



COUNTER CULTURE

SCRIPTURE & PRAYER GUIDE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

DAVID PLATT

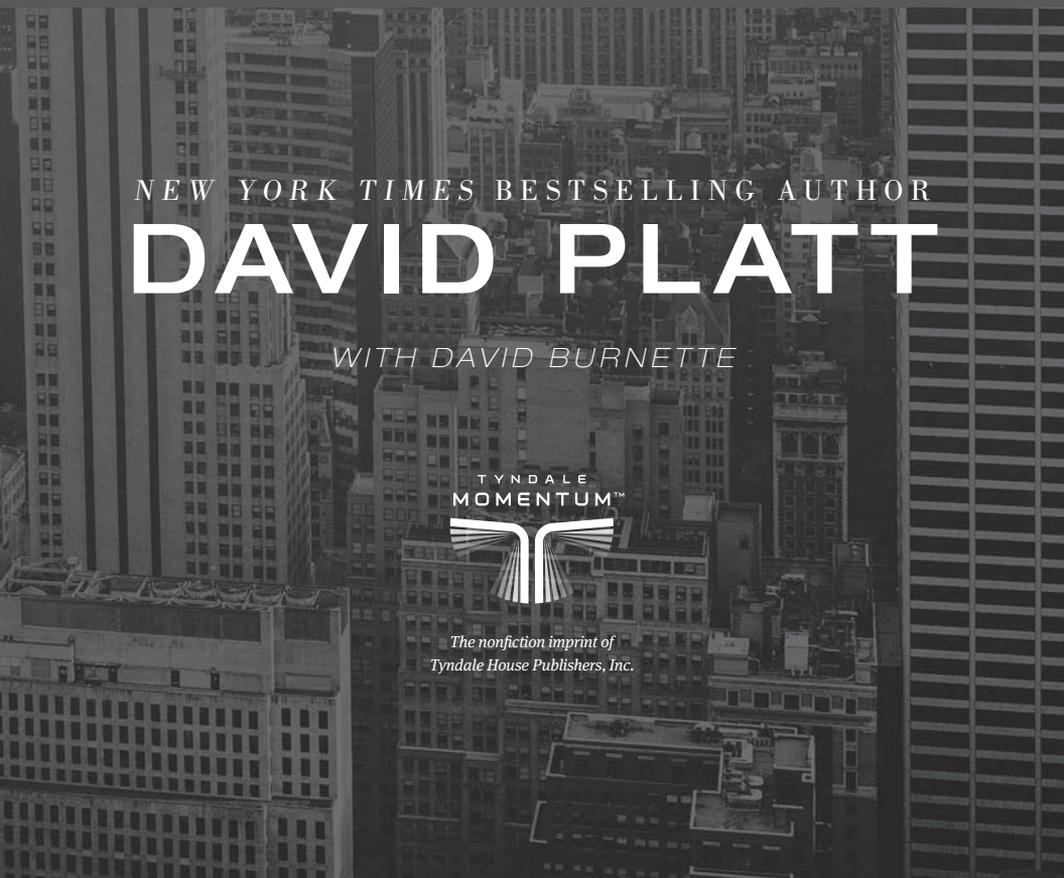
WITH DAVID BURNETTE

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Counter Culture Scripture and Prayer Guide

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Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.

PSALM 115:3

ANGER. DESPAIR. FEAR. WORRY. For Christians who live in a culture like ours, these are all-too-common reactions to an environment that is increasingly hostile to God and his truth. Even basic institutions like marriage are being questioned and undermined. Then, to make things worse, the sheer size and complexity of global problems such as poverty and sex slavery can make us feel helpless. How can we be faithful to Christ in a world like this?

Before we think about engaging culture and standing for Christ, we need to get the right perspective. Yes, the problems we face are serious, but we serve a God who created all things and is sovereign over every detail of his creation. This God has also promised us that his purposes will prevail and that he will never abandon his people. Followers of Christ in all generations have faced opposition and persecution, and God has been faithful to sustain their faith and to empower their witness. “In the world you will have tribulation,” Jesus told his disciples. “But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). This God-centered focus is the starting point for engaging culture.

