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## ***LifeSpace: Embracing an Expansive Relationship with God***

Celebrate a Fully Human Life Filled with the Abundance of God's Grace

**Dallas, TX** — Life with God should bring an ever-expanding gulp of fresh air. So why do many Christians suffer from “spiritual asthma,” feeling burned out and weighed down with unending expectations? Authors **Joni Grace Powers** and **Robert Pyne** offer their new book, ***LifeSpace: the practice of life with God*** (Regal Books, September 2007) as a call to abandon suffocating self-absorption for a spiritual life that regenerates and renews.



Pyne, who directs leadership development for African pastors and community leaders, reveals the three different responses in our relationship with God. “One is based on performance: you try to behave well and hope that God and others are watching. Another demonstrates indifference and wonders who needs God when life is fine. The last demonstrates outright rebellion as you shake your fist at God. Any of these responses leads to a hard incurvature toward the self versus an outward turn to engage the person of God in an intimate way,” Pyne says.

*LifeSpace* challenges the reader to a fresh, new faith that avoids packaging God in a neat, manageable box. “We as human beings must acknowledge a divine reality larger than our own construction, reaching through the facts of our daily lives into an infinitely broader perspective. To live under the law of love means to live as a reflection of the gracious love of God. Nothing about that life is trifling or constrictive,” says Powers. A theologian fascinated with interaction between humanity and God, Powers suggests, “There is so much more to this life than we know...and we simply have no idea.”

In a culture flooded with improvement programs and step-by-step solutions, *LifeSpace* brings a different approach to spirituality. “The ideas found in the book are not novel, but ancient,” says Pyne. “An old church catechism asks, ‘What is the chief end of humanity?’ It answers, ‘The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and to enjoy God forever.’ We exist to delight in God’s grace, mercy, sacrifice, forgiveness and truth. Life must be expansive or we deny the very reason for our existence.”

The book borrows from a broad cross-section of theologians, poets, musicians, philosophers and some unexpected voices on spirituality. A symphony rises to celebrate what it means to love God and others well.

Both Powers and Pyne participate in the American Academy of Religion and in a myriad of ongoing dialogues like Emergent Village, about spiritual formation. Readers can join an interactive conversation on *LifeSpace* topics at the website [www.lifespaceonline.com](http://www.lifespaceonline.com).

### ***About LifeSpace: the practice of life with God:***

*LifeSpace: the practice of life with God* by Joni Grace Powers and Robert A. Pyne. Published by Regal Books. September 4, 2007. Hardcover, 224 pages. \$17.99. ISBN: 978.08307.44534. 5 1/2 by 8 1/2.

# About Joni Grace Powers and Robert Pyne Authors of *LifeSpace*



**JONI GRACE POWERS** has her roots in the wilds of west Texas and now lives in Dallas. She enjoyed a successful career in strategic planning before co-founding the *LifeSpace* project. Joni is an ordained minister and active in the emerging church conversation. She finds the turbulent waters where humanity meets the divine fascinating. Joni and her husband, Tim, hold on for the ride as they raise two teenage daughters.

**ROBERT PYNE** hails from the beautiful desert of Arizona. Formerly a professor of theology, he now serves as Director of Leadership Development with African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, assisting pastors and leaders in sub-Saharan Africa. Robert is a sought-after speaker on the intersection of Christian life and culture. He and his wife, Julie, live in Dallas. Four active children keep them busy with high school and college schedules.

## ***LifeSpace* Message Points:**

LifeSpace embraces a life with God that expands like huge gulps of fresh air for someone who has been suffocating. It celebrates being fully human as we embody God's creative purpose of delighting in the person of God.

**LifeSpace celebrates being fully human as we delight in the person of God.**

LifeSpace reorients our gaze from staring at the lint in our own navels, where love of self reigns, to gazing at the glorious perfections of God. This radical shift of affection brings about the transformation of our very lives.

**LifeSpace encourages a transformation of our affection as we shift our gaze toward the glorious perfections of God.**

Hope abounds as we, through Christ, experience the wellspring of God's perfect love. LifeSpace paints a picture of what it looks like to live in obedience to that love, where we become fountains of grace, forgiveness and sacrifice for thirsty people.

**LifeSpace paints a picture of living in God's perfect love, where we become fountains of grace flowing over people in our lives.**

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### **A Few Words about *LifeSpace***

*LifeSpace* is an ongoing creative project that encompasses this book, salons where interesting people gather to explore a particular topic, weekly learning series and retreats in churches around the country and an interactive website. The future vision for the project even includes a retreat center under a big sky.

As co-founders, Joni Powers and Bob Pyne desire to create a wide space for people to practice this life with God. They view themselves as the loose facilitators of an organic community of conversation. This conversation rests on particular beliefs on who God is, why we are created, and how we love God and others well. The *LifeSpace* project is meant to be fluid with room to respond as the Holy Spirit leads.

Joni and Bob represent a unique partnership in their *LifeSpace* collaboration. They represent the ying and the yang of style in writing and teaching. They share a love of storytelling and good books. The hardest part of writing together is deciding which fabulous words of other writers not to quote!

Bob thinks an afternoon cruising through a book by someone such as Karl Barth or Frederick Buechner borders on perfection. Throw in a run down a wooded path and all is well. Joni will opt for some adventurous adrenaline rush followed by a robust red wine and laughter over dinner.

