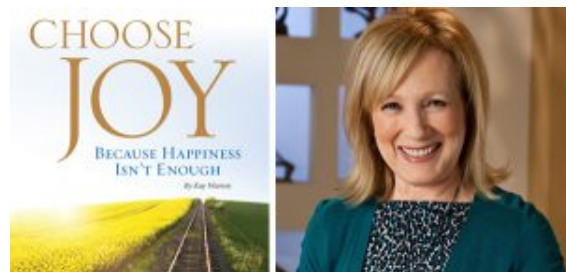


Resilience demands ‘gritty faith,’ Kay Warren tells conference

May 5, 2021

Resilience in tough times demands “gritty faith,” not “pretty faith,” Kay Warren told an international audience during the online [Alpha Leadership Conference](#).



Kay Warren’s book, ‘Choose Joy,’ grew out of her quest for the joy Jesus promised. That joy was severely challenged when her son Matthew took his own life, she said.

“Start by acknowledging life is harder than you think,” said Warren, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and cancer.

She and her husband Rick, co-founders of Saddleback Church in Southern California, described how they maintained faith following their son Matthew’s death by suicide eight years ago.

As they stood in the driveway of Matthew’s home waiting for emergency personnel to respond, members of their small-group Bible study encircled and embraced them, the Warrens recalled.

“Don’t isolate in hard times,” she said.

Members of their small group told the Warrens they would sleep on the floor in their home that night if necessary, but they would not leave them alone.

The ministry of presence—not easy answers or cheery words—brings peace in the times of deepest hurt, he insisted.

“The deeper the pain, the fewer words you use,” he said.

‘Broken and beautiful’

It’s still a “messed up Earth,” and Christians cannot expect to “live in the world without collecting scars,” she added.

“You can be broken and beautiful,” she said. “God is not helpless in the ruins.”

Rather than dwelling on the size of a difficulty, concentrate on the greatness of God, her husband urged.

“Focus on the greatness of God when problems seem great,” he said. “It’s one thing to tell God how great the problem is. It’s another to tell the problem how great God is.”

As the church seeks to minister in a world emerging from the shadow of COVID-19, he encouraged Christians to learn from five post-exilic Old Testament books—Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

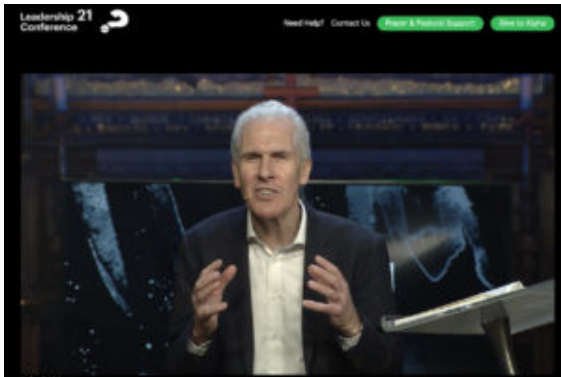
Churches that have gone 14 months without worshipping in person can discover insights from God’s people who went 70 years without worshipping in the temple, he noted.

If it seems the world has “gone to hell in a handbasket” in the past year,

Christians can find hope in the God of Scripture who has proven himself to be the “rebuilder, restorer and redeemer,” Kay Warren concluded.

Roaring Twenties

Just as the “Roaring Twenties”—a time of innovation and creativity—followed the 1918 pandemic influenza, Christians can look forward to the church “roaring” back in the post-COVID-19 era, said conference host Nicky Gumbel, vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton in London.



Nicky Gumbel, vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton in London, was host of the online Alpha Leadership Conference. (Screen capture)

Gumbel urged Christians to listen for the “roar of the Lion of the tribe of Judah”—Jesus—in the decade of the 2020s.

First, he called on Christians to listen for “the anointed roar of a united church famous for its love,” as believers seek to minister to people devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Run toward the need,” he urged. “This is the moment for the kingdom of God to advance.”

Next, in a time of racial reckoning, he encouraged the church to listen for the “roar of justice.”

“The Holy Spirit is the spirit of justice. ... The roar of Jesus is the roar of justice,” he said.

Finally, in a period of so much bad news, the church should offer the welcome “roar of good news,” he said.

The digital revolution offers the church the greatest opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel since the invention of the printing press 500 years ago, he asserted, insisting the church should embrace technology.

“The Holy Spirit is not confused by Zoom,” he said.