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# ONE TO ONE

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An interview with  
legendary musician

**John Elefante**

Keynote

## MAKING CHOICES

by Charles Simpson



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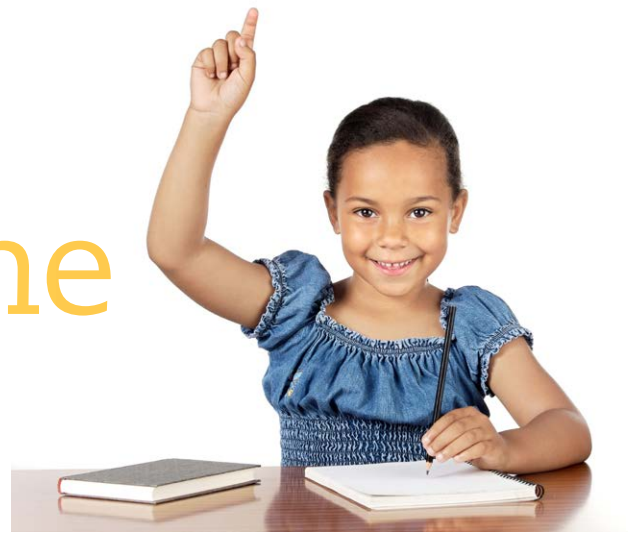
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# From the Editor

# Pass the Flame

Having faith means sharing faith



Her little hand was raised high, arm waving to get my attention. I was visiting with the Second Grade at Covenant Christian School in Mobile, Alabama, as I do each week, and it was time to take prayer requests from the students. Requests had been made to pray for colds and sniffles, for parents who were sick, for a neighbor with cancer, for an upcoming trip ... and one goldfish who had recently died.

But the little girl persisted, and so I asked her, "What would you like us to pray for today?" She replied sincerely, "For all the people who don't know Jesus, so that they could be saved." Every prayer request moved me, each in its own way. But, that one grabbed my heart. I told her, "Yes, let's pray for that right now, and let's all pray for that every day!"

How much does it mean to you to see others receive faith in Jesus Christ? Enough to pray for it? Enough to share it with others, in both words and actions?

In this issue of **One-to-One**, we feature an interview with John Elefante, the renowned singer, songwriter, and producer. John has a beautiful song called "Pass the Flame" from his best-selling album **Defying Gravity**, which expresses his heart as a father, as a husband, and as a son. Part of the chorus says: **"We are the light in a darkened world/We are the fire on the arrow/We must pass the flame."**

The faith that we have received in and through Jesus Christ—that "one true faith" passed on to us at so great

a price for which we now contend—contains within it the mission to share it with others (see Jude 1:3). Any belief system or creed that does not compel us in love to share it with others, with conviction, is not true faith.

When we recognize, by God's gracious revelation, the worth and power of what we have received in Jesus, how can we not want others to receive it as well? Especially when He reveals to us just how much He loves others and desires to bring freedom and blessing to them. His love for them becomes our love for them.



Furthermore, we have seen the utter bankruptcy and failure of every other attempt to change people's hearts and lives; the kind of change that actually transforms our society for the better. No political system, no mere ideology, no plethora of new laws can have a lasting positive effect on the human heart. No matter how much power we cede to the state, we've seen that the state cannot ultimately solve the problem of personal motivation

and perspective.

John Elefante, along with his brother, Dino, and Scott Springer, wrote an amazing song for Petra that asked, **"When will the world see that we need Jesus?"** This is the big question. Every other answer has and will come up short. And how will the world know, if we refuse to tell them? If our hearts are too hard to pray, our knees are too stiff to kneel, and our eyes too dry to cry?

Coming May 14-16, CSM will host our annual Gatlinburg Leadership Conference, and our guest speaker this year will be Bill Wilson from the Metro World Child ministry in New York City, as we focus on "Discipling the Next Generation". (For more information, visit [www.csmpublishing.org](http://www.csmpublishing.org)). The needs among youth are exploding, and we must be equipped and inspired to reach them with the Good News of Christ's Kingdom. Where they face violence, skepticism, cynicism, economic struggle, job shortages, and confusion in their generation, we must come alongside them with hope and wisdom in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The faith was passed to us through courage, trial, tears, and prayer. It is our turn and our time to run the race with perseverance ... and pass it on! **121**

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Keynote

# A Matter of CHOICE

How to  
make good  
decisions in  
trying times.

