



# INSURGENCE

Reclaiming the  
GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

FRANK VIOLA

## **Praise for God's Favorite Place on Earth**

"Frank Viola's *God's Favorite Place on Earth* is a fast-moving, groundbreaking look at the Christian's struggle against legalism, discouragement, doubt, rejection, and spiritual complacency. A masterfully engaging book."

**Mark Batterson**, author and pastor

"A lot of people write books; Frank writes stories, and in this one we once again see why he's such a master. Honored to call him a friend, excited to call him an author I love to read."

**Jon Acuff**, author and blogger

"Frank Viola's pen and voice are consistently both penetrating and trustworthy."

Jack Hayford, renowned pastor and author

"Frank continues to challenge the church-at-large with a powerful mind, an impassioned voice, and a love for the Bride of Christ."

**Ed Stetzer**, author and speaker

"*God's Favorite Place on Earth* realigned my heart toward Jesus and His mysterious, confounding, surprising, beautiful ways. It's not often I learn something new when reading a book, but Frank Viola's sharp storytelling and insightful interpretation made me hunger for more of the real Jesus. Pick up this book if you need a reversal in your Christian life; it will not disappoint."

**Mary DeMuth**, author and blogger

"The best thing I can say about Frank Viola is this: When I read his books—and I read them all—I don't think much about Frank Viola. I think about Jesus. And I learn to love Him more. This book is no different. Read it, and you'll find yourself thinking, if you're like me, 'I knew Jesus was great, but . . . Wow!' And that, at least from me, is as good as it gets."

**Brant Hansen**, author and radio personality

"As masterly as a Cézanne canvas or a Stravinsky score, Frank Viola surpasses himself in his best book yet—a work of serene, soaring magnificence.

Part novel, part biography, part theology, part Bible study, Frank's imaginative touch and command of prose haiku leaves the reader resolved more than ever to be a Bethany—God's favorite place on earth."

**Leonard Sweet**, author, seminary professor, speaker

"Combining masterful storytelling, historical knowledge, biblical insight, and practical wisdom, Frank artfully uses the Gospels' depiction of Lazarus and the small town of Bethany to lay out a beautiful and compelling vision of a God who longs to make every human heart and every church 'His favorite place.' This is a beautifully written, timely, prophetic work all would benefit from reading!"

**Greg Boyd**, pastor and author

*“God’s Favorite Place on Earth* beautifully creates a powerful and moving portrait of the humanness of Jesus and His dearest relationships. Taking a story well told, Frank Viola engages the voice and view of Lazarus to bring a new perspective and moving relatability to Jesus’ life on earth. Incredibly thoughtful and moving.”

**Jenni Catron**, author and leadership consultant

“Few authors challenge me in my faith like Frank Viola. This book and the stories it contains will force you to face the myth of religion and instead adopt a life of deeper dedication to God, to find your own Bethany. It sure did for me.”

**Jeff Goins**, author and blogger

### **Praise for *From Eternity to Here***

“Frank’s *From Eternity to Here* is a masterpiece. . . . It reads like a movie on paper.”

**Dr. Myles Munroe**, author and speaker

“When you’re as old as I am, you don’t hear new stuff. You can hardly say anything about religion that I haven’t heard several times. But what’s in *From Eternity to Here* is so new to me.”

**Steve Brown**, author and talk-radio show host

“A great work of narrative theology.”

**Alan Hirsch**, author and speaker

“Dissent is a gift to the church. It is the imagination of the prophets that continually calls us back to our identity as the peculiar people of God. May Viola’s words challenge us to become the change that we want to see in the church.”

**Shane Claiborne**, author and activist

“I just finished *From Eternity to Here*. I’m in process of reading it again. It has moved into my top ten books. Brilliant.”

**Derwin Gray**, pastor and author

### **Praise for *Jesus Manifesto***

“There cannot be enough books written about the majesties and excellencies of Christ. I am grateful that Frank and Leonard Sweet put *Jesus Manifesto* in the lap of so many.”

**Matt Chandler**, pastor and author

“Whether you are a seminary professor or someone seeking answers about Christ for the first time, *Jesus Manifesto* promises to illuminate the truth about the greatest personality to ever walk the earth.”

