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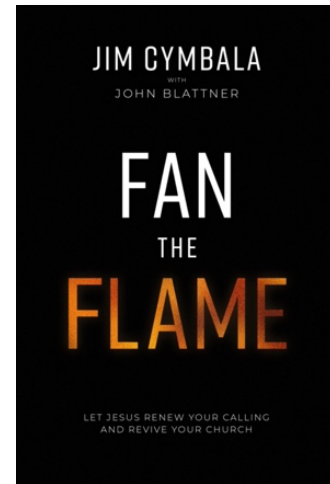
PASTOR JIM CYMBALA OF THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE ENCOURAGES WEARY CHURCH LEADERS

***FAN THE FLAME* OFFERS EXPERIENCE & WISDOM FROM 50 YEARS OF MINISTRY**

“Christians are leaving the church in droves. Leaders are losing heart and leaving the ministry. Something is obviously wrong, and we must be open to changing course.” – Jim Cymbala

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN (July 1, 2022) – *Church attendance is down. U.S. churchgoers now make up just 28% of the population, down six points in two years.*¹ *Also down? The morale of Christian pastors. Two years of congregational feuding over COVID health precautions and political issues have taken a serious toll. Many pastors are considering departure from ministry, and some church experts predict a tidal wave of pastoral resignations in 2022.*²

Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle for five decades, has observed this growing pastoral discouragement in real time. As the pandemic set in, Cymbala began reaching out to local pastors and listening to their stories, which often reflected this sentiment: *“Jim, I’m feeling defeated. I find myself in front of the church preaching, putting on a happy face, but inside I’m discouraged, worn down, wanting to walk away from it all.”*



Jim and his wife Carol began serving at the Brooklyn Tabernacle when just 20 people attended, and today thousands attend weekend services. The Cymbalas have seen seasons of discouragement become gateways to spiritual revival, and Jim longs to encourage weary and disheartened pastors to stay the course. Cymbala began working on his first new book in a decade, ***Fan the Flame: Let Jesus Renew Your Calling and Revive Your Church*** (Zondervan, September 2022), while counseling pastors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The book’s message is crafted for both pastors and church members.

“We Christians are all on the same team. If one hurts, we should all feel it; and if one is blessed, we should all rejoice,” writes Cymbala. “***Fan the Flame*** is my heartfelt endeavor to bring encouragement to the body of Christ and especially to church leaders. It has no magic formula or personal vision I wish to communicate. It’s just a sincere attempt to review what we’re doing and why we’re doing it, in light of God’s Word.”

Pastor Cymbala focuses on Acts 20 as he guides pastors and church leaders toward renewal and revival, including:

- How to improve **spiritual leadership**
- How to develop a deep and authentic **practice of prayer**
- How to **lead others** into the presence of God
- What pastors **should** and **shouldn’t** be doing as leaders of a church

¹ January 2022, IFS analysis using the [American Family Survey](#)

² “Our Pulpits are Full of Empty Preachers” by Kyle Rohane, *Christianity Today*, April 2022



Jim Cymbala has been a pastor for more than fifty years at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, where attendance has grown from 20 people to thousands each weekend. Pastor Cymbala has a strong burden for the local church and has been blessed with the opportunity to encourage thousands of pastors around the globe. Cymbala is the bestselling author of *Fresh Wind*, *Fresh Fire* and other titles. His next book, ***Fan the Flame***, will release September 2022. Jim lives in New York City with his wife, Carol Cymbala, who directs the Grammy Award-winning Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.

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Fan the Flame: Let Jesus Renew Your Calling and Revive Your Church

By Jim Cymbala with John Blattner

ISBN 978-0310133766 | Hardcover | U.S. \$24.99 | 240 pages

Available September 6, 2022, from Zonderan

Review copies and interviews available: pamela@mmpublicrelations.com, 615-294-5073

JIM CYMBALA



JIM CYMBALA has been a pastor for more than fifty years at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, where attendance has grown from 20 people to thousands each weekend. Pastor Cymbala has a strong burden for the local church and has been blessed with the opportunity to encourage thousands of pastors around the globe. Cymbala is a *New York Times* bestselling author of several books, including *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*. His next book, ***Fan the Flame***, will release September 2022. Jim lives in New York City with his wife, Carol Cymbala, who directs the Grammy Award-winning Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.