BY CHARLES SIMPSON

**H**ow much freedom do we have? One measure of freedom is the ability to choose. The more choices, the more freedom. When choices are narrowed, freedom is lost. We do not fully appreciate our freedom until we begin to sense that our ability to choose is being lost.

Why is it that we desire the right to make our own choices? Why do little children keep asking “why” when they are told to do something? Is it because the desire to make our own choices is part of the human nature? I think so. I believe that God created us in His own image and that means we have a will. Granted, His will and His ways are infinitely higher than ours, but, we do have a will. It should be apparent that the Lord desires our service to be voluntary—a matter of choice and not coercion. The choice to love or not cannot be coerced, but will have consequence.



## CONSEQUENCE

Choices have consequences. We can all look back and see that our past choices have put us where we are. The choice of believing God or not, the choice of marriage or not, the choice of friends or not, or the choice of a vocation all have consequences, good or bad. Even the seemingly small daily choices determine our next step.

We all have made some bad choices, usually without considering consequences. When we finally discover the consequences, we are faced with another choice: whose fault is it?



A desire to freely make our choices is not the only inborn desire; we are also born with the tendency to blame others for the consequence and that is as old as Eden. “The woman you gave me,” Adam responded when God confronted him with his sinful choice. It was “God’s fault” for giving him Eve or it was “Eve’s fault” for tempting him. Eve quickly pointed to the serpent, “The devil made me do it.”

Modern responses to our consequences follow the Adamic pattern. “God made me this way,” “It was my parents,” “My friends turned on me,” “My boss is unfair,” and more. All of the above may have elements of truth, but our response was our choice.



Dr. Viktor Frankl was a Holocaust survivor. He was imprisoned and lost his freedom but he famously said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s way.” Attitude is a choice that cannot be taken away, perhaps the final choice that determines our path.

Blaming others or circumstance maybe inborn in Adam’s race but it is still a choice that sets our feet on the wrong path.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Blame is another way of saying, “I am not responsible.” The moment we say that, we remove the possibility of a course correction. The only way to change course is to choose to accept responsibility. Adam and Eve did not “get off the hook,” nor do we; eventually sin finds us out (see Numbers 32:23). Bad choices follow us.

David sinned grievously in the relationship with Bathsheba. When he was confronted by Nathan the prophet, he took responsibility (see Second Samuel 12). The tax collector took responsibility for his sin (see Luke 18:9-14). Isaiah took responsibility for his sin (see

Isaiah 6:5). Taking responsibility for our condition is the beginning of repentance and justification before God. It is the necessary decision that enables God to count us righteous and make us righteous. Taking responsibility does not remove all of our circumstance but it does begin a new and superior path.

Let me be clear about my own convictions; I do believe that God is Sovereign and knows us before we are formed (see Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5). I believe that God, based on His infinite wisdom, makes His own choices. Yet I also believe that we are born with the ability to choose His will or our own. That choice determines our destiny and before God we are responsible.

## JOSHUA

Joshua stood before Israel in the latter days of his life and said, “Choose for yourself this day whom you will serve...as for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (see Joshua 24:15). Israel was chosen by God to be His special instrument, to reveal His ways to the world. But Israel still had the choice to serve Him or not. They often made the wrong choice and suffered the consequence.

I find it interesting that Joshua not only made his choice but he led his family in their choice. Our choices affect others. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and the elders who outlived Joshua (see Joshua 24:31). But the successive generation made a different choice and did what they

thought right in their own eyes (see Judges 21:25). What was right in their own eyes brought defeat.

We are blessed in our nation to choose our leaders. What our leaders do and their choices affect all of us in a profound way. Leaders reflect our choices and will



**The choices we make now will affect others and possibly generations.**

either give us more choices or less choices. God is the author of freedom, but the enemy of our souls will narrow choices to the point where our ability to choose is lessened. Then we must once again choose our attitude and the price of liberty. That price has often been blood.

Passivity may seem like one is not willing to choose but passivity is a choice. It is the choice to allow deterioration. It is to be complicit with evil.

Joshua was not passive; he was courageously standing for God's choice (see Joshua 1). When the courage to take a stand is lost, the privilege to choose is lost. The human desire for freedom is greatly depressed or snuffed out.

## **PERSONAL**

I wish that I had always made the right choice of attitude and direction but unfortunately, I have not. That is my own fault. But there are three choices that have profoundly affected my life.

In my teens I was faced with the choice of trusting Jesus as my Savior or going my own way. I had already "joined the church" but simply did so because it seemed right. After all, I was the pastor's son and grew up in church. But finally, I was confronted with my hypocrisy, sin, and need to be delivered from myself. I am eternally grateful that I chose to follow Jesus that day. I made many wrong choices after that, but I had made a lifelong, eternal commitment. The Lord has held me to it.

