

Advance Praise for All Dressed Up and No Place to Go

Wallace's writing goes to the next level in defining a generation with "...no place to go..." His family and ministry have faced real opposition from those who don't want people to have a place to go! Yet, because his heart has been open to a God who "*so loved the world,*" his church doors have been open to ALL people in the world, and the church is full! We must all come to a place Wallace has found that "*racism is a spiritual problem. It's not a social problem.*" Read Wallace's words, reflect on the reality of these stories, and you will go beyond living, a "no place to go life." You can attain the next level, by giving room to people who need a place to go!

Rev. Dr. Mark A. Muirhead
The Friends Forever Mission
www.friendsforever.bz

Wallace Phillips has learned a lot of gospel lessons the hard way and in this book he shares the wisdom of his experiences as a pastor in rural North Carolina. He candidly reminds us of what Jesus said the church should look like: a place where all are welcome, regardless of their skin color, attire or handicaps. Wallace's descriptive writing takes us on his personal journey and calls us to examine our latent prejudices that have been instilled by culture, not Scripture. By exposing the mistakes he's made, Wallace shows that taking a stand against bigotry requires intentional courage. He offers practical tips to break down barriers en route to remembering that the marginalized are valuable in God's eyes.

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Also by Wallace Phillips

Just Plain Vanilla

**ALL DRESSED UP
AND
NO PLACE TO GO**

*Closed Doors at
The Lord's House*

WALLACE PHILLIPS



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First Printing August 2007.

2nd Printing 2014.

Cover and book design by Jeff Pate

Cover art and design by Jeff Whelan—www.jeffwhelan.com

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

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ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-526-6

Acknowledgements

How do you begin to thank the individuals that make an effort like this possible? I *do* know where to begin; I begin with Jesus. He is the one that changed my life. He continually does so as I avail myself to Him.

I thank my wife and my very, very best friend, Joy. She has made me complete. I am thankful for her patience with me and her tireless efforts to travel with me on His journey. You are a “Joy”! You are a gentle editor, too. I pledge to be the same for you.

I must thank my children—the JAZ clan. Josh, Abi, and Zach have made me feel special as a dad. As a pastor they have affirmed me as the best they have ever known. I love you guys!

Jeff Pate has the heart of a servant. His efforts on this project have been superb. Thank you, Jeff, for your heart and hands in this project.

John and Patty Kennedy are not only valued and gifted editors, but friends. Thanks for all your work and your gifting, not only to me, but to the Body of Christ.

I must give special thanks to Rick Joyner of Morningstar Ministries and to Ted Lemmon. Your personal investment to “All Dressed Up” was a mountaintop experience to say the least.

Jeff Whelan is a gifted illustrator. You took the hands of “Brother B” and Pastor Willie and made them speak. May God get glory out of your hands.

Without covering, ministry would be impossible. I thank God for our personal intercessors, Barbara Rice and Jeanette Smith. We love you both. You are in Virginia and Florida respectively, but near our hearts all the time.

The CSC Prayer Team under the direction of Elaine Spivey serves faithfully to lift us up as senior leaders. Thanks for your continual prayers for this work to be effective in the lives of other leaders.

I am grateful for the Elder leadership of our ministry—Richard & Jean Burkett, Pastor David & Kim Metz, and Chris & Angela Rule. Thanks for sharing, living, and proclaiming the vision.

Pastor Willie & Eltroycce Moore and Pastor Roland & Shirleen Garcia serve on my pastoral staff. Without your leadership, I would not be free to be me. You are loved!

My Administrative Assistant, Angela Myrick serves well in keeping me on task. You're faithful reminders through all means of communication are appreciated.

To the Chamblee Family: Your personal and prayerful investment is most appreciated. Thank you Melvin, Nancy, Donna, and Chris.

Alvin Slaughter and Mark Muirhead have made continual spiritual deposit into my life and vision. I have seen it reap immeasurable reward. Only eternity will tell.

Thanks to all who make up the CSC family. You daily live the vision—"The Church Where All Are Welcome".

Finally, thank you....the reader....for taking the time to read this text. And thank you for opening the doors of your temple.

Wallace

To Grandmother Phillips
She not only used her hands. She used her heart to teach me
many things about life and living.

3 John 1:4
*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking
in the truth.*

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Foreword

“Whites go to white churches. Blacks go to black churches. Whites worship like whites. Blacks worship like blacks.”

