



TOPSY TURVY

Grounding Our Spiritual Vertigo in God's Wisdom

author

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A BOOK PROPOSAL

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PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Summary	3
Target Market	4
Table of Contents	5
Chapter Summaries	6-8
Author Biography	9
Platform and Publicity	10,11
Comparable Works	12,13
Format and Deliverables	14
Endorsements	15





SUMMARY

SHORT SUMMARY

The spinning our lives experience when *spiritual vertigo* sets in can overwhelm and threaten to send us careening over the edge. Forasteros calls us back to God's story and onto more solid ground than ever.

ONE PARAGRAPH

What do you do when your world gets flipped upside-down? The loss of a job. The end of a once-cherished relationship. Death. Or maybe the world just doesn't make the sense we thought it should. How can we make sense out of a life that's lost all meaning? Forasteros calls this loss of firm footing *spiritual vertigo*. In *Topsy-Turvy*, he finds solid ground in Jesus' promise to be a firm foundation for his followers. Forasteros explores *how* Jesus' way grounds us. Moving from the beginning of the Scriptures to the living rooms, movie theaters, coffee shops and cubicles of today, Forasteros demonstrates how Jesus grounds us by restoring us to our truest selves, the selves God created us to be.

HALF PAGE

What do you do when your world gets flipped upside down? You just finished your last final and you already know you won't be back next year. The divorce papers just arrived, one signature already on the line. There's a soldier at your front door and he's not your son. You're sitting in your car, the contents of your desk in a box next to you and you can't work up the courage to face your family. Your last kid leaves home and suddenly you realize you're living with a stranger.

At some point we all experience what Forasteros calls Spiritual Vertigo. Suddenly the life we've been building seems empty, the foundations that gave us meaning and purpose crumble away and we're left reeling. Where do we turn in the confusion, the fear, the angst?

Jesus once promised that anyone who builds their lives on his teachings will weather whatever storms come. He describes his way as a rock, a firm foundation that won't shift or crumble. When we're reeling from *spiritual vertigo*, Jesus promises to ground us. Forasteros takes Jesus at his word, and in *Topsy-Turvy* explores the story of God as presented in the Scriptures. Using contemporary examples drawn from popular culture, his pastoral work and his own life, Forasteros exposes the reality that we ask the same questions today as did our ancient predecessors. And just like them, until we ground ourselves in who Jesus calls us to be, we will never find ourselves. We'll continue to stumble around in the dark, pitching and weaving as we cast about for anything that feels firm enough to build our lives on.

Topsy-Turvy demonstrates that the ground the Scriptures establishes for us is as timely, practical and reliable today it was thousands of years ago. Jesus still quiets our Spiritual Vertigo, teaches us peace and shows us the way forward. We discover the life Jesus offers us is the life God intended for us all along.





TARGET MARKET

Target Market

Topsy-Turvy is written in a language that appeals to the experiences of the 25-35 year old who suddenly doesn't know where their life is going. Often people in this age range are experiencing significant transition. Typically, they will have at least some college education and some background in church. They may have just come through a major life change: a death, a failed relationship, an unexpected career change. In a post-modern, post-Christian world, they're open to the possibility that the Bible has answers, but they're unsure what those answers look like. They have deep-seated dissatisfaction in their personal lives – either in their singleness or in their marriages; their professional lives or their private lives. They're not finding the fulfillment they thought these things would bring them, and they're wondering if they've made bad decisions.

Secondary Market

A secondary market will be pastors, teachers and friends looking for a way to connect with those outside the Church. *Topsy-Turvy* engages those asking deep, basically human questions and shows how the answers we find in the Scriptures are as fresh and relevant as the latest issue of *Entertainment Weekly*.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Spiritual Vertigo

Part I: Everything Is Very Good

1. MTV Cribs: YHWH's House
2. Ugly Ducklings
3. I Get By with a lot of Help from My Friends
4. You ~~Deserve~~ Need a Break Today

Part II: Everything is Broken

5. I Want it That Way
6. What's in a Name?
7. Raging Against the Machine

Part III: Everything is Becoming New

8. Walk This Way
9. A Tale of Two Trees
10. A New Way to Be Human

Epilogue: I Love it When a Plan Comes Together





CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Introduction: Spiritual Vertigo

Culture is changing faster and faster, and most of us can't keep up. The foundations we've built our lives on – trusting our government, our churches, our schools, to prepare us for a full and meaningful life – are crumbling at every turn. The mid-life crisis has become a cultural epidemic, hitting everyone from the twenty-something post-collegiate working outside her major to the recent retiree questioning the value of the life he built. Forasteros calls this Spiritual Vertigo: everything we trusted to give our lives meaning is shifting beneath us. Where can we find a firm foundation, one that won't shift under the weight of the lives we're building? What story is strong enough to ground our Spiritual Vertigo?

