



# THE PHOENIX HERALD

PHOENIX MINISTRY

April 2018

**PHOENIX MINISTRY is an organization seeking to empower, educate, and serve anyone and everyone who wants to experience the love, grace, and power of Jesus Christ.**

## President's Corner

Greetings beautiful people! Happy Resurrection month... and Happy April Fools' Day! I know, I know... what a strange and interesting occurrence when the biggest prank day of the year falls on the celebration of the most real and important day in history... when Jesus Christ rose from the dead! There is so much to celebrate and smile about!

We have been busy bees since we last touched base with you. We recently introduced worship as a part of our regular services! Our gifted Secretary Lawrence Lee has been writing songs and using them in leading us with the help of our very talented Nolan Croce! It has completely shifted the atmosphere of our Bible Studies.

We released our short film *Last Christmas* (currently on our YouTube channel) that went on to reach over 1,000 views in record time! In its 3rd week of release, it had already become our most "liked" and most "viewed" Christmas Music Video of all time, surpassing every other video we had made in the previous 4 years! Reception has been overwhelming and we are still really excited about it! It has been an incredible journey!

We were also blown away, as a ministry, at the major motion picture release of *The Greatest Showman*! The film echoed much of our own themes such as the hope of second chances, inclusion, the beauty and importance of dreaming big, rising from the ashes, and the rejoicing in a safe space in all of the things that make us unique. We have hosted many viewings as a group of the movie and we continue to be inspired by its core message: Don't live in fear or shame for being who you are. Celebrate what makes you, YOU.

I am incredibly excited looking ahead to the rest of 2018 as we have even more plans for upcoming material to keep you encouraged and inspired! We love you, and we totally look forward to seeing you at our next Bible Study and social event... so please don't be shy!! God bless you and we love you very much! We are praying God's very best for you!

***"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."***  
- Psalm 139:14

Gratefully,

Gilbert Gonzalez Jr



Join Us For A Study Near You

### Southern California

1711 N. Van Ness Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

**1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month at 4:00pm**

### Northern California

32300 Almaden Blvd.  
Union City, CA 94587

**2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of every month at 6:00pm**

### Upcoming Bible Studies

**SoCal** - April 7: Lord Of Laughter (God Of The Giggle)

**NorCal**- April 13

- *Does God have a sense of humor? It can be hard to tell sometimes. God created comedians and has a unique way of showing His own sense of humor. You don't want to miss this study.*

**SoCal**- April 21: God In The Storm

- *How does God feel when we are in hard times? Why is it so hard for us to grasp? What should our attitude be towards our struggles and why is it important?*

**NorCal**- May 11: The God Of Dreams

**SoCal**- May 19

- *We were all designed with hope and dreams. The cool thing is that those dreams were put there by God and He wants you to pursue them.*

We want to hear what you would like to study. If you have a request, please reach out to Lawrence Lee: [secretary@phoenixministry.org](mailto:secretary@phoenixministry.org)

# Welcome



## A Note From The Editor

Happy Easter to all of our PHOENIX members. I can't believe we are already a quarter of the way through the year and celebrating the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. This time of year excites me because we are heading back in the direction of warmer weather, more daylight, planning summer vacations, looking forward to celebrating pride month, and spending time with family and friends over Easter. So far my 2018 has included the birth of my baby cousin Micah, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Valentine's celebration with my boyfriend, attending my 5<sup>th</sup> same-sex wedding, and an opportunity to watch all but one of the films nominated for best picture at the Oscars. 2018 has started off on a very positive note and I look forward to seeing what's in store the rest of the year both in my life and at PHOENIX. We have an incredible journey of studies lined out this year focusing on the identity of God as well as plenty of social events. I look forward to connecting with all of you and hope you take the time to reflect on the incredible gift and sacrifice God has given us.

- Matthew Lonn  
SoCal Event Coordinator



## Member Spotlight

I heard about PHOENIX Ministry through an app called Meet-up. I had started using this app to meet other folks and was so glad to see PHOENIX offering a Gay Christian Bible Study Group. I had surrendered my life to Christ when I was 24 years old. One of the main reasons that led me to accepting Christ was because I could not handle being gay. It was very tough growing up, having homosexual feelings.

