

# 8B

# RELIGION



## Into the brilliant presence of God

Have you ever had trouble worshipping and serving in church?

On Sunday morning, do you find it difficult feeling or believing that you're really in the presence of God? The book of Revelation will give you the opportunity to come into his presence in a unique way.

When we are aware of God's presence, we can worship and serve profoundly in spirit and truth. And Revelation is the book of truth. Here we can learn more about the relationship of the Father, the Son and Spirit to one another.

The book of Revelation teaches us truth about Jesus, who is given many identifying titles: the faithful witness, the first begotten dead, the prince of kings of the earth, Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

In addition to the titles there are many actions picturing what Jesus has done for all Christians, his servants, so that they can know the blessing of being in a relationship with him.

Whatever helps we may use in our worship services—worship leader, praise team, words on a screen, songbooks, musical instrument of all sorts—cannot be substituted for a real sense of the presence is where the book of Revelation truly shines. No other book in the Bible can kindle the mind and heart of the Christian for worship better than the book of Revelation.

### Who is Worthy? (Revelation 5:1-5)

As chapter five opens, our attention falls upon the scroll that God's right hand. This book is entirely filled with a message. The fullness is indicated by the description of being written on both sides. It is also heavily sealed under someone's authority.

John uses the word seven more than 50 times in the book of Revelation. Very frequently, seven shows us the full value of what is under discussion. Hence the reader desires to know this full message, but only the one of proper, full authority can open it.

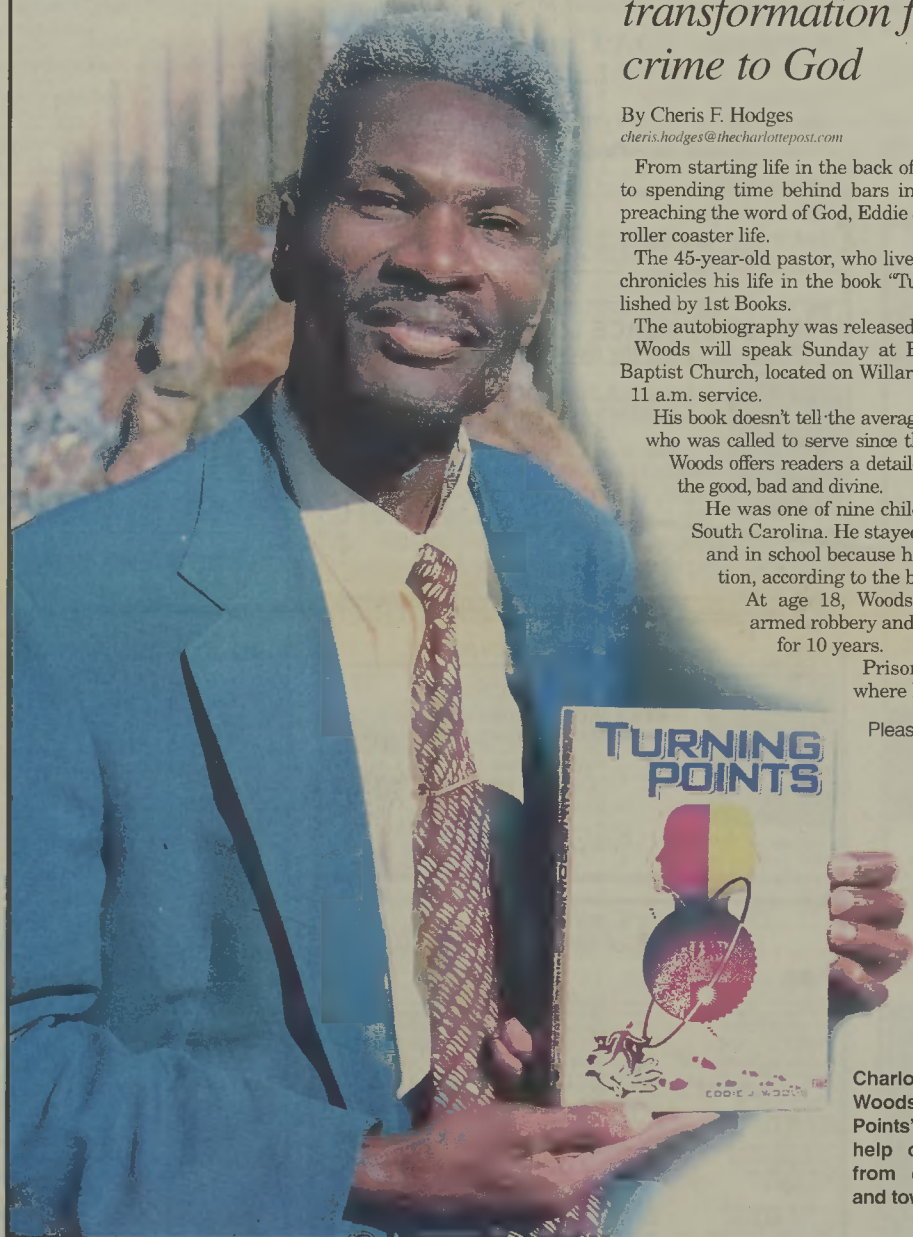
To break the seals and open the scroll are two ways of saying the same thing. To do one is to do the other. The mighty angel in charge for the moment kindles our anticipation, for not just anyone dare open it.

The call of this angel is able to reach to the farthest limits in seeking someone of proper office before God.