Part I: Everything is Very Good (Chapters 1-4)

Part I explores the original foundation for our lives the Scriptures laid. That foundation is found in the first two chapters of Genesis 2. Until we understand who we were originally created to be, what our lives could look like, we can't understand how far off-base we've been building.

Chapter 1: MTV Cribs: Yahweh's House

For ancient Hebrews, the foundation of our lives begins with God's creative activity. They saw the universe as a cosmic temple, a house carefully ordered and arranged by God. We find meaning and purpose by participating in that creative order. Our whole lives can be an act of worship as we live in God's cosmic temple, as we build lives inside of the house of God.

Chapter 2: Ugly Ducklings

What does it mean to be human? How are we to live? The cultures surrounding ancient Israel claimed humanity was created to be slaves to the gods. Genesis, in contrast, claims that humanity bears God's image and that we are called to be God's creative partners. Today, many stories try to define us - the story of Productivity, Consumerism, Individuality, etc. Genesis reminds us of God's story: what God says it means to be human.

Chapter 3: I Get By With a Lot of Help From My Friends

One of the more pervasive American myths is the Lone Ranger. We're taught from an early age that the most basic building block of humanity is the individual. But according to Genesis, that's not true. It's "not good" to be alone. We weren't created to survive alone. When it was just Adam and God, God said, "Something's missing." That 'something' is community. We need other people - the Scriptures call them allies. Partners. Helpers.



Chapter 4: You Deserve Need a Break Today

The most important part of building our lives is pausing to actually *enjoy* them. But we're so caught up in our drive to produce, we seldom have any time to enjoy the life God offers us. Sabbath was the whole point of the first creation story. We are most fully human when we Sabbath. What can Sabbath look like into today's helter-skelter world?

Part II: Broken (Chapters 5-7)

Now that we understand who we were created to be, how did we get to where we are? Part II explores the nature of Sin as presented in Genesis 3 and the consequences of the Fall that reverberate through our lives. Sin poisons our lives at every level – personal, relational and corporate. We see the consequences of Sin throughout the Scriptures and in our world today.

Chapter 5: I Want it That Way

When Church Fathers set about trying to categorize sin, to aid our confession of Sin, they created the now infamous list of 7 Deadly Sins. And the chief of those, the root sin, is Pride. Believing that my way is better than God's Way. This was what the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represented, and from that first sin, all the evils of the world have grown. Pride is the first and most dangerous crack in the foundation of our lives.

Chapter 6: What's in a Name?

In the wake of the Fall, Adam changes his wife's name from Woman to Eve. Why? Because she's been reduced in his eyes from a partner or ally to what she can do for Adam: ensure his legacy through children. This is what Sin does to us: it fractures our relationships by turning us inward, enticing us to use other people for only what they can do for us. Exploitation is the enemy of mutuality.

Chapter 7: Raging Against the Machine

The Greek myth of Pandora echoes Genesis 3. When we introduced Sin into the world, we were playing with powers we couldn't control. Now we're trapped in Sin, and much of it is too big for us even to comprehend - from natural disasters to institutional evils. Fortunately, God promises to rescue and redeem us from these broken institutions, and to set us free from the power of Sin once and for all.

PART III: All Things New (Chapters 8-10)

Part III is the good news: God did not leave us to our broken and crumbling foundations. By tracing God's rescue mission through the Scriptures, we see how Jesus is the fulfillment of the story that began in Genesis 1. The new life Jesus offers us is a return to the very good life God created in the beginning, and we can be part of that new life now.



Chapter 8: Walk This Way

What does it actually mean to build a life in God's world on God's terms? Genesis forms the basis for understanding the whole of God's creative activity in the Scriptures. After exploring how the Israelite community used the Torah, we turn to John's Gospel to see that Jesus is the culmination of not just Israel's story, but all of creation. In Jesus, God has built a new Temple and given us a new *Torah*. When we see Jesus, we see how God created us to live. Once we understand who Jesus is, we can see clearly how to build our lives on his teachings today.

Chapter 9: A Tale of Two Trees

When we look at Jesus, we see God's intention for humanity. We see how we were always meant to live. Jesus is the second Adam, succeeding where our first father failed. And Jesus became the snake for us, allowing himself to be lifted up to bring healing and resurrection to all of us trapped in Sin. The Cross becomes a terrible incarnation of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the awful fulfillment of God's words to Adam: The Day you eat of this tree, you will surely die.