A few years later, I had to make another choice: what would I do with my life? That was a very serious decision again because of the lifelong impact that it would have. After two years, I chose to give in to what I believed was God's will. I became a minister in spite of all of my personal preferences and problems.

A third choice was whom I would marry. I gave up on dating for two years, not because I was virtuous,

but because I was scared of wrong choices. Then God in His grace led me to a young woman who was goodness personified. We had 50 years of love together. She provided so much that I needed.

These three choices were all made by the time I was 21 years old and never in my own wisdom (see Ecclesiastes 12:1). My only wise choice was to trust the Lord. I highly recommend that choice, especially to young people. I should also say this: my parents spent a lot of time on their knees!

## **THE REDEEMER**

I am eternally grateful that Jesus is able to redeem our bad choices. That is not a license to choose wrongly, but it is our hope when we have done so. I rejoice that the Lord is able to make all things work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (see Romans 8:28). He is able to even turn our failure in a test into a testimony of redemption. He is also able to use negative situations for His purpose if we choose the right attitude. As Frankl said, that may be our last freedom in a given circumstance.

One of the best examples of God using negative circumstance to produce positive results is Joseph, son of Jacob. He was mistreated by his jealous brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, imprisoned, and forgotten. But his character and gift of interpreting dreams eventually brought him to be prime

minister of Egypt. In that capacity, he saved both Egypt and his brothers from starvation. When he finally confronted his brothers, he said, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (see Genesis 50:20). God used it all for Joseph's good, Egypt's good, and his brothers' good. That is redemption!

Nothing comes close to saying redemption as does the Cross of Jesus. He was

**Jesus made a choice: "Not my will by Thine be done."**



sinless, yet died as a sinner. He was falsely accused, rejected, and tortured. Yet His death brought us life. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He made a choice: "Not my will, but Thine be done." Of course, that choice was the Father's choice made before time (see Revelation 13:8). I believe that the Father has a choice for each of us, but it

remains for us to choose His choice. The consequences of that choice, good or bad, are eternal.

## LOOKING AHEAD

In the days ahead, we will face many choices, and our choices will matter to us and others. The Good News is that God has a choice, and if we choose His choice, the past can be redeemed. We can choose His Kingdom over ours, His way over ours, His thoughts and attitudes over ours and His destiny for us over our own plans.

Before we make our choices, here are some things to consider:

- Have I trusted Him, His Word and His guidance?
- Have I sought His attitude toward my situation?
- Do I believe that His plan is superior to my own?
- Have I considered the consequences of my choice?
- Am I willing to take responsibility for my past errors or will I give in to the temptation to blame?

No one can answer these questions for us but if we answer them correctly, then we can see many blessings in days ahead! It is a matter of choice, and choices matter. 121

**CHARLES SIMPSON** is Editor-in-Chief of *One-to-One* Magazine. He ministers extensively throughout the United States and among the nations.



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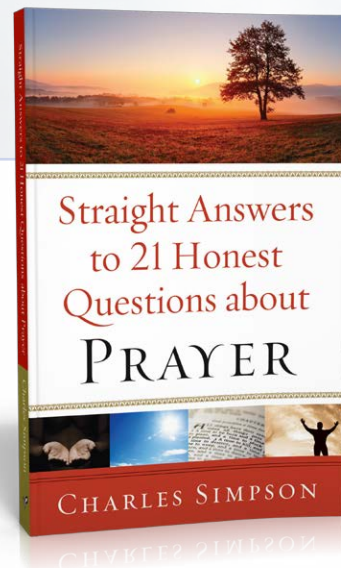
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## Familygram Interview

The legendary singer and producer talks about the amazing story behind his powerfully moving song “This Time”, and some of his experiences with the world’s leading musicians

BY STEPHEN SIMPSON

Photos of John Elefante  
courtesy of Peter Law, ©2014  
plphotodesign.com

# John Elefante



**R**ecently, my wife, Susanne, and I had the chance to sit down and talk with John Elefante, one of the best-known voices in music over the past 30 years. John has been a songwriter, singer, musician, producer, label head, studio owner, and mentor, and is loved and respected by friends and fans worldwide. Many first came to know of John when he was tapped to be the lead vocalist for the mega-platinum band Kansas in 1982 for their album, *Vinyl Confessions*. In the mid-1980s, John became a much sought-after producer for artists such as Petra, Barren Cross, Halo, Guardian, and the Sweet Comfort Band. He has recorded with an incredibly wide range of artists, from Vestal Goodman to Bono, and is the winner of Grammy and Dove Awards.

