



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

News Articles for Episode 324

[Israeli minister Ben-Gvir in provocative visit to the Temple Mount \(yahoo.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #prayer, #temple mount, #holy site

Aug 13, 2024

Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, head of a far-right religious party in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government, again rejected talks with Hamas during a controversial visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on Tuesday.

Speaking in a video published on X, Ben Gvir repeated his opposition to negotiations with the radical Palestinian Islamist Hamas movement on a ceasefire and the release of the hostages it continues to hold.

He also called for Jews to be allowed to pray at the Temple Mount, which is known as the Noble Sanctuary to Muslims and is Islam's third-holiest site, containing the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Jews venerate the Temple Mount as the site of two destroyed Jewish temples. The site is currently under the administration of Jordan's Islamic Affairs Ministry, with Israel providing security. While Jews are permitted to visit the site, they are not allowed to pray there.

Following Ben-Gvir's visit, which was seen as provocative, Netanyahu's office said policy on the Temple Mount had not changed. "There is no private policy by a minister," it said.

Prayers can be heard in the background of Ben-Gvir's video, and Israeli media also published images of dozens of observant Jews praying during the minister's visit.

Ben-Gvir has in the past criticized the agreement with the Muslim authorities as "racist" and anti-Jewish, while Palestinians fear that Israel plans to extend its control over the holy sites.

According to the video, Ben-Gvir visited the Temple Mount on Tisha B'Av, a day of fasting by observant Jews to mark the destruction of the two temples. Media reports put the number attending at more than 1,600. The Palestinian Authority condemned the visit.

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid expressed criticism of Ben-Gvir's "election campaigning on Temple Mount" in "complete contrast to the position of the security forces."

The visit by a "group of irresponsible extremists" within the government endangered lives, Lapid, the head of a centrist party, said.

The US government strongly condemned Ben-Gvir's action.

"Let me just say clearly that the United States stands firmly for preservation of the historic status quo with respects to the holy sites of Jerusalem," US State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said in response to a question in Washington.

"Any unilateral action like this that jeopardizes such a status quo is unacceptable," he added. "And not only is it unacceptable, it detracts from what we think is a vital time as we are working to get the ceasefire deal across the finish line."

The spokesman continued: "It detracts from what our stated goal is for the region, which is a two state solution, a Palestinian state and an Israeli state that's side by side, living in with dignity and harmony."

"We recognize how important the holy site is, so we urge all sides to respect the status quo," Patel added.

Egypt and Jordan on Tuesday also criticized Ben-Gvir's controversial visit to the Temple Mount.

After dozens of observant Jews were pictured praying at the site during the minister's visit, Egypt called the incident "irresponsible and provocative."

Jordan, which administers the site, also chimed in, decrying violations of the status quo.

Exclusive: Iran to deliver hundreds of ballistic missiles to Russia soon, intel sources say | Reuters

#bibleprophecy, #russia, #iran, #weapons

Aug 10, 2024

Dozens of Russian military personnel are being trained in Iran to use the Fath-360 close-range ballistic missile system, two European intelligence sources told Reuters, adding that they expected the imminent delivery of hundreds of the satellite-guided weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine.

Russian defence ministry representatives are believed to have signed a contract on Dec. 13 in Tehran with Iranian officials for the Fath-360 and another ballistic missile system built by Iran's government-owned Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO) called the Ababil, according to the intelligence officials, who requested anonymity in order to discuss sensitive matters.

Citing multiple confidential intelligence sources, the officials said that Russian personnel have visited Iran to learn how to operate the Fath-360 defence system, which launches missiles with a maximum range of 120 km (75 miles) and a warhead of 150 kg. One of the sources said that that "the only next possible" step after training would be actual delivery of the missiles to Russia.

Moscow possesses an array of its own ballistic missiles, but the supply of Fath-360s could allow Russia to use more of its arsenal for targets beyond the front line, while employing Iranian warheads for closer-range targets, a military expert said.

A spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council said the United States and its NATO allies and G7 partners "are prepared to deliver a swift and severe response if Iran were to move forward with such transfers."

It "would represent a dramatic escalation in Iran's support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine," the spokesman said. "The White House has repeatedly warned of the deepening security partnership between Russia and Iran since the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine."