Upon becoming a born-again Christian, I began attending a non-affirming church. Like the non-affirming church I attended, I thought my homosexuality would go away and I would be attracted to women. That did not happen, however, and my homosexual attractions only grew stronger. I have finally come to terms with my sexuality. Reconciling it with my faith has been a challenge, but PHOENIX has been tremendously instrumental in helping me.

At this time, I continue to go to a non-affirming church because I feel I am on an assignment to help the church accept those in my community who attend these churches. My prayer is for non-affirming churches to be replaced by one church, serving and loving people and bringing them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

PHOENIX Ministry has been a great supplement to my Christian growth. I was in great need of this ministry for acceptance, support, and gaining a clearer understanding of my sexuality as a born-again believer. I really enjoy the bible studies because our teacher Gilbert, is a serious teacher of the Word of God. I am big on learning as much of the Word as possible and to do my best to live according to it. I am thrilled for fellowship with my Christian brothers and sisters who love God and want to grow in His grace and make a huge impact on this world for His Kingdom.



- Keith Smith

## Upcoming Events

We have lots of fun of events taking place in the weeks ahead. Be on the lookout for Facebook event pages for more details

### April 20- PHOENIX Dinner Outing

- Come join us for a night of fellowship over at the Taste on Melrose

### April 28- Movie Night at Regency Theater North Hollywood

- Film TBD

### May 26- Pool Party at Matt's Place

- Join us for an afternoon of fun in the sun as we kick off Summer on a proper note

### May 31- The Color Purple

- We're gearing up for a fun night at the Theater. Join us as we see the Broadway hit musical *The Color Purple* at the Pantages Theater

One of the things that makes us truly unique, is the work we put into our video productions. Every year, we create fun and exciting material to not only keep you encouraged in the things of God, but also entertained. We also like giving you the opportunity to get to know us in the process.

Log onto [www.youtube.com/phoenixministry](http://www.youtube.com/phoenixministry) and subscribe to our channel. We have sermons, devotionals, music videos, interview clips from our members, and so much more! Log on today, subscribe, and join us for the ride!





# MONTHLY DEVOTIONAL

## **“The Lord Of Laughter”**

***“What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul.” - Yiddish proverb.***

Have you ever laughed so hard you felt like you couldn't breathe? Ever giggled so uncontrollably that it caused tears to stream down your aching cheeks? Great times, right? It may be hard for many to believe, but the very God that we revere in worship and prayer is the same God that invented laughter, giggling, silliness, and humor in all of its various forms. Rolling on the ground in an absolute fit of giggles can not only be pleasurable, (and great for your abs), but it can also be godly.

Laughter has real purpose in our lives. It was designed by God to help us heal emotionally and psychologically. Sometimes stressful situations or painful memories can become far less cumbersome at the arrival of a well-timed joke or silly situation. Laughter was also designed by God to equip human beings for sincere bonding. No other behavior can create the intimate connections between two individuals quite like laughter can.

***“Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.” - Victor Borge***

Despite all its power, however, laughter is one of the most neglected and misunderstood tools in our spiritual and religious communities. Somewhere along the way, we have been given the false idea that to approach and serve God, we have to be rigorously serious and depressed... all the time. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, always approaching God without joy or humor can be damaging to our relationship with Him and with others. Refusing to smile once in a while, or denying ourselves the permission to enjoy a harmless joke can create real tension amongst those that may be eagerly trying to connect with us. Laughter is liberating, and it can be a vehicle to peace and contentment.

***“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”  
- Proverbs 17:22***

So this April Fools' Day, (and all the other days after it), make a decision to laugh on purpose! Take a joke! Make a joke! Giggle more often and be okay with seeing the humor in all of life's unexpected situations. You will be glad you did, and others will enjoy its infectious nature when they start feeling lighter and more joyful in the process of being around you. Remember... God is not only okay with silliness... He created it... as a gift... for you! He is the Lord of everything... He is the Lord of laughter.