John was offered the lead vocalist role for the Grammy-winning band Toto, but instead, he continued producing prolifically and also leading the excellent and successful band Mastedon with his brother Dino. They formed Pakaderm Records, which was the label home for many leading Christian musicians, before John and his family moved to the Nashville area. John and Dino built the Sound Kitchen, which became the largest studio in the area where leading artists such as Bruce Springsteen, Sting, Vince Gill, Amy Grant, Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, and Alan Jackson recorded.

In addition to three brilliant albums so far with Mastedon, John has recorded four highly acclaimed solo albums, the most recent being *ON MY WAY TO*

*THE SUN* in 2013. An exceptional mix of melodic hard rock and adventurous progressive rock, the album also features a stunning ballad that has captured the attention of hundreds of thousands of people. That song is entitled “This Time”, and it tells the story of a young girl who discovers she is pregnant, and decides to have an abortion. But, as she “sat cold in a waiting room, frightened and all alone,” something extraordinary happened: the Lord began to speak.

“This Time” is not a political or “preachy” song. It’s actually based on the beautiful true story of how John’s daughter, Sami, was spared from being aborted, by the grace of God. Through a series of Divine appointments, God brought Sami to John and his wife, Michelle, who adopted her as an infant. Sami is now 20, and is an amazing young woman in her own right.

Sami’s story, through “This Time”, has reached around the world. In September of 2013, John created a special music video which quickly went viral via YouTube, John’s own website [johnnelefante.com](http://johnnelefante.com), appearances on the Fox News show “Huckabee”, and other programs. Jay Sekulow, founder of the American Center for Law and Justice, has frequently highlighted the song and John’s music.

We met with John at his Nashville-area home to discuss “This Time” and some of the other highlights of his career so far. Here are some excerpts from our conversation.

—Stephen Simpson, Editor





**SS:** Was *"This Time"* a song that you have been wanting to write for a long time?

**JE:** It's a story that I've enjoyed telling for a long time, but I had never thought about writing a song about it. What had happened is that I was about 60% finished working through the album itself. And I started writing these two chords that were just kind of running through my mind. So I went downstairs and started embellishing that a little bit and started writing the music and started coming up with some ideas for the chorus, and I thought, man, this would be a great song for a story. Usually at that point, I will just shut my eyes, and I will go to the Lord and ask, "Please give me something."

And, it just really hit me all of a sudden this might be the time to tell the story about my daughter. I started coming up with it like line by line. I remember coming with the first two lines, "She sat cold in a waiting room frightened and all alone." So I grabbed the microphone and I sang those two lines and then it started unraveling. The memory started coming back how the birth mother told me the story of when she was in the clinic, and she came real close to aborting Sami, and decided not to. She called her mom from the clinic and told her that she was pregnant. Her mom did not know! The girl had been wearing baggy clothes.

Of course, everything in the video itself is not exactly how it happened; because I wasn't there. But I do know that she was that close to aborting, and I do know that she called her mom. I do imagine what it would have been like that day. And the lines just started and "the Lord began to speak" and "you're not taking this one". I mean the lyric literally came together in an hour.

When I got to the second verse and I had to start coming up with lines about the abortion part of it, that was a little harder. I didn't want to go too deep into that because I didn't want

to pull from the narrative. You know, I didn't want to pull from the main story, because it really is a victorious song...her birth mother chose life! But I had to cover that topic, because that was a part of it, and she almost....she almost didn't make it.

**SS:** You made this song personal rather than political?

**JE:** Oh absolutely. The political part was the last thing on my mind. I've been pro-life for a long, long time, as long as I can remember; but no, this song is not political at all. When



**Mike Huckabee and the Elefante family:  
John, JJ, Sami, Michelle, and Daniel**

I talked to Mike Huckabee about that on the radio, I told him "This was not written as a political song, this was not written as an anti-abortion song, it was not written as a pro-life song." Even though it is. But that wasn't my mindset when I wrote it. I just wanted to tell our story.

**SS:** Somewhere along the line, you are realizing the significance of the song and it is really personal—at what time did you sit down with Sami and say, "Hey I've got this song..."