Russia's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations in New York said in a statement that the Islamic Republic had forged a long-term strategic partnership with Russia in various areas, including military cooperation.

"Nevertheless, from an ethical standpoint, Iran refrains from transferring any weapons, including missiles, that could potentially be used in the conflict with Ukraine until it is over," the statement said.

The White House declined to confirm that Iran was training Russian military personnel on the Fath-360 or that it was preparing to ship the weapons to Russia for use against Ukraine.

The two intelligence sources gave no exact timeframe for the expected delivery of Fath-360 missiles to Russia but said it would be soon. They did not provide any intelligence on the status of the Abibal contract.

A third intelligence source from another European agency said it had also received information that Russia had sent soldiers to Iran to train in the use of Iranian ballistic missile systems, without providing further details.

Such training is standard practice for Iranian weapons supplied to Russia, said the third source, who also declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the information.

A senior Iranian official, who requested anonymity, said Iran had sold missiles and drones to Russia but has not provided Fath-360 missiles. There was no legal prohibition on Tehran selling such weapons to Russia, the source added.

"Iran and Russia engage in the mutual purchase of parts and military equipment. How each country uses this equipment is entirely their decision," the official said, adding that Iran did not sell weapons to Russia for use in the Ukraine war.

As part of the military cooperation, Iranian and Russian officials often travelled between the two states, the official added.

"DESTABILIZING ACTIONS"

Until now, Iran's military support for Moscow has been limited mainly to unmanned Shahed attack drones, which carry a fraction of the explosives and are easier to shoot down because they are slower than ballistic missiles.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency said in July 2023 that a new training system for the Fath 360 [had been successfully tested](#) by the country's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force.

Justin Bronk, Senior Research Fellow for Air Power at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a London-based defence think-tank, said: "Delivery of large numbers of short-range ballistic missiles from Iran to Russia would enable a further increase in pressure on already badly overstretched Ukrainian missile defence systems."

"As ballistic threats, they could only be intercepted reliably by the upper tier of Ukrainian systems," he said, referring to the most sophisticated air defences Ukraine has such as the U.S.-made Patriot and European SAMP/T systems.

Ukraine's Ministry of Defense did not have any immediate comment.

In March, [G7 leaders voiced concern](#) at reports Iran was considering transferring ballistic missiles to Russia and warned in a statement that they would respond in a coordinated manner with significant measures against Iran.

The NSC spokesman, in response to Reuters questions, noted that Iran's newly elected President Masoud Pezeshkian "claimed he wanted to moderate Iran's policies and engage with the world. Destabilizing actions like this fly in the face of that rhetoric."

A British government spokesman expressed deep concern at the reports suggesting that Russian military personnel were being trained in Iran. "Iran must not proceed" with the transfer of ballistic missiles, he said.

U.N. Security Council restrictions on Iran's export of some missiles, drones and other technologies expired in October 2023. However, the United States and European Union [retained sanctions](#) on Iran's ballistic missile programme amid concerns over exports of weapons to its proxies in the Middle East and to Russia.

Reuters [reported in February](#) on deepening military cooperation between Iran and Russia and on Moscow's interest in Iranian surface-to-surface missiles.

Sources told the news agency at the time that around 400 Fateh-110 longer-range surface-to-surface ballistic missiles had been delivered. But the European intelligence sources told Reuters that according to their information, no transfer had happened yet.

Ukrainian authorities have not publicly reported finding any Iranian missile remnants or debris during the war.

[Report: Iran has prepped missile, drone units just like it did before April attack on Israel | The Times of Israel](#)

#bibleprophecy, #iran, #war, #drones

Aug 12, 2024

Iran has prepped its missile and drone units, similarly to steps taken before Tehran's unprecedented attack on Israel in April, according to senior officials in Washington and Jerusalem quoted by Israeli journalist Barak Ravid.

In a post on X, Ravid writes that the officials stressed that neither Israel nor the US can predict the exact timing of the retaliation attack that Iran has threatened for the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran last month.

Ravid also quotes a senior Israeli official as saying, "The Iranians openly signal (on the ground) their determination to carry out a significant attack in addition to their public statements that the attack will exceed the one they carried out in April. Iranian public statements do not reflect any retreat."

In its first direct attack on the Jewish state, Iran fired some 300 missiles and drones at Israel on April 13-14, most of which were downed by Israel and its allies.