Pastor Jim Cymbala was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, where he enjoyed a successful career playing basketball in both high school and college. Upon graduation from the University of Rhode Island, he entered the business world and married his childhood sweetheart, Carol. Although unforeseen by them, it wasn't long before God called them into ministry.

Arriving at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, Jim and Carol found a congregation of less than 20 people meeting in a rundown building located in an impoverished part of downtown Brooklyn. Over the years, God has shown his faithfulness to them and their congregation in many miraculous ways. Their present campus includes a large renovated theater in downtown Brooklyn, where thousands of people come each week to hear the good news of Jesus.

During his early years of ministry, the discouragements and challenges nearly led Pastor Cymbala to resign. He desperately sought the Lord for a breakthrough in the church and in his ministry that would reflect what could be seen in the early church of the book of Acts. God clearly spoke to his heart that prayer was the source of the power and breakthrough that were needed. As a result, the Tuesday Night Prayer Meeting became the most important service of the week for the church. Today, Pastor Cymbala's ministry is still characterized by his emphasis on prayer in the church and a dependence on the Holy Spirit for his leading and power.

Pastor Cymbala has a strong burden for the local church and has been blessed with the opportunity to encourage thousands of pastors around the country and world with what God has taught him throughout his 50 years of ministry.

Pastor Cymbala is the author of several books, including *Spirit Rising; Breakthrough Prayer; and Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, which earned a Christian Book of the Year Award from ECPA. He has also done a number of sermon series and other video series on prayer and other important topics for the Christian church.

His wife Carol directs the six-time Grammy Award-winning Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, whose music has blessed people around the world. Pastor Jim and Carol Cymbala continue to serve as senior pastors of the Brooklyn Tabernacle and have been blessed with three children, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Fan the Flame: Let Jesus Renew Your Calling and Revive Your Church

Available September 2022 from Zondervan Academic

Interviews and review copies available upon request: pamela@mmpublicrelations.com

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pastor Jim Cymbala, author of *Fan the Flame*

- The last two years have been difficult for just about every person on the planet. Churches and pastors are no exception, with attendance on the decline and morale low among clergy. What have you heard from pastors during the last two years? How are they doing?
- Your new book, *Fan the Flame*, is your first in a decade. Why this book and why now?
- The Brooklyn Tabernacle is renowned for many reasons, but music and prayer are perhaps two of the best known. How have these two elements contributed to the growth of your congregation's size and spiritual maturity?
- Share a story, from your five decades as a pastor, about a time of discouragement. How did you find hope, find your way through that tough time?
- You write that it is important for weary pastors to remember their calling. What does that look like?
- You also write that it's important for church leaders to go back to the basics. What are the most basic, fundamental practices that must not be neglected in a Spirit-led church?
- You describe four "detours" that can pull a pastor and congregation off track: tradition, the latest trends, politics, and culture. Can you unpack those for us?
- When church leaders hit rock bottom, role models can help them find their way through tough seasons. You recommend a role model from scripture: the apostle Paul. What does Paul have to offer today's church leaders?
- You emphasize the importance of taking care of one's physical well-being and spiritual wellbeing during stressful seasons. What might that look like for pastors in the U.S.?
- *Fan the Flame* offers encouragement to pastors, pointing them back to their calling and their relationship with Jesus. What does the book offer for lay leaders and churchgoers?
- Your 1997 bestseller, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, inspired Christians around the globe. How does that book's message relate to the themes of *Fan the Flame*? What is your prayer today for American churches?