**JE:** I played it for her. "I got this idea to write this song about your story". She listened to it and she cried. She was very touched by it, you know. She has never been ashamed to talk about it. She's known she was adopted since eleven. I remember before we had told her about her adoption and the circumstances,

I sought some counsel from the woman from an organization called House of Ruth, which is connected with Calvary Chapel in Downey, CA. This woman is unbelievable, I mean, she is so anointed in this field and otherwise. She talked about how Sami is chosen and special; that she was chosen to be with our family and that it was no coincidence. Well, Sami really got it when we first talked with her at 11. She understood it at such a young age. And, she is certainly fine with the song and video now.

**SS:** I was really impressed at the end of the video to see her with you. Did she take a pretty active role in the video in the creation of the video?

**JE:** No. She was too busy.... (Laughs) ... Oh she wanted to be there! She said, "Dad we should go up there while they do the video." I said, "Sam, you don't understand the way the video is done. I mean they could shoot the last scene first. You know it's standing around, hurrying up, and waiting. But when you see it done, it's going to make sense to you."

**SS:** I'm guessing, based on what you said, you didn't start off thinking that this was going to be the big hit song on the album, or the main lead video...

**JE:** You know I started suspecting it, Stephen, when people heard the record and I started getting comments that people loved the album and everybody was referencing that specific song. "I love the record and that song about your daughter is awesome."

**SS:** I think the thing that grabbed me was the line, "the Lord began to speak." That is so strong. Plus the fact that this is a deeply personal song and story...ultimately people can't argue with your actual experience.

**JE:** You know what is interesting, we made a conscious decision to have someone on the video shoot that had experience with abortion. This woman counseled women who

had undergone abortions and she counseled women contemplating abortion. She's well-schooled in the issue, she's been to abortion clinics, and she's had two herself. We wanted her there just as "checks-and-balance". She thought we could have gone even further with the abortion theme. She said, "first of all make this place more filthy," because that is the reality in most abortion clinics. But she was a big help in keeping it real.

**SS:** *It was interesting to me that such a gritty subject could end up being such a beautiful video in so many ways. In your writing over the years, you haven't shied away from dealing with really hardcore issues, such as suicide, abandonment, death, depression and all these*



*different things. But you do it from a personal, human, and ultimately biblical perspective as a storyteller.*

**JE:** I've never really gotten political with my lyrics...that is, I didn't set out to do anything political. You know, I don't feel like I have to. I don't feel that politics is the ultimate answer.

**SS:** *That gives you an open door to have fellowship with people who have different views politically. I would imagine a lot of people that you deal with have completely opposite political views from you. How have they responded to this song?*

**JE:** Mostly positive, believe it or not.

One reason I know that, is through Sami. She just graduated from Cosmetology school. And there are all walks a life in that field and she would sit them down with her laptop and say, "Check out the video. It's about how I came into the world." She didn't ask them what they thought politically. She didn't say "If you are pro-choice you are not going to like it." She said, "Sit down and just watch it. It's my story. I don't care if you like it or not, you're going to watch it." I mean everybody she showed it to cried. And she never asked where they stood. You know, there are a lot of youth that haven't thought too deep about this subject. I think they are starting to. You know amongst the youth now, the majority are pro-life. That's a big turning point.

**SS:** *Another aspect of what you do that I really appreciate is that you are very family-oriented. Can you tell me a little bit about your song "Pass the Flame" from the DEFYING GRAVITY album?*

**JE:** When I wrote that, I was thinking about the big responsibility that we as parents have to pass the message of Christ on to our children, because they will with their families. That is a cool song! But, sadly, I can't find the original video. That's why the quality of the YouTube video is not good. But the original video is quite moving. It's a special song that came after we adopted our first two children, Sami, and my son, Daniel, and our family is in the video.

**SS:** *How did you come to adopt Sami and Daniel?*

**JE:** My wife, Michelle, and I really wanted to get pregnant and we had already been married for about five years. Doctors told us no way, no how, no chance, forget about it. So we thought—let's adopt. We did go in front of the congregation and about 300 people laid hands on us and prayed. So, about a year later, I was backstage after I did a Harvest Crusade with Pastor Greg Laurie. I was talking to somebody else about

adoption, and a lady overheard me, and walked up to me and said, "My name is Karen Johnson, and I am from a ministry called House of Ruth. I hope you don't mind but I overheard you talking about adoption."

I told her about an adoption situation we were considering, but there was something that didn't feel right in our spirit about it. And I started telling Karen this story, and Karen looked me right in my eye and said, "Stay clear—get out of that situation." She's done so many adoptions, and she said, "Something doesn't sound right." That situation later ended up being a terrible custody battle between the birth mother and biological father. We never would have been able to adopt that baby, so thank God for Karen's advice.