[Putin to discuss Israel-Hamas war, Iran with Palestinian Authority president Abbas - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #russia, #abbas, ##middle east

Aug 13, 2024

Abbas is in Moscow on a long-expected visit until Wednesday and is to travel to Turkey for talks with President Tayyip Erdogan afterwards.

[Russia](#)'s President Vladimir Putin will discuss the situation in the Middle East with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Moscow on Tuesday, the Kremlin said late on Monday.

"It is expected that an exchange of views will be held on the situation in the Middle East in light of the current aggravation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip," the Kremlin said in a post on the Telegram messaging app.

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Russia's diplomatic ties

[Russia](#), which has forged close ties both with [Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#) and Arab leaders including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has condemned the recent killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, calling on all parties to refrain from further destabilization of the Middle East.

It has also repeatedly scolded the West for ignoring the need for an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders.

[Signal has been blocked by Venezuela and Russia - The Verge](#)

#bibleprophecy, #signal messaging, #blocked, #russia, #venezuela

Aug 9, 2024

For those affected by the blocks, Signal recommends turning on its censorship circumvention feature.

Signal is being blocked in Venezuela and Russia. The app is a popular choice for encrypted messaging and people trying to avoid government censorship, and the blocks appear to be part of a crackdown on internal dissent in both countries.

In Venezuela, the blockage follows the disputed results of the country's presidential election last month, which have led to protests and arrests as president Nicolás Maduro clings to power, [according to MSNBC](#). (The US has recognized opposition candidate Edmundo González [as the winner of the election](#).) Internet monitoring service NetBlocks said Thursday evening that Signal [had become](#) “unreachable on multiple internet providers” in the country. Maduro has also ordered a block on X, [The Associated Press reports](#).

In Russia, the country's communications regulator, Roskomnadzor, says that Signal violated Russian legislation, [reports Interfax](#). People in Russia also can't register a new Signal account without using a VPN, [Reuters reports](#). Russia has “restricted Signal messaging app backends on most internet providers” as of Friday afternoon, [NetBlocks says](#).

“We're aware of reports that access to Signal has been blocked in some countries,” [Signal says](#). If you are affected by the blocks, the company recommends turning on its censorship circumvention feature. (NetBlocks reports that this feature lets Signal “remain usable” in Russia.) Signal didn't immediately reply to a request for comment.

We're aware of reports that access to Signal has been blocked in some countries. As a reminder, Signal's built-in censorship circumvention feature might be able to help if your connection is affected:

Signal Settings > Privacy > Advanced > Censorship circumvention (on)

— Signal (@signalapp) [August 9, 2024](#)

Users in Russia have also reported a mass YouTube outage in the country, [according to VOA News](#). “We are aware of reports of some people not being able to access YouTube

in Russia,” YouTube spokesperson Ciaran Ward tells *The Verge*. “That is not as a result of any technical issues on our side or action taken by us.”

Earthquake centered in Syria shakes already-jittery northern Israel and Lebanon | The Times of Israel

#bibleprophecy, #earthquake, #syria, #lebanon, #jordan, #israel

Aug 13, 2024

Tremor measured between 4.8 and 5.5 doesn't cause any injuries or damage in Israel, but does see 25 people sustain minor to moderate injuries in central Syrian town of Hama

An earthquake hit central Syria late Monday, with tremors felt in northern Israel along with Lebanon and Jordan.

Syria's National Center for Earthquakes said a 5.5 magnitude quake struck 28 kilometers (17 miles) east of the city of Hama at 11:56 p.m. local time. The US Geological Survey put the quake's magnitude at 5.0 and said it had a depth of 10 kilometers. The German Research Center for Geosciences (GFZ) placed the magnitude at 4.8. Jordan's state news agency reported a 3.9 magnitude aftershock less than an hour after the initial quake.

At least 25 people sustained minor to moderate injuries due to stampeding following the earthquake, the Syrian city of Hama's Health Director Maher Younis said early on Tuesday.

Many in Syria had immediate flashbacks to 2023, when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake killed more than 50,000 – mostly in Turkey but with thousands also perishing in northern Syria. The quake also left widespread destruction in both countries.

In Damascus and Beirut residents descended to the streets fearing a stronger quake that would collapse buildings on Monday.