GUEST BIO: Jim Cymbala is pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle

BOOK TITLE: *Fan the Flame: Let Jesus Renew Your Calling and Revive Your Church*

AVAILABLE: September 6, 2022, from Zondervan

**EARLY PRAISE FOR
FAN THE FLAME BY JIM CYMBALA**

Pastor Jim Cymbala is known as a man who listens to God and faithfully teaches His Word, and in his book, *Fan the Flame*, he has a powerful message for all who struggle in their ministry. If you are a leader in the church and feel the depths of discouragement and defeat because of the challenges you face among God's people, this book is for you.

Throughout these pages, Pastor Cymbala speaks as a wise and godly mentor, confronting the pain of fruitlessness and rejection, teaching essential principles for successful ministry, and recounting his experiences of God's faithfulness. I pray that those who are tempted to abandon their calling will read this book, embrace Pastor Cymbala's wise counsel, and be strengthened to carry on in God's plan for their lives.

—Dr. Charles Stanley, Founder, In Touch Ministries, Pastor Emeritus, First Baptist Atlanta

In *Fan the Flame*, my friend Jim Cymbala confronts head-on the crisis facing pastors and leaders across America. You will find it biblically sound and spiritually inspirational!

--Tony Evans, President, The Urban Alternative; Senior Pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

Jim Cymbala has the rare gift of being able to cut through all the clutter and get to our hearts as ministers and Christian workers. *Fan the Flame* is written to encourage and redirect those who are weary and confused amid the increasing pressures and expectations of our culture. You will be blessed to read these pages and then be sure to pass the book along to your pastor or anyone who wants to fan the flame flickering in their hearts.

--Erwin W. Lutzer, Pastor Emeritus, Moody Church, Chicago

We are reminded that God is Sovereign and in control of it all. You will find solace, practical advice, and strength to step out of the way so God can re-ignite your passion, so your God-given call to Kingdom Service will flourish once again. Follow Jim Cymbala and the Apostle Paul through the pages of this powerful book, as they follow Christ and show us the way to put the guard rails of the timeless truth of Jesus Christ back into the church today.

--Ron Brown, Executive Director/CEO of Teen Challenge of Southern California

Q & A WITH JIM CYMBALA
AUTHOR OF *FAN THE FLAME*

Q: *Fan the Flame* is your first new book in over a decade. Why this book and why now?

A: According to a survey from the Barna Group, about 1,500 pastors leave the ministry every month. Even more telling is that half the pastors polled said they would leave the ministry if they had another way to make a living. That's staggering! And the stress is taking a toll on pastors' families. In fact, over 80 percent of clergy spouses want their spouse to leave the ministry.

And surveys and statistics aside, my personal experience tells me that a great many pastors are discouraged, disheartened, and all but defeated. Laboring in the vineyard for years with little spiritual fruit to show for it can be discouraging. Even if a leader has been truly called, the lack of spiritual fruit leads to hidden frustration and discouragement. There comes a day when the leader can't hide it anymore. No matter how they try to cover it up, their discouragement affects everyone around them. Perhaps most tragically, it affects their family.

For many years I've felt a special burden for men and women in ministry. I've been blessed with many invitations to speak at conferences and seminars directed to leaders. But I've also had countless opportunities to sit down with small groups of pastors—one or two or five or ten at a time, from all denominational backgrounds and theological persuasions, often with their spouses—and I've listened to their stories. I ask them how they were called into the ministry, what challenges they face, and how they think God wants to use them going forward. Many of their stories are inspirational. Many blessed churches dot the landscape.

For many other pastors, though, their tone changes as the conversations deepen. I share with them some of the difficulties and discouragements Carol and I have faced over the years. Then they share their own experiences, slowly and hesitantly at first but then, as their defenses weaken, in torrents. Defeats, frustrations, personal challenges, family strains. Often tears flow. The most common, and most crushing, are the accounts of feeling as if they have failed and let God down. They try to drum up more faith and persevere; but it's tough sledding when you're just "doing church." And too many feel like they want to quit.

Q: What do you say to pastors who feel alone in their discouragement or weariness?