# Mission: Possible to turn away from life's temptations

*Book details man's transformation from crime to God*

By Cheri F. Hodges  
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From starting life in the back of a taxi in Charlotte, to spending time behind bars in South Carolina to preaching the word of God, Eddie J. Woods has lived a roller coaster life.

The 45-year-old pastor, who lives in Ridgeway, S.C., chronicles his life in the book "Turning Points," published by 1st Books.

The autobiography was released in February. Woods will speak Sunday at Bethany Missionary Baptist Church, located on Willard Street, during the 11 a.m. service.

His book doesn't tell the average story of a minister who was called to serve since the day he was born. Woods offers readers a detailed look into his life—the good, bad and divine.

He was one of nine children raised in rural South Carolina. He stayed in trouble at home and in school because he yearned for attention, according to the book.

At age 18, Woods was convicted for armed robbery and sentenced to prison for 10 years.

Prison, Woods says, is where his life changed.

Please see MINISTER/6B

Charlotte native Eddie Woods wrote "Turning Points" as a road map to help others turn away from criminal behavior and toward God.



Keith Wonderboy Johnson  
New Season  
Keith Wonderboy Johnson and Spanky Williams, producers  
Verity Records



Keith Wonderboy Johnson had lots of success as the lead singer of the Spiritual Voices, a modern-day quartet with a traditional sound. Johnson has put the Voices in his past and opted for a solo career.

Johnson's now with Verity Records and released "New Season," a recording that is to redefine his sound and direction.

Or so it seemed.

This is essentially a quartet CD without the Spiritual Voices. They have been replaced by garden variety backup singers and sometimes simply by having Johnson singing all the background vocals. This may please Johnson's established fans, but what's the point of getting rid of the group if you keep the same sound?

There are moments when Johnson strays from his tried and true formula. The Spanky Williams-produced songs have an urban radio flavor. "Simple Touch" sounds more like Usher and R. Kelly. "Come On & See About Me" sounds like Case. "Shower Down A Blessing" could be an outright hit on urban radio stations.

But that just teases folks looking for something other than the bump and buck style of quartets. Johnson opens with "I Need Your Help," which is "Be Right," Part II. And that's pretty much the tone of this record. "After-while" is has great harmony and is as traditional as you can get. "Praise Him" is jump-till-you-sweat hyper.

Traditional fans may be turned off by some of the R&B overtones while contemporary mavens will ignore the quartet sound. So why bother with this? My point exactly.

### Ratings

Classic;	☆☆☆☆☆
Excellent;	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆☆☆
Why?	☆☆
No stars - A mess	☆

## Norful's sounds blends secular and religious music

By Cheri F. Hodges  
cheri.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

Gospel sensation Smokie Norful is coming to Charlotte for a performance at University Park Baptist Church on May 16.

Norful has a following of secular and Christian fans. His music gets airplay on both gospel and adult R&B stations.

"Music is a power - it's a force," he wrote on his web site. "The Lord is the ultimate source of that power and He has no limitations or boundaries. If you tap into that source, people can't help but take notice, whether they realize it or not. I try to write and perform songs that come out of my personal experi-

ences, when I do that it seems to reach the heart of people. Music is the calling card that opens the door."

His debut CD, "I Need You Now," landed him atop the gospel Billboard charts and his Limited Edition release, which debuted at No. 1 on the charts, put him in the company of popular gospel artists like Yolanda Adams and Kirk Franklin.

Norful is the son of an African Methodist Episcopal pastor, but was given the freedom as a boy to experience some of the mainstream as well as gospel music of his youth.

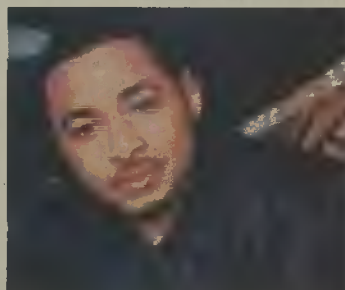
He counts the likes of El DeBarge and Stevie Wonder as musical influences, along with Daryl Coley, Vanessa Bell Armstrong and other

singers from that era in gospel history.

In 1998, Norful said he felt God call him into the ministry, according to his web site. He relocated to suburban Chicago to attend Garrett Theological Seminary where he is near completion of a masters of divinity degree.

Through song he ministers. "My greatest goal is to please God in all I do-my life, my music, my ministry," Norful said. "And the only way to do that is to be a servant. My service at this point is the uplifting and encouraging others with the gifts that God has given me."

Norful will release a new album this summer, according to his label, EMI Gospel.



Tickets for the concert can be purchased at all Ticketmaster locations, charged by phone at (704) 522-6500 or purchased from University Park Baptist Church.

## CHURCH NEWS

**May 8**  
District III Annual Oratorical Contest and third annual Youth Day Program from 10 a.m. to noon at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 517 Baldwin Ave.

**May 9**  
Mother's Day Gospel Fest will be held at the Stanley County Agri-Civic Center at 3 p.m.

**May 15**  
Friendship Missionary Baptist Church will host a public forum on federal labor

laws at 10 a.m. The forum will be held at Friendship's Enrichment Center, 3239 Beatties Ford Road, directly across from the church. The forum is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Friendship Mission-

ary Baptist Church at (704) 392-0392.

• Grier Heights Presbyterian Church, located at 325 Skyland Ave, will host a Health and Wellness Screening Day from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The screening will offer

tests for diabetes, cholesterol, blood pressure checks, cancer education and nutrition and fitness tips.

**May 21**  
Faith Community Church will celebrate its 32nd anniversary. Please see FAITH/7B