Both Lebanon and Syria have been hit by Israeli air strikes over the last 10 months as regional hostilities play out in parallel with the Gaza war, and several residents said they initially thought the quake was an air strike.

While Israel's northern residents reported having felt the earthquake, there were no reports of damage or injuries.

[Earthquake hits Pasadena, shaking Los Angeles, California | CNN](#)

#bibleprophecy, #earthquake, #pasadena, #los angeles

Aug 12, 2024

A magnitude 4.4 earthquake occurred in Los Angeles at 12:20 p.m. PT, according to the US Geological Survey. The “notable” quake had an initial reported intensity of 4.7 but has since been revised down to 4.4, the agency said.

The shallow quake was only 7.5 miles deep and directly under the populated areas of Los Angeles, so was likely felt widely despite the relatively modest intensity.

“It was a jolt,” a woman who teaches at a nursing school in Glendale told [CNN affiliate KABC](#). “And then the building just started to shake violently. It wasn’t those nice roll-ones we get. I had to hold on to the door jamb.”

Earthquakes of magnitudes 4 to 5 generally bring light shaking and very light to no damage.

Other recent earthquakes in the area include a magnitude [4.9 quake](#) on July 29 near Barstow and a magnitude [5.2 temblor](#) last Tuesday near Bakersfield.

Monday’s shaking had the Los Angeles Fire Department go into [earthquake mode](#), with crews at 106 fire stations doing surveys of their districts. There were no reports of injuries or structural damage, the department said when the check was complete.

Pasadena Fire Department Deputy Chief Anthony James told KABC he felt the earthquake while out driving.

“I was parked next to a bus. It felt like the whole ground was going away from under me. I thought, ‘What was that?’ And quickly figured it out,” he said.

The only known early report of damage in Pasadena was a broken water pipe, officials said. It was a leaking sprinkler head at the top of the city hall rotunda, according to James.

One person was temporarily trapped in an elevator, he added.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly Mitchell said: “Thankfully, no major damages or road closures were reported due to the earthquake.”

Supervisor Kathryn Barger used the opportunity to remind residents to be prepared.

”I want to remind L.A. County residents who are feeling jittery after today’s quake to visit [ready.lacounty.gov](https://www.ready.lacounty.gov). You’ll find helpful tips and information on how to prepare and be ready for earthquakes and any other hazard that can impact our County,” she said.

[Gen Z women are increasingly leaving organized religion behind \(usatoday.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #church, #falling away, #apostasy, #americans

Aug 13, 2024

As a Nicaraguan-born girl growing up in Miami, Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez remembers going to church five times a week. Her father was a pastor, and their fundamentalist evangelical faith taught that a woman's role was to serve her husband.

At the same time, Mojica Rodríguez saw how essential women were in keeping the pews filled and the church running. Ultimately, dismayed by the subservient role of women and the church's harsh restrictions on girls, she would leave her faith – and her husband – in her late 20s.

"Women are less inclined to be involved with churches that don't want us speaking up, that don't want us to be smart," said Mojica Rodríguez, who went on to earn a master's degree in divinity. "We're like the mules of the church – that's what it feels like."

Though the Nashville-based author and activist is now 39, her experience reflects a growing and, for churches, a potentially worrisome trend of young women eschewing religion. Their pace of departure has overtaken men, [recent studies show](#), reversing patterns of previous generations.

Americans have been disaffiliating from organized religion over the past few decades. About [63% of Americans](#) are Christian, according to the Pew Research Center, [down from 90%](#) in the early 1990s.

Meanwhile, the share of those who describe themselves as agnostic, atheist, or "nothing in particular" [has risen to 28%](#). But it had been males, especially young men, leading these shifts – until now.

"For as long as we've been conducting surveys on religion, men have exhibited consistently lower levels of religious commitment than women – across cultures, class divisions, any way you cut it," said Daniel A. Cox, director of the Survey Center on American Life, whose data helped spotlight the trend. "That's what made this so notable."

A forthcoming study from Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute Research reaffirms the pattern, Barna CEO David Kinnaman said. According to the report, Generation Z women, especially those aged 18 to 24, are less likely than young men to identify with a faith or to believe in a higher power.

According to the Pew Center, the shift is occurring primarily among Protestants, 60% of whom identify as evangelical. Experts say multiple factors are driving the trend.