**Ed Young**, pastor and author

“If we follow the Spirit, Christ can become as real to us as the world was when we were sinners. *Jesus Manifesto* is a compass pointing toward this holy pursuit.”

**Francis Frangipane**, pastor and author

“*Jesus Manifesto* is a passionate invitation to fall head over heels in love with the Son of God. Prepare to be shaken. Prepare to be awakened. And prepare to answer the call to follow Jesus with wholehearted abandon. After reading this book, you’ll never be the same.”

**Margaret Feinberg**, author and speaker

“*Jesus Manifesto* is the most powerful work on Christ I have read in recent years. The Christ of the Empty Tomb is back among us. Sweet and Viola have beckoned us to return to Olivet and renew our souls. I was hushed by its welcome authority. I found a lump in my throat as I read through page after page of biblical witness to the one and only, incomparable Christ in whom alone is our Salvation. You must read this book. All of us must, and then we must believe in this book, rise, and advance on our culture with the truth we have lately backed away from in our faulty attempt to play fair at the cost of our God-given mission.”

**Calvin Miller**, author and professor

“Brilliant, refreshing, soaring—and that’s just the first chapter! This book is destined to be a classic devotional volume that will inspire generations of Jesus-followers. The line from the song goes, ‘You can have all this world, but give me Jesus.’ This book does just that.”

**Reggie McNeal**, author and missional specialist

## **Praise for *The Day I Met Jesus***

“What a treasure this diary-style book—*The Day I Met Jesus*—is!”

**Lysa TerKeurst**, author and speaker

“Jesus, from the very beginning, has been ‘good news for women.’ One reads of His encounters with the women described in *The Day I Met Jesus* with a sense of wonder that these interactions took place two thousand years ago. He is good news for women still.”

**John Ortberg**, pastor and author

“I thought I knew the women in these stories well, but in this beautiful book—*The Day I Met Jesus*—I met each one in a fresh, personal, and profound way.”

**Sheila Walsh**, author and speaker

“We all long to lift the veil of history and catch a glimpse of the real story—the one that makes our hearts pound, our faith grow, and our lives change. You will never look at Scripture or God’s work in your own heart the same way again after you close the final page.”

**Holley Gerth**, author

“An amazing new book that will give you a glimpse of Jesus that you probably never saw before. This is a very unique book.”

**Dr. Michael Brown**, author, speaker, radio personality

“It’s one thing to skim a story about women meeting Jesus; it’s another one to dive deeply into their hearts. *The Day I Met Jesus* shines the light on desperate lives and Jesus’ powerful intervention. These stories made me think about my own transformation by the One I love. If you want to love Jesus more, this is the book for you. Scholarly and accurate, but also tender and beckoning, it’s a book you won’t want to miss!”

**Tricia Goyer**, author and blogger

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# Introduction

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Mark 1:14–15 NASB

The book you hold in your hands contains a revolutionary message. One that has shaken nations, toppled kingdoms, altered lives, and set countless people free.

That message radically changed my own life. And it’s still challenging me, stretching me, probing me, transforming me, and (on occasion) scaring me, even as I pen these words.

I’ve been a Christian for over thirty-five years. Throughout that time, I’ve heard countless sermons, read countless books, and traveled the world. Based on my experience and observation, the message I will be presenting in this book is rarely preached today.

I wish I had heard it when I first became a believer. It would have spared me so many problems. Unfortunately, the revolutionary message I will share with you has been replaced by two “lesser” messages. The sober confession of one young man sums up the fruit of one of these:

When I first got saved, I really wanted to please God. So I sat under convicting preaching and read convicting books. I did everything I was told. I worked very hard at trying to serve God and did my best to build His kingdom. But I eventually burned out. And looking back, I didn’t see much impact from my efforts. Later my eyes were opened that my main motivation I was operating from was guilt and fear. Fear of having God upset with me because I wasn’t doing enough for Him. Guilt (which I called “conviction”) because I didn’t measure up, despite my best efforts.

Another confession from a young woman describes the fruit of the other lesser message:

When I received Jesus, I rejoiced that I was forgiven of all my sins. I was told that my personal life didn’t matter much to God because He loves me despite what I do. I’m under grace, and God is primarily interested in justice and helping the poor. For years, my life was focused on raising my children, sending them to college when they grow up, and someday having grandchildren. I went to church once a week, read my Bible, and prayed. I was hungry for justice in the world and supported several causes that promoted it. Looking back, I discovered that Jesus was really just a supplement to my already busy life. Christ wasn’t the reason why I breathed. I was living for other things, even good things like raising a family and working for justice, but they weren’t my Lord Jesus.