That line taken from this book either makes you a little uncomfortable, makes you mad, or makes you say a resounding amen....preach it, preacher! Taken out of context, this line could be an introduction to a book written by someone who winks at the truth of God's Word to satisfy his own learned or acquired prejudice.

But in context, Wallace Phillips brings home the way real worship should be. He concludes, “Race divides, but relationship with Christ unites.”

This leads you to wonder...what else do we adopt and accept as part of our Christian society, that in reality, actually stinks in the nostrils of God? Republicans speak loud. Democrats speak loud. Preachers preach loud. Movie stars and Hollywood live loud. But can our lively songs of praise touch the heart of God if we are silent to the truth and turn away from the very things that move His heart?

ALL DRESSED UP AND NO PLACE TO GO

Wallace Phillips serves up a hefty portion of real life application to go along with a side dish of good intentions. Good intentions are useless if they never get out of the gate. Reaching people...all people, is the heart of God.

Wallace is a white pastor building a thriving and growing multi-cultural church in a small town in North Carolina. I've been there; three times as a matter of fact. Not only is Wallace a pastor, he's my friend. By the way, I'm a black man. Why does this matter you ask? (I hope you ask!) The reason this is significant is because there was a time when people with brown skin like mine were not welcome in Wallace's church. The congregation and the board weren't having any of that. Did I mention Wallace was the pastor?

I didn't know Wallace back then, but I do know that today Wallace is colorblind. And I'm sure you won't find him on the healing line to get his "sight" back. He probably wouldn't say this, but I also know that he has taken major criticism from black and white leaders because he's opened up the doors of the church to anyone looking to find refuge and hope in the Kingdom of God.

So ALL DRESSED UP AND NO PLACE TO GO is about people. And it's a book about God. It's also a book about unconditional, unfailing love. It's God working through you and me so that we can start a revolution — spiritual revolution that causes us to become radical enough to step away from the cult of the comfortable; breaking through the color barriers, the food lines, and the denominational walls. The gospel is for the "haves" and the "have-nots" the able and the disabled. It's for anyone and everyone who truly wants to be free. I hope that's you. I'm glad it includes me.

Ever wondered what your purpose is? Do you know what your purpose is, but you're not sure how to make it happen? Wallace gives practical and spiritual insight to touching God. For when you touch God, he'll lead you to your

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purpose. ALL DRESSED UP AND NO PLACE TO GO is a book that will fuel your fire to make the grace of God available to all and the love of Jesus more famous than the labels we choose to wear.

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Chapter One

“This is the church...”

As a child, I well remember sitting on the second row from the back at our church in North Carolina. Often I would seize the opportunity to sit with my grandparents instead of my mom and dad or some other friend or family. It’s intriguing now, as I visit those days in my mind, to realize the tremendous effect those moments had on me. I’ve recalled them in memory; I’ve shared them in sermons. I’ve visited and revisited the little things that seem to have made lasting impressions on my life, and now on the lives of others.

Grandma Phillips would often lean over and whisper in my ear as we quietly awaited the entrance of the ministry team from the front of the sanctuary. Each week I watched as the pastor, choir members, and other individuals who assisted from time to time entered the place of worship at the eleven o’clock hour. They met together behind the scenes as a team ready to take their position on the field. Pastor instructed. Choir robes were zipped. Last-

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minute looks in the mirror were taken. Someone prayed. And the moment the glorious chimes completed the eleventh ring, God's chosen leaders stepped in to what we all take for granted far too often. It was time for worship—time for the people of God to corporately join together to declare the Lord's worth.

When Grandma leaned and whispered, she instructed. Her message indeed was reverence. Silence was expected—only indoor voices. She did, however, use this time to teach me. I can see her now cupping her wrinkled hands and whispering poetically the stanza that has forever been imbedded into my spirit. From her middle fingers to her pinkies, she formed a building. Her index fingers were raised with tips touching to fashion her steeple. Her two thumbs met in the middle to form the doors of her church and then she spoke: *"This is the church. This is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people."* As she reached

"This is the church. This is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people."

the final word of the stanza she rolled her hands in an upward fashion and revealed a church filled to capacity. Eight fingers

and two thumbs represented a packed house in Grandma's hand-designed church. She never knew that her pre-service lesson would impact my life and become a major part of what I share in my ministry influence today.