As with Mojica Rodríguez, some fume over gender hierarchies, the inability of women to serve in influential positions, or expectations of chastity placed upon girls. Others, they say, struggle with their church's positions on reproductive and/or [LGBTQ rights](#).

"Young women are moving farther left politically," said Ryan Burge, an associate professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, who has examined the trend.

As partisanship becomes the prime lens through which many Americans see the world, Burge said, it has infiltrated the church environment, leaving many young women disillusioned and caught between their politics and church expectations.

Should the trend continue, it could have major repercussions for faith communities: Women are often the backbone of their congregations, fueling volunteer efforts and instrumental in engaging their families in the faith.

"Women do the majority of the work that keeps the church going," said former evangelical Sheila Wray Gregoire, who's studied Christian marriage in the U.S. and Canada for 17 years. "They're the ones responsible for getting children out of bed and *going* to church. They're the ones staffing the Sunday school, making sure potlucks happen or that people are supported when they have an illness or are having a baby. The church is not going to survive without women."

'An emerging area of concern'

Burge, of Eastern Illinois, pored through biennial data compiled by the Cooperative Election Study, a national online survey of more than 50,000 people. [The numbers showed](#) that since 2012, the share of young women who identify as agnostic, atheist or "nothing in particular" has edged closer to and eventually overtaken that of young men.

He said the trend can't be written off as an anomaly.

"It's an emerging area of concern," Burge said. "Right now the 'check engine' light is coming on – not every time you start the car, but sometimes. And you don't know whether it will fix itself or get worse."

Likewise, the Survey Center on American Life's 2023 survey of 5,400-plus adults found men represented 54% to 57% of Baby Boomer, Generation X and Millennial individuals who had left their childhood faith.

Among Generation Z, however, the pattern has flipped: 54% of those who'd left the church are female, Meanwhile, nearly four in 10 Gen Z women identify as religiously unaffiliated, compared to a third of Gen Z males.

One statistic showed the vast difference between young women and their elders: While the share of religiously unaffiliated men was 11 points greater among Gen Z than Baby Boomers (34% to 23%), young women were nearly three times as likely than Baby Boomer women to identify as such (39% to 14%).

The issues that drive young women away from the church

Researchers say there's usually not just one reason women leave the church. Higher levels of education, career goals and deprioritizing of marriage and parenthood can play a role; alternately, so too can the economic pressures of parenthood as the cost of living rises.

Matters of principle may provide the final push. According to the Survey Center on American Life, Generation Z women are far more concerned than previous generations with inequality and scornful of institutions adhering to patriarchal hierarchies – including more conservative churches, where women are not allowed to preach or hold leadership positions.

“There’s a cultural dissonance with young women being told you can do anything and then being told, well, generally, yes, but when it comes to our place of worship there’s restrictions,” Cox said. “That’s another challenge that these places are wrestling with.”

While many denominations now allow ordination of women, how such policies play out in practice can differ at the local level, where pastors may follow the lead of congregants resistant to such change.

“Why would you want to be at a place where your voice doesn’t matter?” said Gregoire, the former evangelical. “It’s hard when you grow up with a deep, personal faith and then the church you’re in treats you as less than. It’s like having the rug pulled out from under you.”

As incidents of sexual assaults or indiscretions involving church elders have increasingly come to light, the rise of the #MeToo movement and its religious equivalent, #ChurchToo, has “empowered young women to say, I don’t need to put up with this anymore,” Burge said.

Tim Whitaker, director and founder of The New Evangelicals, a digital nonprofit for former evangelicals rethinking their faith, said notions of “[purity culture](#)” and “modesty culture” – requiring girls to be chaste and dress modestly – are deeply embedded in some evangelical churches.

“I’ve been told that girls as young as 10 are told, ‘Your dress is too short,’” he said.

Purity culture, Gregoire said, teaches that women are responsible for men’s lustful thoughts. That’s one reason she launched Bare Marriage, a podcast and research effort

examining the marital and sexual satisfaction of evangelical women in the U.S. and Canada.

“The way a woman dresses can cause a man to stumble – that’s the phrasing they use,” Gregoire said. “Because of that language, and because churches aren’t good at teaching about consent, if girls are sexually assaulted they can feel like it’s their fault, because ‘he’s just a man.’”