Interestingly, the New Testament takes dead aim at these two lesser messages and the fruit they produce. In fact, most of Paul’s letters—which make up the majority of the New Testament—were provoked because the churches he planted embraced one of these two messages.

Sadly, countless Christians today have never been exposed to any other message. Especially the groundbreaking message that we find all throughout the New Testament and that I will seek to unveil in these pages.

This book is divided up into six parts:

- Part I    Three Different Gospels
- Part II   Unveiling the King's Beauty
- Part III   The Gospel of the Kingdom
- Part IV   Entering and Enjoying the Kingdom
- Part V    Our Glorious Liberty
- Part VI   Advancing the Kingdom

Each part builds on the previous one. And they all contain short chapters for ease of reading. Also, some of the questions that will arise in your mind while reading will be answered later in the book.

If I developed every theme in this volume, it would be more than 1,000 pages. Consequently, I've included footnotes and endnotes that contain source material and supplemental resources that delve deeper into the themes. You can obtain these resources at [InsurgenceBook.com](http://InsurgenceBook.com).

## **God's Eternal Purpose**

For the last two decades, my main focus, burden, and passion has been God's eternal purpose. It is the thread that runs through all my work.

As I have argued in detail elsewhere, the eternal purpose of God is the grand narrative of the entire Bible. <sup>1</sup>

The kingdom of God is at the heart of God's eternal purpose. In fact, in recent years, I've come to realize that the kingdom of God is just another term for the eternal purpose. In this respect, John Bright was correct when he wrote,

The concept of the Kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible. . . . The Bible is *one* book. Had we to give that book a title, we might with justice call it "The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God." That is, indeed, its central theme. <sup>2</sup>

The kingdom of God explains and sums up the meaning and purpose of Jesus. The kingdom points to the universal glory, fullness, and rule of Jesus Christ and the exercise of God's image and authority through human beings—the central features of the eternal purpose.

I want to make clear at the outset that I'm not writing this book for scholars or theologians. Yet I believe scholars and theologians will benefit from it.

I'm instead writing so that a teenager in high school who is familiar with the basics of the Bible will be able to understand and gain value from it.

## **My Hope**

My hope in writing this book is that its message will deliver you from every other version of the gospel except the gospel of the kingdom—a gospel that has been virtually lost to us today.



When properly understood and received, I am convinced that the gospel of the kingdom will capture your heart and ruin you for the Lord Jesus Christ and the insurgence He launched on the day of His resurrection.

It's that powerful.

# A Warning Before You Read Further

If you dare to read this entire book, you may be infuriated by some of the things I write. And you will probably become defensive over certain parts of it. (So make sure no one is around if you decide to fling the book across the room. Neither I nor the publisher are responsible if you take out an eye! If you're reading the book on your Kindle or Nook, it may be even more dangerous, given that those devices weigh more than a paperback.)

All humor aside, this book is not your typical "Christian" work. Some of the statements I make are admittedly extreme. But they are no less extreme than those made by Jesus and Paul.

Given the explosive content of the book, I interrupt some of the chapters with heartfelt prayers. I encourage you to read those prayers and not skip over them.

So yes, you may get agitated while reading. But holster your weapons and consider whether or not your anger is directed at what I've said or what Jesus or Paul said.

To be candid, I'm writing to strike at your heart. Consequently, if you have a spiritual pulse, I believe you'll be deeply challenged and stirred. And you'll take action.

Being forewarned is being forearmed. And my warning is simple. *You will be distracted from finishing this book.* You will also be distracted from taking action on it.

What follows is my strong encouragement before you turn to the next chapter:

1. Decide right now that you're going to act on the message. The goal of reading this book isn't just to persuade you to change. It's to navigate you through *what* to change.

For this reason, I've added a "Taking Action" section following each part of the book. This section contains steps on how to practically apply the message of the kingdom to your life.

2. If you're going to invest the valuable asset of time to begin this book, make it productive and decide to finish it come hell or high water. I suggest that you set a clear goal (with a date) as to when you will finish. And create a reading plan where you commit to reading a certain number of chapters each week.

