

**PASTOR LEONARDO  
RODRIGUEZ**

Pastor Leonardo tells his  
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dysfunctional life  
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**ESTE FIRESIDE  
IS BACK!**

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Fireside  
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# SOMOS ESTE



**M A Y 2 0 2 2**

**THE CREATION OF  
SOMOS ESTE  
MAGAZINE IS FOR THE  
SPIRITUAL  
EDIFICATION OF THE  
YOUNG PEOPLE OF  
AJEC RE. MAY THIS  
MAGAZINE SERVE AS  
AN INSTRUMENT FOR  
GOD TO GLORIFY  
HIMSELF AND FOR  
YOUNG LIVES TO BE  
CHANGED  
EVERYWHERE.**





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"I have told you  
these things, so that  
in me you may have  
peace. In this world  
you will have  
trouble. But take  
heart! I have  
overcome the world."

JOHN 16:33



# Power Of Praise

By: Joshua Colon



As Christians, many of us often forget that we are fighting a spiritual battle, or it seems to be an after-thought to the physical world in which we live. Sometimes we may sing to sing, read the word to read, or play instruments just to play, but something is happening in the supernatural realm that we cannot see. Through every single note, prayer, and application of the word to our lives, chains are being broken to the people that surround us. Some people need to hear your PRAISE, they need to feel that spirit, love, and passion of a Christian who truly knows how to worship God in spirit and truth. It is not your singing that does the fighting but it is your praise to the Holy One that causes the mountains to shake and the people to tremble in the Spirit.

We see the power of praise in the book of Acts when Paul and Silas are locked up in prison shackled and have no other thing to do besides praising God, "...and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bond was unfastened" (**Acts 16:25 ESV**). As their praises grew louder and louder eventually the whole prison came crumbling down and as a result of praise, the prison guard gave his life to Christ. Paul and Silas were still able to worship wholeheartedly, without a care in the world that they were in prison. The power of praise can lead others to Christ and break the bondage of those that surround you.

Another example we see is Joshua. He and his army were outside the walls of Jericho for an entire week marching and blowing trumpets. Joshua obeying the







word of God marches and on the last day calls for his people to “...shout for the Lord has given you the city” (**Joshua 6:16 ESV**). Through praises and obedience, God moved and Israel conquered their new city. Persistent praise and obedience have the power to break down barriers. The only thing that is stopping you from conquering is the lack of persistence in your praise. Shout! Get excited! Sing a new song! God has the victory. Just praise Him.

to move when you praise, lift your hands, and worship. Do not drop your hands one bit. Find people who are always going to be there to lift you when you are weary. These people and your praise can be the difference between victory and failure.

We have no problem shouting for our favorite sports teams, praising our favorite players, and even throwing parades when our team has won the championship title.

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“ *Why can't we devote that same devotion to God? Not just singing to sing, but real praise.* ”

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One last example of praise was in the battle between Israel and the Amalekites in the book of Exodus. Moses was required to go on top of the mountain and lift his hands so that Israel can prevail. As he kept his hands raised, Israel prevails, however when he lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed. With the help of Aaron, Hur, and a couple of stones to keep his hands, steady Israel claimed victory over the battle (**Exodus 17:8-16 ESV**). Lift your hands and keep them up high. The Spirit begins

Why can't we devote that same devotion to God? Not just singing to sing, but real praise. Praise that will convict others of their sins. Praise that will break the bondages and strongholds of men permanently. Praise so heavy that the earth trembles. King Jehoshaphat had to fight a war against multiple nations, and instead of putting his best fighters on the front line, he placed his best worshippers there and came out victorious because they praised and honored the Lord (**2 Chronicles 20**).



# TRUE PRAISE

We are too focused on trying to accomplish our dreams, aspirations, and desires that we quickly lose sight of the fact that we are spiritual warriors in God's army fighting a spiritual battle and the way we fight is through **praise** and **prayer**! Even when you are hurting get loud, bold, and praise the Lord. Do not be surprised to see that victory is just around the corner. Always shout a praise, for God gave us eternal life through his son Jesus Christ. **There is power in your praise!**



# DEFINING THE CALL







# Who Do You Say I Am?

By: Jessica Delvalle

"Who do you say I am?" is a question Jesus asked His disciples and is recorded in three of the four gospels. At some point in all of our lives, we have been faced with a similar question. It is the most important question we will ever answer. Who do we say Jesus is?