LOOKING TO A SOVEREIGN GOD

ENGAGING CULTURE STARTS with looking to and trusting in the God who is sovereign over culture. We need his grace, his wisdom, and his power at work within us if we are to speak and act in a way that bears witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is this God-centered and God-exalting posture that will keep us from despair on the one hand and self-reliance on the other. As Christians we must be confident in God.

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

[God's] dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as

nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

DANIEL 4:34-35

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

JUDE 1:24-25

Responding in Prayer

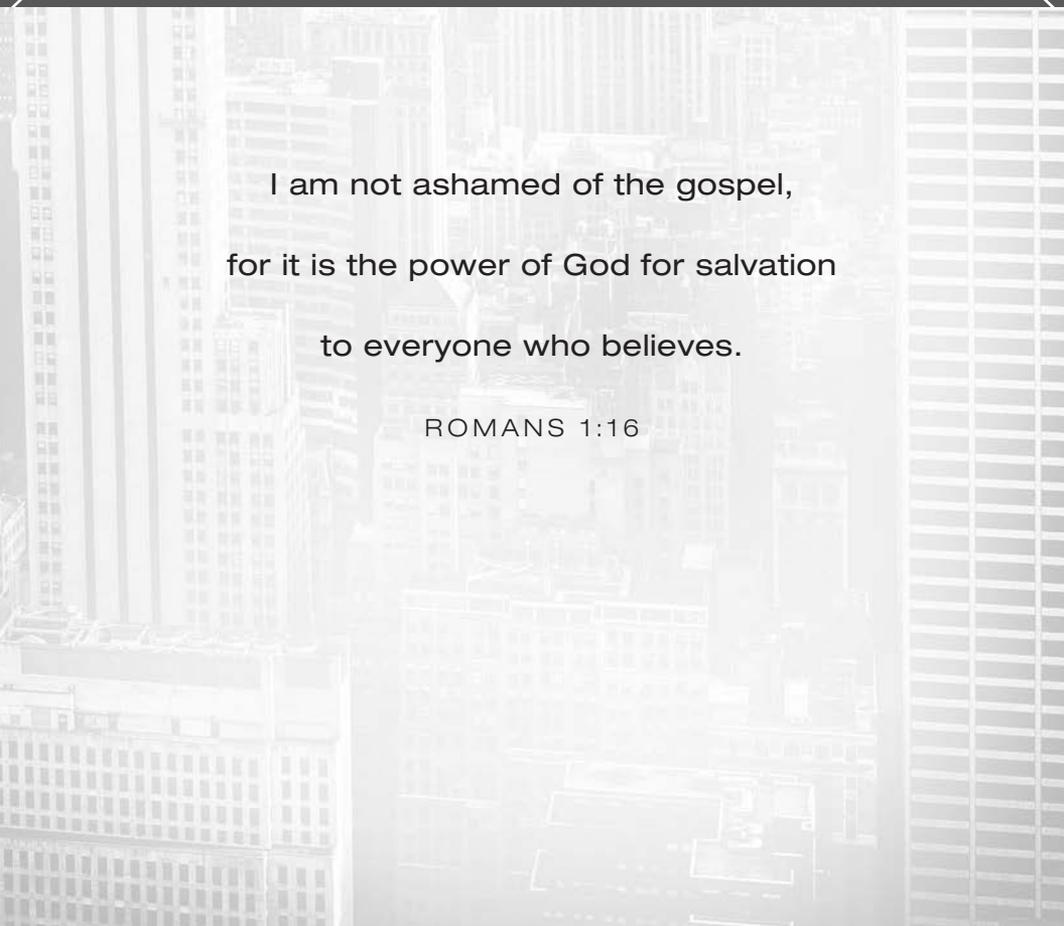
- Praise God for his sovereignty over all things and people. Express your trust in his power and wisdom.
- Pray that God would give you confidence in his promises. Ask him to give you faith and hope as you seek to follow Christ.
- Pray that your church would depend fully on God and the power of the gospel as you speak to various issues in your own community.