Chapter 10: A New Way to Be Human

Paul shows us that in the wake of Jesus' resurrection, there are two humanities: those in Jesus and those in Adam. God has chosen those in Jesus to be redeemed and made holy. Those in Adam will continue their march to Death. Which will you choose? It's the most important election in our (eternal) lives. When we choose Jesus, we become part of the New Humanity, Jesus' bride, the Church. The Holy Spirit enables us to live in this new reality even while we're still part of the old world.

Epilogue: I Love it When a Plan Comes Together

Revelation 21-22 gives us a vision of the End of All Things that sounds strangely familiar. In the wake of Jesus' Death and Resurrection, the way is open again to the Tree of Life. We are free to live in God's world following God's Way again. But this powerful vision is not just of the future. In God's kingdom, the End is a new beginning that starts in the here and now!



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



JR. Forasteros is a popular blogger and ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene. He currently serves as the teaching pastor at the 1,000+ member Beavercreek Church of the Nazarene in Dayton, Ohio. In his decade of full-time ministry, he's cultivated a reputation for thoughtfully presenting both Scripture and popular culture with clarity, humor and insight. He connects to those who are both inside and outside the Church, frequently building bridges between the two groups.

His blog receives more than 8,000 unique pageviews per month and he cohosts the StoryMen podcast, which receives 1,000 monthly downloads. He also contributes to Prodigal Magazine and reviews books for RelevantMagazine.com. His unique perspective on TV, film and literature have made him a go-to for many Christians learning to engage popular culture.

JR. Forasteros preaches 35 Sundays out of the year for his congregation in Dayton. He also works with area pastors to develop sermon series, content and delivery. He's been invited to speak at Shepherd Church of the Nazarene in Columbus, Ohio and at the Fall Revival at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, where he spent a week with over 1,000 college students. His sermon podcast has over 100 subscribers.

JR. Forasteros' unique ability to illustrate biblical truths with engaging, relevant examples from popular culture, and to understand and critique messages said popular culture is sending using clear biblical teaching, has made him a prominent voice among those Christians who want to incarnate Jesus faithfully without condemning or ignoring the culture around us.



PLATFORM AND PUBLICITY

Current Platforms and Built-in Audience

- Beaver Creek Church of the Nazarene (pastor); 1,000+ members
- JRForasteros.com (personal blog); 8,000+ monthly unique pageviews
- StoryMen podcast (cohost); 1,000+ monthly downloads
- Social Media; 2,000 Facebook friends, 950 Twitter followers
- Prodigal Magazine (feature writer); Christian website
- RelevantMagazine.com (former book reviewer); Christian website
- MinistryMatters.com (blog contributor); Christian website
- FaithVillage.com (blog contributor); Christian website
- Twitter followers; 1,000+
- StoryMen downloads: 1,100+

Additional StoryMen Platform and Built-in Audience

StoryMen (Matt Mikalatos, Clay Morgan, and JR. Forasteros) all blog on NorvilleRogers.com now (it's where JR. hosts all his popculture stuff, while JRForasteros.com is where his church-related stuff is).

- In a month, NorvilleRogers.com gets 12,500 visitors and 32,500 pageviews.
- Co-hosts Matt Mikalatos and Clay Morgan will also promote
- Combined Social Media; 5,000 Facebook friends, 10,000 Twitter followers
- Combined Public Speaking; 11-13,000 persons per year

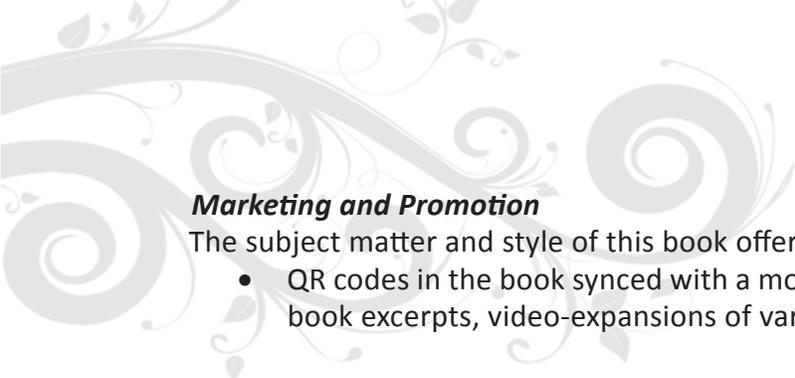
Publicity and Exposure

After several years of blogging film and book reviews, JR. has built a large, well-respected platform. He maintains relationships with authors, podcasters and bloggers all over the country and is available for interviews, articles and guest posts.