Jesus began the conversation with His disciples by asking a related question: "Who do the crowds say I am?" (Luke 9:18). In response, they let Him know what they had heard. The opinions included John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. He then directs His question at the disciples, "What about you? Who do you say I am?" Almost immediately after this question was asked, Peter answers, "You are The Messiah, the Son of the living God." This phrase is so important, 'Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' When Peter said this, he was declaring that he believed that Jesus was God Himself. And although Peter walked with Jesus, witnessed miracles, and even walked on water, he did not solely discover this by observation and investigation, but through revelation. Jesus responds to Peter, "Blessed are you, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17)



*"Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?'"*

**Luke 9:18**



The knowledge of Jesus as The Christ, The one and only Son of God, is a gift. It is a revelation by God, and this revelation comes through a relationship and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In other words, this is not just about human intelligence. This is not just about familiarization. It takes a divine revelation. We can do our best to explain Him, but the conviction of others that Jesus is The Christ, The Son of The Living God, is beyond us.

Jesus is a common feature of the major religions of the world, and the perspectives on Jesus vary among these religions. In Islam, Jesus is considered to be a messenger from God or a prophet but rejects the view that Jesus was the Son of God. Judaism completely rejects the idea of Jesus being God. They believe He was a false Messiah. Hinduism believes that Jesus was a spiritual teacher and includes Him in their list of many deities. Buddhists naturally tend to interpret Jesus according to their system of thought. They are attracted by

His teachings and by His example. They recognize Him as someone who renounces Himself out of compassion for others. They accept Jesus as a wise teacher, but they do not accept Him as the Son of God.

In all of the world, everyone and every Religion feels the need to explain Jesus and put Him in a place that best fits their belief system. However, while the World's religions account for Jesus tangentially, only one faith system is established on the authentic, eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, teachings, and ministry. The core principle that sets Christianity apart from any other religion is our belief that the one and only God and creator of the universe took on human flesh, lived among us, and then, in His great love, died that we might be saved. Salvation is of The Lord. He is The Christ. The Anointed One. The Messiah. The forever King. He is The Son of The living God. He is The Savior this world is looking for. It is all about Jesus! The hero of life, history, and the bible is not us, it's Jesus!

*Who do you say He is?*



# Affiliations 2022

# AFFILIATE WITH AJEC RE



**Affiliation 2022 | Afiliación 2022**

**Informe para la Convención Anual 2022**  
Report for the Annual Convention 2022

**Información de su Iglesia**  
Church Information

**Distrito \***  
District

**Nombre del Pastor \***  
Pastor's Name

First Last

**Correo Electrónico del Pastor \***  
Pastor's Email:

**Nombre de su Iglesia \***  
Name of your Church

**Dirección de la Iglesia \***  
Address Line 1

City State Zip Code

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Youth Society Information

**Nombre del líder \***  
First Last

**This is the final month for affiliation!** Make sure to contact your leader to do affiliate. Leaders, to affiliate your youth, click the link in our social media bios and complete the affiliation form. Affiliations period will be open **and ends 5/31**. \$6 affiliation fee for each youth is due by **5/31/22**



# FROM DYSFUNCTIONAL TO FUNCTIONAL



**PASTOR  
LEONARDO  
RODRIGUEZ**

The word dysfunctional was a word I heard a lot throughout my early youth and although I really tried to ignore its meaning and those who used it towards me; I could never shake off the reality, that in all the aspects of my life this was the word that could be used to define me. I was a dysfunctional person. The word dysfunctional can be simply defined as something that is not working or operating in the proper and or normal way; and before having my encounter with God nothing in my life was working properly, nothing in my life was normal, nothing was working the way it should.

See I come from a dysfunctional home; at a young age my parents split up. This split up was very heartbreaking and caused me and my brothers to have a very dysfunctional childhood. Family park days, dinners, or movie nights were not a thing in my house. In my house, everyone chose their own corner of solitude and stuck with it. The pain we felt by my parent's separation and the loneliness experienced in the home caused me and my brothers to each take our own paths and while doing so we created a dysfunctional sibling relationship. We always loved each other; we always had our backs however we just never knew what was going on in each other's lives. Everything was a domino effect; because of our parent's separation, we as brothers also separated. This caused us to enter dysfunctional friendships and lifestyles, trying to fill empty voids left from all the pain and loneliness caused in the past.