Such ideas, she said, are pushed in books targeted at teens, young men and parents and distributed by pastors during premarital counseling sessions or presented by peers at bridal showers.

“It isn’t from the pulpit all the time,” said Rebecca Lindenbach, Gregoire’s daughter and partner at Bare Marriage. “But they have curricula with recommended readings. That’s how these things get propagated.”

In general, Gregoire said, church attendance benefits women, contributing to higher marital satisfaction and fewer mental health issues. But it becomes harmful when women internalize what she calls “toxic teachings,” such as that a woman should have frequent sex with her husband to keep him from watching pornography.

Such teachings, she said, persist on the conservative fringes of Southern Baptist and independent fundamentalist Baptist circles.

“Not all churches are like this,” Gregoire said. “But the way many churches handle gender, it’s a choice they’re deliberately making, and it’s turning women off in huge numbers.”

Making the break with purity culture

Mojica Rodríguez, the Nashville author, recalled not being permitted to have male friends or to get phone calls from anyone who wasn’t Christian. Meanwhile, while her parents allowed her brother to stay out late, she couldn’t even leave the house.

She recalled attending a youth conference where boys and girls were divided into two groups; the boys split off to discuss leadership while the girls were made to list the attributes they wanted in a good husband.

At age 20, her date with a male friend was chaperoned, and her pastor father policed such interactions with vigilance.

“He would say, ‘If people can see that I can’t contain you, how will they listen to me?’” she said. “I carried the weight of purity culture.”

When Mojica Rodríguez got married, it was to a man she had met seven months earlier.

“The teaching is that you have get married fast, because lust is a powerful thing,” she said. “They sort of thrust you into marriage with strangers to keep you from the sin of fornication. As far as my mom knows, she witnessed our first kiss at the wedding.”

Mojica Rodríguez gradually realized her marriage also was about escape. Leaving home gave her the freedom to pursue graduate school studies at Vanderbilt University, where she was able to put the teachings of her upbringing into context. Her father had no interest in her theological views, she said, because of her gender.

She was still in the program in 2013 when she decided both to divorce herself from her husband – and her church. When she called her mother for emotional support, she said, her mother instructed her to return to her husband, with no questions about why she had left.

Soon afterward, she discovered she was pregnant, suddenly faced with another difficult choice. She ultimately decided to get an abortion.

“Those two things back to back went against everything I had ever been taught,” she said. “It was like, am I going to feel shame for the rest of my life, or am I going to be OK? It was hard, but it was even more heartbreaking to be so deeply misunderstood by my family and have them vilify my choices through their church lens.”

How will churches respond to the crisis?

Whitaker, of The New Evangelicals, said while many of these issues affect women broadly, young women have fewer ties to the church than their older peers who are more established with families and community bonds.

He partly credits the exodus of young evangelical women to the rise of social media spaces that facilitate sharing and affirmation of discontent. His organization, which launched in 2022, built an audience on Instagram and now has about 116,000 followers, about 70% of them women.

“These platforms have given them a place to express their thoughts and be heard,” he said. “Seeing other people’s stories, and seeing them make the change, has given them permission to take seriously their own concerns.”

Whitaker hears mostly from those who have left white evangelical churches, but doubts many institutions will adapt to stem the tide.

“A lot of them think God has given them clear commands around sexuality, gender and hierarchy, so when people leave for those reasons they see them as defecting from the church completely,” he said. “I don’t think the evangelical church is going to change its tune anytime soon.”

The Rev. David Gushee, author of “After Evangelicalism: The Path to a New Christianity” and a professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, said that while some evangelical leaders are trying to respond constructively, “others are tripling down on toxic masculinity. It’s very sad, really.”

Tod Bolsinger, an ordained Presbyterian pastor who runs a consulting firm working with churches trying to navigate a changing world, said most are struggling to determine their identity moving forward.

“The challenge is that you’ve got to get really clear on what is so deeply important that it will never change and be prepared to change everything else,” he said.

Bolsinger, an associate professor of leadership formation at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, said cultural shifts mean church leaders can no longer rely on old ways of thinking.

“For generations, people would say young adults will leave, but when they get married and get their babies baptized, they’ll come back,” he said. “No longer. You have to have something to offer people ... If we are losing the people who have historically been the most loyal, that’s a four-alarm fire.”

[Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone makes Olympic history, glorifies God | Sports \(christianpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #sydney mclaughlin, #christian, #olympics, #testimony

Aug 10, 2024

Christian track star Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone gave credit to God as she became the first woman ever to become a two-time Olympic champion in the women's 400-meter hurdles on Thursday.

The 25-year-old American won the gold medal in Paris, France, by recording a time of 50.37 seconds, beating out fellow American Anna Cockrell, who won the silver medal with a time of 51.87, and bronze medalist Femke Bol of the Netherlands, who finished in 52.15 seconds. Not having lost a 400-meter hurdles race since 2019, McLaughlin-Levrone's victory never appeared to be in question as she pulled away from her competitors down the stretch.

"I credit all that I do to God. He's given me a gift. He's given me a drive to just want to continue to improve upon myself," she said during a Thursday [press conference](#). "I have a platform and I want to use it to glorify Him, and so whenever I step on the track, it's always the prayer of 'God let me be the vessel in which you're glorified' whatever the result is, how I conduct myself, how I carry myself, not just how I perform."

"So it's just freedom in knowing that regardless of what happens, He's going to get the praise through me," she added. "And yeah, that's why I do what I do."

The day after her gold win on Friday, McLaughlin-Levrone appeared on NBC's "[Today](#)" show Friday to share her thoughts on the victory.

"I'm feeling great. Honestly, woke up. Surreal. ... Honestly, you just got to run through the line. You never really know what's going on behind you. And you never know how close anybody is with the crowd screaming like that. So you just got to keep running your race, clear those 10 hurdles, and just sprint to the line," McLaughlin-Levrone said.

"You can always tell when it's going to be a fast race. The crowd is huge. But, also, the field was so deep that I knew it was going to take a fast time out there, and the track was very fast, too. So that also helps," McLaughlin-Levrone said.

Immediately after her race, McLaughlin-Levrone was seen hugging her husband, [Andre Levrone](#), and other family members in the crowd.

"It makes the moment so much more full. Honestly, having them there. They're the people that have helped me get to this place. They've done so much for me and just supporting me and doing all the things necessary so we get to celebrate together and it just makes these moments so special," she said.

Andre Levrone, a former college football player for the University of Virginia, joined his wife on the "Today" show. He shared how proud he is of her accomplishments and believes her hard work, dedication and strong faith in God enabled her success.

"I'm incredibly proud of her. I can't even put it into words. There was just sheer emotion coming through me last night at the race. But, the work ethic that she mentioned; she worked incredibly hard," Andre Levrone said.

"We're always there encouraging her practice. ... But, yesterday, before the race, just seeing the confidence and the trust and the faith that she had in God, in her work ethic and the plan that her coach had put into place for her, ... I can't describe it in words. It's beautiful," he added.

After setting another world record in June at the U.S. Trials, McLaughlin-Levrone [told NBC Sports](#) that "anything is possible in Christ."

"Praise God," she said. "I was not expecting that, but He can do anything. Anything is possible in Christ."

McLaughlin-Levrone finished the U.S. Trials 400-meter hurdles in 50.65 seconds, which she bested this Thursday.

In a December 2023 [interview](#) with The Christian Post, McLaughlin-Levrone said that "the one thing that's unchanging" is her faith in Christ. She said that being able to glorify God through her career and platform has shown her a purpose in life that is "bigger than myself." Sharing the Gospel, she said, "is what its all about."

"That is the most valuable thing. [My goal is] being able to share that truth with people and allow them to come to know and love the Lord in the way in which I have come to know and love," McLaughlin-Levrone said.

"God has been so kind in just allowing me the opportunity to, first of all, fail without Him and realize my need for Him. Living my life for so long apart from Him and trying to succeed in a worldly measure of what success looks like, it always left me empty even when I attained it," she continued.

McLaughlin-Levrone believes that although perfection is "unattainable in this life," Christians should "always strive for excellence" and "always strive to do things ... in a manner worthy of the calling of God."

"In appreciating Him as our Savior, we humble ourselves to realize that we are not perfect," McLaughlin-Levrone said.

"The Lord is sufficient in all things, and being able to glorify Him throughout my career and through my life on the track has shown me a purpose bigger than myself."