As a teaching pastor, JR. regularly preaches to a congregation of 1,000 persons and has strong relationships with Nazarene pastors, professors and college presidents all over the country who will promote the book. He also has 17 Sundays each calendar year he is free to travel to speak and promote the book.

JR. is an expert communicator who can provide workshops, lectures and seminars in addition to book readings or sermons in a worship context.





Marketing and Promotion

The subject matter and style of this book offer some intriguing promotional opportunities:

- QR codes in the book synced with a mobile-friendly website designed to show film clips, book excerpts, video-expansions of various topics and more
- Giveaways or contests on my blog and the *StoryMen Podcast*
- GoodReads giveaways and contests on other blogs
- Google Hangout Author Interview/Discussions





COMPARABLE WORKS

The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg

Retail price: \$18.99

Pages: 272

Publisher: Zondervan

The Life You've Always Wanted addresses the same sense of spiritual shallowness as *Topsy-Turvy*. Ortberg's supremely pastoral work focuses primarily on Spiritual Disciplines, whereas *Topsy-Turvy* focuses on the narrative of the Bible. My book would serve as an excellent companion to Ortberg's, and is also easily modifiable for use in small group contexts.

The Evolution of Adam by Peter Enns

Retail price: \$17.99

Pages: 192

Publisher: Brazos Press

The Evolution of Adam is excellent, but scholarly. While he engages the creation/evolution debate directly, *Topsy-Turvy* seeks to build a bridge past that debate to engage both sides in the religious meaning of Genesis. Further, *Topsy-Turvy* begins with the modern world, the questions we ask, and engages the larger story of Scripture. It is also more accessible and more pastoral than *The Evolution of Adam*.

God Will Carry You Through by Max Lucado

Retail Price: \$15.99

Pages: 224

Publisher: Thomas Nelson

God Will Carry You Through is supremely pastoral and focuses on how to find purpose in the midst of suffering. Lucado's book explores only the story of Joseph, while *Topsy-Turvy* places the reader's story within the whole story of the Scriptures, from Genesis through Jesus to Revelation.





The Explicit Gospel by Matt Chandler

Retail Price: \$17.99

Pages: 240

Publisher: Crossway

The Explicit Gospel explores the larger story of God's work in the Scriptures, but Chandler's approach is didactic rather than narrative. *Topsy-Turvy* invites the reader to identify their own story and see how it fits into the larger narrative of Scripture. Weaving popular culture and personal narrative together creates a warmer, more inviting and pastoral read than what Chandler offers.



FORMAT AND DELIVERABLES

- *Topsy-Turvy* will be 12 chapters, including the introduction and conclusion
- A Price point in the \$15 range
- Trade paper back
- The author envisions the book to be approximately 230 page paperback
- Roughly 75,000 words
- Currently, the Introduction and three chapters are complete
- The entire manuscript can be finished within 90 days of a signed contract.
- Alternative Titles

Spiritual Vertigo

Upside Down

Dizzy

Reeling from Religion





ENDORSEMENTS

Potential endorsements include but would not be limited to:

- Rachel Held Evans – Author, *The Year of Biblical Womanhood*; Blogger
- Jason Boyett – Author, *The Pocket Guide* series; Blogger
- Matthew Paul Turner – Author, *Hear No Evil*; Blogger, Jesus Needs New PR
- Matt Mikalatos – Author, *My Imaginary Jesus*, Blogger, StoryMen Cohost
- Clay Morgan – Author, *Undead*, Blogger, StoryMen Cohost
- Matt Lee Anderson – Author, *The End of Our Exploring*; Blogger, *Mere Orthodoxy*
- Randal Rauser – Author, *The Swedish Atheist*, *The Scuba Diver and Other Apologetic Rabbit Trails*, Blogger
- Dan Boone – President Trevecca Nazarene University
- Tifah Philipps – Musician, Page CXVI
- Ally Vesterfelt – Author, *Packing Light*; Blogger; editor, *Prodigal Magazine*
- Andy Crouch – Author *Playing God* and *Culture Change*; Editor at *Christianity Today*
- Jonathan Merritt – Author, *Jesus is Better than You Think*; Senior Columnist for *Religious News Service*
- Tom Krattenmaker – Author, *The Evangelicals You Don't Know*; columnist for *USA Today*