The dysfunctional home, dysfunctional sibling relationship, and dysfunctional friendships all caused one major problem in my life, a dysfunctional spiritual lifestyle. During all this time my mother was a woman of God, who dedicated herself to prayer and the service of God. She would constantly take us to church, but our broken hearts, torn spirit, and lack of focus would never let God in to fix everything that was not working properly. I would always go to church, but I was far from God. But the great thing about God is that it doesn't matter how far we are from Him, He is always close to us. I remember one service, in particular, God used one of his servants to give me a word, he said "God is calling you, to use you in ministry. But before all of that, you first need to focus on him. He will fix everything; He will put everything in working order." I remember telling myself "There is no way He can use me; I am a mess; my family is a mess." I share this story because there might be many of you out there thinking the same thing, wanting to be used by God, but saying to yourself "there is no way God can use me, I am a mess."

Well, let me tell you that you couldn't be farther from the truth. Throughout Scripture, we can see great evidence that God used dysfunctional men and women to do remarkable and unforgettable things. People like Joseph, Moses, Jephthah, Samson, Rahab, Ruth, David, Solomon, Ester, Hosea, all the Apostles, and the list could go on. All of these were broken men and women, dysfunctional people; but God fixed them and used for





his glory and purpose. Do you want something a little closer to home? Look at the leaders and teachers of the congregation you're in, look at you're a pastor; get close, hear their story. Behind every suit and tie, behind every pulpit, behind every successful ministry, there's a story of how God took a broken man or woman and restored them completely. A story of how God took them from a dysfunctional state to a functional state. I encourage you, to get closer and hear their story.

I was blessed enough to have a mother that constantly prayed for me. Because of that prayer, I had an encounter with God; I was fifteen years old and one day I was invited to a waterpark with some dysfunctional friends of mine. In this waterpark, I was doing things that I for sure knew were not pleasing God. In an instant I was left alone, the park felt empty, and I remember feeling the voice of the Spirit of God speaking to my heart saying, "Leo I can no longer be in here, there's no space for me, I must leave." And at that moment, I felt loneliness strike my heart like never before, the loneliness I have experienced before could not compare to this moment. See I was never really alone, God was always with me. But until this moment I have never experienced true loneliness. The Spirit of God could no longer make my heart his home because now I have given my heart to sin. Talk about an all-time low, talk about reaching the lowest point of being dysfunctional. I was completely alone. On the trip back home, I felt desperate. I felt like I couldn't breathe, I felt like my life was over. I was in the corner of the bus crying all the way home wondering what my next step would be. By the time I reached my house, I finally knew what my next step was.

I ran to my room, shut my door, and began screaming out "God forgive me, please come back; I need you and only you!" At that moment I felt the biggest relief as the Holy spirit re-entered my life. The room lit up and I experienced the presence of God like never before. Surprisingly no one outside my room heard or realized what was going on. But on that day, God officially began restoring my life, turning me from dysfunctional to functional. Wonderful things happened, I accepted Christ; I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. I began my education in the wonderful school of AJEC. God gave me great friends along the way that pushed me and encouraged me to continue looking for God. Also, God placed wonderful pastors and mentors in my path to guide me in the ministry. So many wonderful things have happened since the moment I had an encounter with God, time won't be enough to tell them all.





However, it's important to share, that due to that first encounter, years later, my family is now experiencing the best moments ever. I and my brothers have never been closer; God has also given me an opportunity to have a family of my own, I am married with three kids and one on the way. And the best news of all is that God's promise was fulfilled, and I began working in the ministry. In July of 2020, we were given the opportunity to open a church in the same neighborhood that witnessed me, and my brothers come from a dysfunctional family. Not only that, but all the members of this once dysfunctional family are now in some way or another collaborating so that the gospel of Christ gets preached. The purpose of all of this is for you to see that your past experiences and you're scarred life should not and will not determine your future success in Christ. The more weight you have on your shoulders, the deeper you will sink into his presence, don't



be afraid; get in deeper with God, let Him restore you, let Him write your story. It doesn't matter how much of a mess your life is; God will restore you and do great things with you.

I hope that my short story would motivate you to allow God to take you from the present dysfunctional state that you might find yourself in, to the glorious functional state that He desires to have you in. Romans 12:2 says the following "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is; his good, pleasing, and perfect will." Leave that dysfunctional lifestyle behind and enter God's perfect functional state where you will find God's will for you, which is good, pleasing, and perfect.



**ESTE FIRESIDE EP. 4**

**LIVE**



# OUR HARDEST BATTLES

**DAVID VARGAS JR.**



**WANDER SANTANA**



**DISCUSSING OUR DIVERSE  
STRUGGLES AS YOUTH IN THE 2020'S**

**STREAMING  
WEDNESDAY  
MAY 11**

**8:00 PM**

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