THE GOSPEL

I am not ashamed of the gospel,
for it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who believes.

ROMANS 1:16



IF WE BELIEVE that the gospel is truly the lifeblood of Christianity and the foundation for countering culture, then we ought to meditate on it regularly. Christ lived a life of sinless obedience, the life that God requires of us; Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin; Christ rose from the grave, thereby conquering sin and death; all who repent of their sins and believe in this Christ receive the forgiveness of sins and the free gift of eternal life. That's good news.

The gospel is the foundation for our faith and for our witness to a dark and dying world. We must not leave it behind, as if we can follow Christ in our own strength. And we must not think that the unbelieving world around us will experience real and lasting change through our own courage, compassion, and conviction. No, it's the gospel that saves and transforms people, and it's the gospel that compels us to speak out when we see injustice, to stand up for those who are afflicted, and to hold fast to the truths of God's Word in the face of opposition. This gospel is the very message that unreached peoples from across the globe so desperately need to hear. The gospel is worthy of our continual reflection and worthy of our lives.

HUMBLING OURSELVES BEFORE GOD

THE FIRST STEP in addressing the sins and needs around us is to confess that *we* are sinful and needy. Our role is not to save culture, for “salvation belongs to the LORD” (Jonah 2:9). We need the same Christ that we proclaim to our unbelieving neighbors. Being used by God begins with being forgiven and cleansed by God.

God is “near to the brokenhearted” (Psalm 34:18), and he promises to forgive those who confess their sins (see 1 John 1:9). Followers of Christ ought to confess their sins to God and ask him to strengthen them to be obedient. This kind of humility is pleasing to God and it prepares us to be used by him.

Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

I CORINTHIANS 10:12

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

PSALM 51:1-2

O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there." They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your

DAY 2 : HUMBLING OURSELVES BEFORE GOD

name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

NEHEMIAH 1:5-11

Responding in Prayer

- Confess your sins to God. Ask him for forgiveness and to grant repentance.
- Pray that God would give you humility as you speak about the gospel and the truths of God's Word. Ask God to remove your own self-righteousness as you confront the sins of others.
- Pray that your church would be known not only for its boldness but also for its humility in your community.

THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR FAITH

CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION are the basis for everything the New Testament authors say. Even the Old Testament, Jesus says, was pointing forward to him all along (see Luke 24:44). It's no surprise, then, that Scripture is filled with promises related to the gospel, as well as explanations about the gospel's significance for our lives and our churches. Take time to think through the following passages as you reflect on the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

I CORINTHIANS 1:18

I [Paul] delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried,

that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

I CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

ROMANS 3:21-26

Responding in Prayer

- Thank God for sending his Son to pay the penalty for your sins and for raising him from the dead. Ask God to help you rely on Christ for your righteousness.
- Ask God to help you trust that the gospel (and not your own abilities and efforts) is the power for salvation.
- Pray that your church would focus on making disciples by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in your community and around the world.

THE GOSPEL AND CULTURE

WHILE THE GOSPEL brings peace between God and sinful men, it also creates conflict—conflict between those who believe the gospel and those who reject it. This kind of conflict should be expected for those who follow Christ (see John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12). Speaking and living by the truth is costly. However, the cost of following Christ is as nothing compared to the reward.

In light of the fact that suffering and opposition are expected in the Christian life, it is fitting that God has given us so many promises that assure us of his presence and of our future reward. We would do well to meditate on and memorize these promises, even if we're not presently walking through a trial. Opposition will come, in one form or another, and we should want to be found faithful.

[Jesus] said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and

follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

LUKE 9:23-26

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

I PETER 4:12-16

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed

is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:31-35, 37-39

Responding in Prayer

- Thank God for his promise to be with you and for the hope he has given us in Christ.
- Pray that God would prepare you to faithfully endure trials.
- Ask God to prepare your church for times of opposition. Pray that your pastors and the congregation would hold fast to the gospel.