Both are raising their families in Dallas, Texas. They infect their teenage and young adult children with the international travel bug whenever possible. Their spouses, Tim and Julie, are known as their greatest assets. Both families attend a local nondenominational church, where the *LifeSpace* concepts were first aired out in a weekly teaching series.

### **A Few Words with Joni**

The strangest thing happened when I went to seminary. The big sky God I brought with me became smaller and smaller. I put a box around God and studied God like a lab specimen. I could barely breathe. *LifeSpace* developed as a desperate response to that suffocation. Its message pushes against the boundaries, expanding into the boundless glory of God.

Teaching is my passion. I teach literally hands-on. Chaining me to a podium feels like prison. I roam about, touch shoulders, laugh hysterically, cry often and generally fling the love of God on my audience. The disembodied aspect of writing a book has been a great challenge. I want all the readers to come lollygag with us for awhile!

### **A Few Words with Bob**

The whisper of *LifeSpace* can be heard in every conversation I engage or class I teach. The message is life's one really big idea for me. *LifeSpace* sums up the major lessons of my own experience. Its concepts reflect my passionate belief in an expansive, fully human life centered in the glorious, infinite God.

I am now embarking on a new phase of my career. The opportunity to work with African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries brings together my love of teaching and my desire to live with a broad horizon before me. The *LifeSpace* concepts resonate no matter where they are heard. God graciously allows us to participate in what is really real about the practice of life with God.

# Interview Questions for Joni Grace Powers and Robert Pyne

## Authors of *LifeSpace*

1. What does *LifeSpace* contribute to the conversation of spirituality?
2. What is broken about the way we currently approach transformation in our life with God?
3. How do your images of gulps of air and expanding toy spheres fit into spiritual formation?
4. What does *LifeSpace* say about the gospel? Are you redefining the gospel or reclaiming an old message?
5. Is there a *LifeSpace* program or list of steps to follow? If not, then how will people know what to do with the *LifeSpace* message?
6. You push against a spiritual life as a constricting box bounded by rules. Are you discarding rules? Is this a dangerous approach?
7. You believe we box God into our own construction of who God is. Explain.
8. What is “the law of love” and why it is central to the *LifeSpace* message?
9. Your subtitle: The practice of life with God. How does that relate to *LifeSpace*?
10. You write about a person becoming a fountain versus a drain, where the love of God reigns over their love of self. How does this shift of affection happen?
11. *LifeSpace* explores the tension of being a people who live in two worlds at one time: earth and heaven. Is it about holding your breath until heaven arrives? Is there hope for this lifetime?
12. *LifeSpace* advocates a radical re-orientation of our affection. You write about a person becoming a fountain versus a drain, where the love of God reigns over love of self. How does this shift of affection take place?
13. *LifeSpace* places the Holy Spirit front and center in the process of formation. You write of some ways in which people misunderstand the Spirit’s work. What are some of the common misunderstandings?
14. Why does the entire second half of the book camp on the topic of grace?
15. Watch any TV show or movie, read any magazine, and the word “love” splashes across them all. Is God’s call to love different and, if so, how?
16. You draw from a vast array of writers. Why did you cite writers from such a broad perspective?

**For an interview with Joni Grace Powers and Robert Pyne, contact Ben Laurro at Pure Publicity at 818.753.4056 or [Ben@purepublicity.com](mailto:Ben@purepublicity.com).**

# Story Ideas Based on *LifeSpace*

## **The Need for Transformation and a Fresh Perspective on Spiritual Formation**

Powers and Pyne recognized a need for spiritual transformation in America that goes beyond “how-to” guides and other formulaic spiritual development techniques. This story would look into the need for transformation and why step-by-step formulas often fall short.

## **How Religious Constructs and Rules Have Stunted Spiritual Growth**

A story that examines why putting God inside a box restricts spiritual growth. Is your spiritual life in a constricting box, bounded by rules? What are some of the most common “boxes” that Christians develop that restrict their spiritual growth?

## **How Can Christians Develop an Expansive Life with God?**

Powers and Pyne introduce readers into an organic community of conversation about who God is, why we were created and how we can love God and others well. The authors show how this begins with an understanding of who God is, and then developing an intimate relationship with the Creator.

## **If Christ Has Set The Captives Free, Why Are We Still Tied Down?**

Christian theology is about freedom, and Jesus talked about freedom extensively in the Gospels. If there is freedom in the Christian life, why are people tied down to the various struggles of life? This story would examine freedom and the Christian life.

## **Finding and Creating the Life Space to Connect with God**

Thinking about spiritual formation is healthy, but how does it become practical in the day-to-day lifestyles? This story would examine the most common ways Christians can begin to create the “life space” to connect with God in an intimate way.

## **The Tension of Two Worlds: Between Heaven and Earth**

Christian theology recognizes the tension between life on earth today and the promise of Heaven. The authors of *LifeSpace* urge Christians to embrace the tension, and continually strive to be agents of change while on earth. The story would examine the intersection.

## **The Concepts of *LifeSpace***

The *LifeSpace* conversation rests on particular beliefs about who God is, why we were created, and how we can love God and others well. The concepts behind *LifeSpace* include:

- Humanity
- Incarnation
- Spirit
- Community
- Grace
- Forgiveness
- Sacrifice
- Hope

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