Anyway, after I told Karen our story, she said, "Would you still like to adopt? How would you like a baby in five weeks? I know about a little girl." It's like I felt the hair on the back of neck standing up at that point! I called my wife over, and Karen was speaking to both of us and said, "Why don't you guys pray about it and let me know if you decide you want to do it." Karen put together a packet of information about us with a resume and pictures, and all about our lives and values. We prayed and agreed, and Karen set up a meeting with us and the birth mother and biological father, and they chose us right away for Sami.

**SS:** *I was amazed about something I read about the birth father and your meeting with him. He said that he liked your shoes.*

**JE:** I met the birth father, and I had a pair of Doc Martens on, and later, when he was asked by Karen, "why did you choose them?", he said, "Well I liked their shoes." God used a pair of shoes! Then, we were really blessed to be able to adopt our son, Daniel, through that same ministry just a couple of years later. Now, to go back to that time when the congregation laid hands on my wife to get pregnant ... a few years after we adopted our first two children, my



wife got pregnant and now we have an eleven-year-old son named JJ.

**SS:** *I note these recurring threads over and over again of how close your family stays together. I was listening to you talk about the Sound Kitchen studio that you and your brother Dino owned, and the most interesting thing to me about all that wasn't all of the various superstars that recorded there but it was the fact that you had this big actual working kitchen in the middle of the studio, where your parents, Danny and Nora, cooked these amazing meals for everybody. What made you decide to set it up that way?*

**JE:** Oh yeah...family first! You know, it's growing up in studios my whole life; studios are music and food! So when we built the Sound Kitchen here, we wanted to have a dining room and a full-blown kitchen right in the center of it. I wanted a spot where my folks could come in and be close, and they could fix meals for various stars and staff, and, I mean... it was...I can't tell you how big of a hit that was. I remember my dad walking into the control room where Julio Iglesias, this big international singing star, was recording. Here is my Italian father, who was not a respecter of persons whatsoever... he definitely was *not a dis-respecter* of persons...but he doesn't care who you are. He walked into the control room ... he had a towel on his arm, and he he kind of talked in that little bit of Italian thing...and he said to Julio, "Hey chief, the food is getting cold in here! Man, can you take a break and eat?" And Julio says, "Ahh I am sorry Mr. Elefante, we'll be there in like five minutes I promise." Sure enough he comes walking in with his entourage. Now, my mom was always a big fan of Julio Iglesias. You know, he's hugging her and telling her, "Look I've had Italian food all over the world and this is in the top five." I grew up in a family that is very hospitable.

**SS:** *It seems like you've made a priority of keeping your family nearby. And, of course you work*

*often with your brother, who is a brilliant musician and producer in his own right.*

**JE:** When we moved to Nashville, our parents were right behind us. They had their stuff in the same truck. I don't think I ever lived more than a couple miles from my folks.

**SS:** *Let me ask you about a couple of your songs, because you are such a strong storyteller. "One Day Down By the Lake" from the Mastodon album REVOLUTION OF MIND (2009) ... is that your story?*

**JE:** It's reflective of me. Yes, some of it is autobiographical. The meaning behind that song really is that we are to be content where we are. A lot of



people, they get older and they keep reminiscing about old times, you know, "I remember back in the good old days." I don't think God wants us to live in the past. He wants us to be content where we're at in our life, no matter what our age is, and accept the gifts that He's given to us. There's that one line, "*You are at peace with who you are, and here you'll stay, it's something that this world can't take away.... Remember that one day down by the lake, where the Spirit made you sure of who you are.*" My daughter was a basketball star in high school and she had a tournament in Memphis, so I wrote half the song on the way up to the tournament, and the other half on the way back.

**SS:** *That's a bit like one of your newer songs, "Where Have All the Old Days Gone" where the message isn't really about looking back, but it's about seizing the day.*

**JE:** That's right. It's a major recurring theme on the whole *ON MY WAY TO THE SUN* album. I used to just drive down Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1 in California) all the time because Dino and I used to surf all the time. I remember this one spot that was really pretty as you were coming into Huntington Beach. So, as I was writing the title song, I just pictured some dude...you know ... he's got it all together, man. He's driving along, thinks, "I'm cool", but deep down inside, he's hurting and bleeding, and he knows it. He's trying to play this whole "everything is okay" deal.