Finishing the book is important, because the threads laid out in previous parts will be pulled out and expanded in later parts. So unless you read every part of the book, you will likely come away with a misunderstanding.

3. If you consider yourself to be a Christian, saved by Christ, I would encourage you to do something you may find strange at first. *Read this book as if you were never saved.* Come to it as a person who is hearing the gospel for the first time.

The truth is that virtually all Christians have heard the gospel of salvation, but not many have heard the gospel of the kingdom. And in the first century, the two weren't separated like they are today. This book seeks to present the full gospel to you for the very first time. So it is to your benefit to prepare your heart and hear it as if it were the first time.

4. In each part of the book, I introduce you to individuals whom I know have obeyed the gospel of the kingdom. Because they are "unsung heroes" in my eyes—ordinary souls, mostly obscure and unknown—I believe their stories will inspire you with confidence that you too can live out the message of this book.

In that regard, I love these words attributed to Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo:

It is what the unimportant do that really counts and determines the course of history. The greatest forces in the universe are never spectacular. Summer showers are more effective than hurricanes, but they get no publicity. The world would soon die but for the fidelity, *loyalty* and consecration of those whose names are unhonored and unsung. <sup>1</sup>

5. This book isn't just about you or for you. It's also about and for the people you know. So the single best thing you can do after finishing is to give your copy to someone else. Or better, buy them their own copy. I don't say this because I want to sell books; I have no personal need for that.

But I believe in the message. It changed my life and the lives of those I've shared it with. In fact, to gain the most value from the book, I suggest you read it with a friend or a group.

6. Due to space limitations, we had to move some of the chapters in the original manuscript to InsurgenceBook.com as online articles. Therefore, I encourage you to read each article when you are prompted to in the footnotes.
7. Despite its comprehensive nature, I am not presumptuous enough to think that this book is the final word on the kingdom of God. I regard it as a robust exploration of the subject. I've spoken and written more about the kingdom elsewhere, and so have others whom I mention in the footnotes and endnotes. And many of them are listed on InsurgenceBook.com, a website dedicated to those who wish to delve deeper into the content.

All told, when you finish this volume, you will be equipped to take your place in the divine insurgence that launched 2,000 years ago. An insurgence that will set you free from everything else except Jesus Christ and His glorious kingdom.

- **insurgence**

noun

An organized opposition intended to change or overthrow existing authority:  
***insurgency, insurrection, revolt, revolution, sedition, uprising***

# What Is the Insurgence?

During the last weekend of July 2017, I spoke at a conference in Central Florida. People attended from all over the United States, Australia, New Zealand, China, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the UK, UAE, and Canada.

The conference was marked by great diversity.

Racial diversity, diversity in age, culture, social status, and so forth. It was a microcosm of God's kingdom.

What took place that weekend was remarkable. A piece of heaven broke through to all of us.

During the conference, I did my dead-level best to unleash the titanic, explosive, cataclysmic, earth-shaking, life-altering gospel of the kingdom that was preached by all the apostles in the first century and that turned the world into a mad rage.

The second night of the conference, something incredible happened. A number of people pulled me aside after the meeting and said things like, "I've not been so shaken by the Lord through a message." Another said, "What took place was electric. Something very special happened in that room that I can't fully describe." Others said they were deeply stirred and rocked by what took place.

We didn't plan this nor foresee it, but the next morning, a number of people expressed their desire to be baptized. So I asked a brother and a sister in Christ to baptize anyone who wanted to respond to the gospel of the kingdom. Those who responded were baptized in the hotel pool where the conference was held.

Each person being baptized gave a moving testimonial about severing their ties with the world system and making their entrance into the glorious kingdom of God. More than half the conference attendees came out to witness the baptisms and rejoice. (At a public hotel pool!) I was on the tenth floor observing the entire event, and I could hear the clapping and singing from there. The sight brought me to tears.

The next day, I returned home humbled and profoundly thankful. To my mind, the weekend was historical. Many who attended wrote me testimonials of how their lives were turned upside down.

Here is the moving testimony of a woman named Ruth. She wrote it, then read it aloud to everyone just before she was baptized Saturday afternoon.

