review what you have learned in this study and to establish a comprehensive plan for personal growth and ministry.

WHO CAN USE THIS GUIDE

We have designed this guide with enough flexibility to be used by either individuals or groups. Some people will want to use these lessons for their personal study of the book.

Others will study the book with a group, whether that be a church group, a book group, or a group of neighbors. In such a setting, the study guide provides questions not only for personal preparation but also for group discussion and response.

We encourage you to study this book with a group, which will provide a forum for discussion, a springboard for action, and a tool for accountability. We don't expect you to agree with everything we say in *How Now Shall We Live?* But we do anticipate that the book will provoke lively discussion about a variety of themes and issues. We hope that your group wrestles with ideas presented in the book. We also hope that you come to a deeper understanding of your worldview. But most of all we hope that you are moved to act, to map out goals and strategies for becoming God's redeeming force in a new millennium.

As we said in the introduction to *How Now Shall We Live?*, the book

is merely a beginning point for you to pursue what it means to live out a Christian worldview. Take a serious look at the list of resources in the recommended reading section at the end of the book. Choose several titles to deepen your understanding of specific topics that interest you.

Our prayer is that God will bless this project and use it to bring profound renewal and revival in his church and our world.

CHRISTIANITY IS A WORLDVIEW

Christianity is a *worldview*, that is, a way of understanding every aspect of the world and human life. For many of you, this is a new way of thinking about faith in Jesus Christ. But it is the *biblical* way, and once you grasp and begin to make use of it, a worldview understanding of Christianity will bring new excitement, enthusiasm, and power to your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Read the introduction and chapters 1 and 2.

OBSERVE

- 1 According to the introduction, how has failing to see Christianity as a worldview crippled Christians?
- 2 What is the difference between saving grace and common grace?
- 3 What is the purpose of *How Now Shall We Live*?
- 4 Summarizing from chapter 1, make a list of the differences between the Detainees Pavilion of the García Moreno Prison and the wing that had been given over to the Prison Fellowship (PF) leaders:
 - Conditions in the Detainees Pavilion
 - Conditions in the PF Wing
- 5 To what may we attribute these differences?
- 6 In what ways is the García Moreno Prison a parable of God's kingdom at work in the midst of a fallen world?
- 7 According to chapter 2, what is a *worldview*?
- 8 What are the three questions that form the grid through which all worldviews can be evaluated?
- 9 What is the basis for the Christian worldview?
- 10 What is the "false dichotomy" that plagues much of contemporary evangelicalism?

- 11 What are the great commission and the cultural commission? How do we “engage the world”?

REFLECT

- 12 The Bible uses many contrasts to show that the Christian life is very different from life in the world. For example, Ephesians 2:1-5 speaks of the contrast between being dead in sins and being alive in Christ. What other contrasts can you find in Scripture?
- 13 Read Ephesians 4:17-24, a classic passage comparing life in sin with life in Christ. How does Paul describe the effects of sin on those who still live in it (vv. 17-19)?
- 14 Verse 20 is pivotal. What event in our lives cuts us off from the life of sin and sets us on a new course? Have you come to experience this?
- 15 What differences should new life in Christ make in our lives (vv. 21-24)?
- 16 What is the role of the mind in helping us to begin realizing this new life in Christ (compare vv. 17-19 with vv. 22-24)?
- 17 In what ways would people who have been “made new in the attitude of [their] minds” look at life differently from people who are “darkened in their understanding”?

APPLY

- 18 What new insights have you gained from these first two chapters?
- 19 How do you hope that reading this book will enrich or enhance your relationship with Christ?
- 20 In what areas of your life do you see your worldview having an impact? To help you respond to this question, make a list of the places you go and the kinds of activities you are involved with during a typical week. Be comprehensive and specific. Place a C next to the involvements that you can honestly say are shaped by a Christian worldview.
- 21 Which of these areas still need to be influenced by a Christian worldview? Place an X next to each item that could use more “renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).
- 22 How can your life begin to change as a result of renewing your mind according to a Christian worldview in these areas and activities?
- 23 What prayer requests come to mind as a result of studying these chapters?