But the guy is saying to himself, "*If it's all right but everything's wrong, then why can't I seem to find my way home? The fields have all dried up so desperate for rain, no wonder why the harvest never came. A knock on my door this time I'm answering. I've waited too long to put a crown on my King.*"

Now this guy driving his car has some kind of spirituality in his life. But he's never crowned Jesus as King of his life. There's a big difference. There's a lot of people that have never crowned Jesus as King. Until you do that, and truly make Him Lord of your life you're short-changing Him and yourself.

I don't really have a theological background. I mean I am in the Word but I haven't studied the way a pastor has. Still, I never like to leave the listener walking around with a question, "What did he mean by that?" I guess that's what I like singing about my personal experiences, because that is what I know best.

**SS:** *You've written so many songs that have had a great impact. I heard that you wrote "This is What Love Is" from 1995's WINDOWS OF HEAVEN as a response to the number one hit song "I Want to Know What Love Is" by the band Foreigner. What is the story behind that?*

**JE:** Well, it's about 50/50 in terms of responding to that song and also just expressing my own experience. Some of it was an answer to "I Want to Know What Love Is", because every time I would hear that song, I felt a little empty almost. Lou Gramm, the vocalist for Foreigner and the writer of the song, is crying out, "I want to know what love is, I want you to show me." I am thinking, "I know what love is," and talking about the life of Jesus. So, the lyrics just came out of that.

**SS:** *Later, Lou Gramm became a Christian. What kind of feedback did you get from him about your song?*

**JE:** He loved it. Later, I got to sing that song onstage right before Lou Gramm sang "Now I Know What Love Is". And then, of course, Lou and I recorded "We Need Jesus" with Petra. That song became the theme song for Harvest Crusade for about eight years, and I got to sing it with Dino. "When will the world see that we need Jesus?" That question means more now than ever, doesn't it?

**SS:** *Let me ask couple of quick questions about the Kansas band. You had violinist David Ragsdale and guitarist Richard Williams play on your new album. And, you had guitarist Kerry Livgren play on the last Mastedon album. Do you have a good relationship with those guys?*

**JE:** Yes, I do, and totally respect them. I also have stayed in touch with drummer Phil Ehart. All the guys in Kansas are great guys and amazing musicians. Steve Walsh is one of my heroes vocally. But let me say this about the two songs you're mentioning: "One Day Down By the Lake" from the Mastedon album and "This is How the Story Goes" from ON MY WAY TO THE SUN...I don't think either one of those songs would have made it on those albums if Kerry, Rich, and Rags had not been playing on them.

**SS:** *Really? I'm really curious...why not?*

**JE:** Because I think that their presence really validated the style of the song.

Both songs are somewhat "Kansas-esque" kind of songs. And I think having them play on the songs really validated those songs and made them stronger.

**SS:** *I read in Kerry Livgren's book, SEEDS OF CHANGE, that when they auditioned you for Kansas, they didn't know you were a Christian, and they just liked your voice; they thought you would be the right guy for the band and even picked you over eventual Van Halen vocalist Sammy Hagar. And then after you got the job, then you told Kerry, "Hey, I am a believer too!"*

**JE:** Yes, that's true...when I told Kerry that, he went totally silent. I actually thought for a second that he had hung up on me. And I said, "Kerry? Kerry?" Finally, he said, "Yeah..I'm just...I'm just bowled over by what you just told me, because me and David Hope (Kansas' founding bassist) had been praying like crazy that the Lord would bring us a believer." It just so happened that the guy they chose was a believer!

**SS:** *Any new projects ahead?*

**JE:** I am doing some writing, and I just finished producing another artist, as well as another band out of Omaha called DeadNote. So, you know, doing some producing, but I'm always doing something in my studio, coming up with ideas for songs and stuff. I want to do another record but I am not sure stylistically where I want to go yet. John Schlitt of Petra and I will be doing a "Voices of Rock" Tour, and we stay in close contact. (For information: Sue Dempster, Nova Productions, (920) 980-7671, [sue@johnwschlitt.com](mailto:sue@johnwschlitt.com).) Also, I toured recently with a band called World Classic Rockers, with guys like Aynsley Dunbar (Drummer for Journey, Santana, and Whitesnake), Fran Cosmo from Boston, and guys from Steppenwolf...it's kind of an all-star band. Plus, I stay in touch with a lot of my other friends, like David Pack of Ambrosia.

**SS:** *How can our readership and*

*friends be praying for you, your family and your ministry?*

**JE:** I really appreciate that. Just pray that God would continue to use me and that He will continue to give me lyrics and melodies that have the ability to get into somebody's soul. When I get a note or message, that's primarily what they say, is how much something touched them.