Thirty-four years ago I responded to a very weak and inaccurate gospel message that I had been taught all of my life. It was a message that was mixed with half truth and half lies. It was a perverted "gospel message" based on works and fueled by fear. I was baptized into that system of control. It's important for me to be re-baptized today to declare my renunciation with that system and my commitment to the real, true gospel and to our Lord Jesus Christ. So today I do this before you as witnesses, God, and all the heavenly beings, both holy and the demonic beings, because they need to hear my renunciation and proclamation:

By my baptism today, I publicly declare my intentions to completely break ties of loyalty to and come away from this world's systems and all of its entanglements, distractions, and counterfeits. I choose to forsake all that gets in the way of me fully coming into the kingdom of God—into the Lord Jesus Himself. I repent of being baptized into a legalistic system that taught my acceptance by Him was based on my performance in addition to what Jesus did for me. I renounce any agreement with the fear that this belief produced in me if I didn't measure up. Although I believed I would go to heaven, I did not know then what it meant to forsake all and to fully enter His kingdom; to "come follow Him."

I sever my ties to a mixture of lies and half truth, which resulted in a lack of seeing the

power of the pure gospel's effect in my life. I repent of not receiving the fullness of the power of the resurrected Christ in my heart, but instead followed a lie of Him still on the cross. I choose to live by the power of the resurrected Christ and by His grace to appropriate my full inheritance that He paid for, to be a radical laid-down lover of Jesus who will bring this kingdom everywhere I go, to be the royal mature bride that my Beloved deserves and to impact the world with His love.

By His grace, I have counted the cost as best as I know, and I choose to be "all in" toward Him and all out of the world today and forever. I go under the water so that I might die to myself and everything that has tentacles around me, including compromising the gospel. I come up in newness of life, into His glorious light, putting to death all known or unknown agreements to darkness or to living by my flesh or man's systems. I will be a new creation, a new citizen who is fully immersed in God's kingdom! I will live by Jesus' gospel, not any version of man's invention. Today is a new day, a new start!

~Ruth

What I've described above is an example of the insurgence that I will be discussing throughout this book. The insurgence is no less than the recovery of the radical gospel of the kingdom of God—a gospel that I believe will once again shake this earth.

### **A Prayer for the Insurgence**

This is the prayer that was in my heart when I began penning this book. Please read it now and agree with me before the Lord:

*Lord, I ask that You push back the limits of Your mercy. I confess that the message in this book is beyond me. I'm totally incapable of delivering Your Word within these pages, so I lean hard on You as I craft each sentence.*

*Give every person who reads this volume a deeper comprehension into Your eternal purpose and everlasting kingdom. Motivate and inspire each one to complete this book and take action on its challenging, yet liberating message. And out of it, gain a people for Yourself who will raise a new standard in the earth of what it means to obey the gospel of the kingdom.*

*Make them a witness and a testimony of the present—yet ancient—insurgence.*

*Amen.*

**To order your copy and read the rest of  
the book, go to [Insurgence.org](http://Insurgence.org)**

## THE INSURGENCE HAS BEGUN . . . DON'T MISS IT!

Why does the allegiance that radical terrorists give to their false cause exceed the allegiance that most Christians today give to Jesus Christ? Have we lost the explosive, earthshaking gospel of the kingdom that Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles preached? Have we exchanged this dynamic, titanic, living gospel for a gospel of religious duty or permissiveness and “easy believism”?

Yes, says bestselling author Frank Viola. And it's high time we reclaimed it.

In today's politically charged era, Christians on the progressive left as well as the conservative right both equate their particular viewpoints with the kingdom of God. Viola dismantles these perspectives, offering a fresh and revolutionary look at the radical gospel of the kingdom. With gripping power, he challenges Christians to reclaim the lost kingdom message of Jesus and join a spiritual insurgency that can change the course of history.

**FRANK VIOLA** has helped thousands of people around the world to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and enter into a more vibrant and authentic experience of church. His mission is to help serious followers of Jesus know their Lord more deeply so they can experience real transformation and make a lasting impact. Viola has written many books on these themes, including *God's Favorite Place on Earth*, *From Eternity to Here*, and *Jesus Manifesto* (with Leonard Sweet). His blog, [frankviola.org](http://frankviola.org), is rated as one of the most popular in Christian circles today.

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