Today I serve as senior pastor to a most unique church—at least that is the word that I receive from ministry guests who visit Carpenter's Shop Church from all across

the nation. Carpenter's Shop is not a megachurch. It's not strategically placed in a Fort Worth, a Sacramento, or an Atlanta. It's a church placed in a small town of just more than five thousand people—a worship facility that draws from the rural parts as people make their way to the hub of our county of just over twenty-two thousand. Our ministry *is* unique because its doors are open to *everyone*. It's multicultural, diverse in its makeup, warm in its feel, and reflective of its community.

The church is busy, constantly touching the community and consistently committed to marketing what we have to offer. We believe the love of Jesus—and the fellowship of His followers that is experienced by all who frequent our fellowship—should characterize *every* church. Jesus himself said, “*A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*” (John 13:34,35).

That love for Him should be the experience of anyone and everyone who embraces the ministry on any level. That love for Him should transcend all of our presuppositions about what the church should be. It should demolish any argument about who *should* or should *not* be a part of our church.

That's the thing that puzzles me about the church at large today. Why are we so separated? Why are we divided? Why have we allowed denomination to be placed at the forefront of significance? Why has race or ethnicity served as a characteristic of why we are a part of a certain gathering of believers? Why has socio-economic status become a

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determinant in the question of who our church should reach? Why is the church unprepared to meet the needs of some who would love to be a part of the fellowship?

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ in our nation should be recognized by the same characteristics as that of the early church in the Book of Acts. This living organism called the church should be known for its perpetual growth. Luke reminds us what made the early church so attractive in Acts 2:42–47:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Does that sound like the church you attend? The final assessment of the early church is that *“the Lord added to their number daily.”* Growth was phenomenal! The church impacted *everyone*. All were united and had everything in common. *Anyone* who had a need was given the necessary resources. The church at large today has drifted from this biblical picture that was established on the winds of Pentecost. The spiritual fire that set early believers ablaze for the kingdom burned out the dross of a religious spirit, resulting in spiritual empowerment to point people to Jesus and His love for all.

The picture of the church that we see today doesn't include *everyone*. Some are excluded intentionally, while others are often overlooked or not targeted as candidates for the church because of race, socio-economic status, or the mere fact that we're not prepared to minister to their unique needs.

By and large, people are not attracted to what we know as the traditional church in America. Some houses of worship are struggling to survive and keep their doors open. Statistics show us that many churches in America today are losing ground.

The church, whether directly or indirectly, has turned many people away. Those individuals often deem the church as irrelevant, ineffective, stereotypical, or judgmental.

If you were to ask any pastor of any church today if he wanted the church to grow, I think the answer would be a resounding "YES!" Christian leaders desire growth, but growth doesn't come easy. George Barna records his finding about

***"A new command I give you;
Love one another."
—Jesus***

church attendance and involvement in a March 2005 publication of The Barna Update. He says "Despite widespread efforts to increase church attendance across the nation, the annual survey of church attendance conducted by The Barna Group shows that one-third of all adults (34%) remain 'un-churched.' That proportion has changed little during the past five years. However, because of the nation's population continuing growth, the number of unchurched adults

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continues to grow by nearly a million people annually.”

In addition, worshipers are discovering new means of meeting their spiritual needs rather than the typical church on the corner. In a June 2006 publication of The Barna Update, Barna again notes that “Americans are increasingly designing their lifestyles in ways that meet their needs more efficiently. This is true even in the spiritual realm, as evidenced by the rapid growth of participation in house

“The church at large today has drifted from this biblical picture that was established on the winds of Pentecost.”

churches across the nation. Whereas most people continue to think of ‘going to church’ as attending a service at one of the many

church buildings located throughout their community, a new study from The Barna Group shows that millions of adults are trying out new forms of spiritual community and worship, with many abandoning the traditional forms altogether.”

The traditional church has forced individuals to seek out more effective means of meeting their spiritual needs. If some believers find themselves turned off by what the church offers, how do you think the typical non-believer assesses the church on the corner? Grandma’s” church was filled to capacity as she quietly taught me *“This is the church. This is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people.”* But Grandma’s packed-house model would be absent a few fingers in the stanza today.

Believers should be concerned about the reality of

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the church in America. Is the love that Jesus talked about evident in the lives of those who claim to be His disciples? Is the church living out the biblical characteristics that are shown to us in the early church model? Are the doors to the churches that are indeed abundant in America open, and open to everyone? I'm not sure they are. In fact, in many cases, the doors to the house of the Lord are closed.

“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”(Acts 2:47).