A It happens to us all. Sometimes Satan attacks and tries to take us out with a single blow. But most of the time, his strategy is simply to keep us under the pressure of financial, pastoral, and family concerns—hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month. We run around preaching, teaching, and helping people until we are spiritually run down and soon want to run away from it all.

We're in good company. Remember the story of Elijah? After a long series of spiritual battles, he received word from Jezebel that she intended to kill him. Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. He journeyed into the wilderness, sat down under a bush and prayed that he might die. Then he lay down and fell asleep.

How could Elijah be God's mighty prophet and yet run for his life when Jezebel threatened him? He was human. But notice what happened. First, God sent an angel to minister to Elijah. The lesson is that even when we are at our lowest, God is mindful of our situation and will come to our aid. Second, the angel brought Elijah bread and water. Elijah ate and drank and then lay down. This provides good advice on how to take care of our bodies, but it was also likely a symbol of the spiritual food we receive from God's Word and in prayer. Third, Elijah was restored to the point that he was able to travel forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, where God spoke to him in a "gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12) and gave Elijah a personal word of instruction as to what to do next.

Sometimes we miss out on our calling not because God has changed his mind, but because we get so tired, perplexed, and discouraged that we lose sight of it. We can recapture our calling and pray with David, "Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope" (Ps. 119:49).

Q: You write that “God uses people, not programs, to bring about his kingdom on earth.” Tell us more.

A: God has never sought clever methods or techniques to get his work done. But today’s church is looking more and more like corporate America, reducing every activity to a method, a formula, a marketing design for our “brand.” The message we hear from many quarters is, “Here’s the formula. Follow these steps and you can’t miss.” Over the past years, new formulas have come and gone, each one promising to be the answer. But how can any formula be from God if it’s going to be replaced a few years later? The truth is, God doesn’t use formulas or methods. He uses people. He uses frail people, simple people, sinful people. Why? Because that’s all he has!

Jesus picked fishermen and tax collectors to be his first disciples. He chose people who would be helpless and who would need to depend on the Holy Spirit in all things—men and women whose prayer would be, “Oh, God, help me!” Personally, I feel the most God has ever used me is when I’ve been hanging by a thread.

God is waiting on many of us, today’s church leaders, to pull away from our busy schedules to receive a fresh word and fresh direction from him. How could he, who has given us his only Son, fail to equip and energize us anew for the work he has called us to do? Does our Father delight in frustrating us with promises he will fail to keep? Never! He works for those who wait for him (Isa. 64:4), and his power released among us can accomplish more in one month than an entire year of human activity. We too often forget that “unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1).

Q: How do you personally find rest and renewal when ministry demands are at their highest?

A: Exhaustion is a common problem for those in ministry — physical, mental, and spiritual. I remember when we realized it was time for our church to move out of the remodeled theater building we’d been meeting in for years. It was bursting at the seams, and sometimes people had to be turned away. I consulted our pastoral staff about seeking a bigger space as soon as possible.

I naively thought it would take only about eighteen months to find a new building and move in. Wrong. We ended up adding a fourth service on Sundays and each service was about two hours long. We did that for six years. I woke up exhausted every Monday morning.

The question all pastors have to answer is, *Where do we go to get spiritually renewed?* We pour ourselves out for others. Who’s pouring into us? We call people to church on Sunday so we can feed them the Word of God. But who’s feeding us?

We can exercise regularly and eat healthy foods. These are good physical habits, but they are of no help to the inner being that determines our spiritual strength and vitality. We need the Spirit himself to come and renew our hearts through the Word every single day.

For me to be renewed every day, I have to receive something fresh from the Lord. My own practice is to have something of a church service just for myself. I go somewhere I can be alone. I listen to Christian music. I even sing along. I read and meditate on Scripture. (I do everything but take an offering.) I often read one or two sermons that I gather from my library, because I need the Word ministered to me just as the congregation does on Sundays. And I spend time in prayer. When I’m done, I find I am spiritually renewed.

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Available September 2022 from Zondervan Reflective

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