**SS:** *I loved seeing you and your family on the Huckabee TV show recently, where you sang "Carry On Wayward Son" and discussed the video for "This Time".*

**JE:** Well, I think we got the point across. I had close to 600 messages and emails immediately afterward. A lot of people went to my website at [johnnelefante.com](http://johnnelefante.com) right there on my homepage and watched the video, and you know, we shot up 22,000 views in just three days. We've had more than 430,000 hits on the YouTube video alone. Recently, I was interviewed by author Ken Mansfield, who was the first U.S. Manager for the Beatles' Apple Records. When I showed him the video for "This Time", he went weak in the knees. He's working on a new book, and one of the chapters features my life and music. Ken is a great writer and a strong believer in Jesus.

**SS:** *I really want to just thank you so much for your music and testimony through the years.*

**JE:** You're welcome. I wish we could have gotten together sooner! 121

To read an expanded version of this interview and a review of John's album, ON MY WAY TO THE SUN, visit: [csmpublishing.org](http://csmpublishing.org)

For more information about how you can save babies from abortion visit: [onlineforlife.org](http://onlineforlife.org)





# Marketplace Exchange

## Running into God

### Real world lessons from

### Jacob's journey

by Jonathan Simpson

Jacob was a dealmaker who faced the rewards and consequences of his transactions, as we all must. Gritty and humorous at times, Jacob's story doesn't fit neatly in a Sunday sermon. His decisions led him to places of distress, yet God blessed him and never left him. As we advance our mission through work, we too can find ourselves in places of distress. The wrong hire, selfish decisions, market downturns, poor leadership, defective products, bad strategies, and many more struggles can await us all each workday. Jacob's account should be an encouragement to all contending in the marketplace that God reveals Himself through real people with real flaws and leads them to overcome.

## ON THE RUN

After hoodwinking his father and taking his brother's birthright, Jacob fled from his homeland in fear of his brother. His discriminating taste in women found him marrying two sisters and saddled with a conniving father-in-law/business partner named Laban. Jacob and Laban would go on to struggle for twenty years in a contentious relationship. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you." Knowing that Laban did not want him to leave, he artfully gathered assets and fled from Laban in fear...until Laban caught up with him. In facing each other, both schemers had to face their past.

After making a peace with Laban, God's passageway for Jacob was leading him to face his brother. Genesis 32 gives us the scene: Jacob, desperately praying for God to save him from Esau's hand, as he considered how angry his brother

might be at him. The night before Jacob would meet Esau, God in the form of a man, came to Jacob and the two wrestled through the night until daybreak. In his desperation, Jacob clung to the Lord and said "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Jacob emerged at daybreak limping, but he had received God's blessing and a new name, Israel, "because he struggled with God and man and overcame."

Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found." Jacob's birthright and blessing from God at dawn were gifts, but they were sought out. Jacob was hungry for God and recognized that there is a great gulf between walking in our own strength and walking in God's. It was a chief distinction between Jacob and Esau. Even in the midst of his fears and reliance on his own manipulative tactics at times, Jacob's faith and tenacious pursuit were blessed by God.

## FACING ESAU

In obedience to the Lord, Jacob humbly limped out in God's blessing to meet Esau, who received him gladly. Re-encounters with our past business can be narrow places of God's leading. God cares enough for us to lead us into the narrow places because they lead us to Him. As we walk through them, our story of what we were redeemed from is revealed and we can better know the measure of His love. It's not to bog us down; it's to free us in our advance.

Bethel was Jacob's destination after Esau. Bethel was undoubtedly a holy place to Jacob. It had been where God had revealed himself to Jacob and it was a land of promise to him. Before arriving at Bethel, Jacob made a decision. He took all of the foreign gods in his household and buried them.

Jacob was bold enough to wrestle with God, but feared Him

enough to eliminate the other gods. Work opportunities are part of God's blessings toward us; however, foreign gods often plague business and work environments. The gods Jacobs buried were small visible statues. In our work, foreign gods can be more subtle but just as destructive, such as material and status trappings that hold too high a priority in our lives.

## OUR JOURNEY AHEAD

Jacob was ninety-seven years old when he wrestled God and faced Esau, but God gave Jacob fifty more years of life that were just as adventurous. Jacob was the father of Joseph, arguably the best businessman in the Bible. Like Jacob, our actions and decisions through our work can bring us through places we never intended; yet, they can be places of fertile ground for God's blessing and redemption.

God's covenantal character means that He doesn't flee from us in the midst of poor choices. Even in the darkness, He is there that we may cling to him and that He may give us a new dawn. 121

### JONATHAN SIMPSON

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