THE DAILY BREAD

The Missio of the Beloved



Being a Joyful Presence in a Cynical Age

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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Being a Joyful Presence in a Cynical Age

The Most Subversive Witness There Is

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INTRODUCTION

The Witness the Culture Cannot Explain

A woman may understand that joy is one of the most powerful witnesses in a cynical age, and still not know how to actually be a joyful presence day after day in a culture saturated with anxiety, outrage, and despair. For being a joyful presence is not a matter of forced smiles or naive cheerfulness, but a cultivated way of living and relating that draws people toward the source of a joy they cannot explain. In a world of cynicism, the woman who is genuinely, durably joyful, not because her life is easy but because her hope is real, becomes the witness the culture cannot account for, the presence that quietly subverts the despair everyone else takes for granted. The question is how a woman actually becomes and remains such a presence in the concrete reality of her days.

This book is about the practical art of being a joyful presence in a cynical age. It will show how to cultivate real joy rather than forced cheerfulness; how joy can be genuine without denying the reality of suffering; how to be a winsome and attractive witness rather than an off-putting one; how to be a positive presence in the digital world; how to have conversations across deep disagreement without losing kindness; how to resist cynicism from taking root in her own heart; and how hope is the deep root from which lasting joy grows. The aim is wholly practical, to help a woman become the joyful presence that witnesses most powerfully in a cynical age, carrying into her world a joy the culture cannot explain.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. — John 15:11

Christ spoke so that His own joy might be in His followers and their joy might be full, revealing that Christian joy is not a mood a woman manufactures but a gift she receives from Him, His joy dwelling in her. This book will help her live out of that joy and carry it into a joyless culture. Being a joyful presence is not about faking happiness but about receiving and radiating the joy of Christ, a joy that is full and real because it rests on Him. This book is about becoming such a presence in practice, so that a woman carries the joy of Christ into a cynical age and witnesses by it to the One who is its source.

CHAPTER ONE

Cultivating Real Joy

More Than Forced Cheerfulness

Genuine joy is not forced cheerfulness or a performance of happiness, but a deep and stable gladness that a woman cultivates by rooting her life in God, the true source of joy. Understanding how to cultivate real joy frees a woman from faking it and shows her where authentic joy actually comes from.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. — Psalm 16:11

Joy Is Not the Same as Happiness

A woman must distinguish joy from happiness, for happiness depends on circumstances while joy is a deeper, stable gladness that can persist even when circumstances are hard. A crucial distinction for cultivating real joy is that joy is not the same as happiness, for happiness is a passing feeling dependent on favorable circumstances, rising and falling with events, while joy is a deeper and more stable gladness rooted in something beyond circumstances, able to persist even in hardship, so that a woman seeking to be a joyful presence aims not at constant happiness, which no one can sustain, but at the deeper joy that endures through changing circumstances, a gladness of soul rather than a mood. This means a woman distinguishes joy from happiness, understanding that real joy is a stable gladness beyond circumstances rather than a passing feeling, so that she seeks the deeper joy rather than mere happiness. The woman who distinguishes joy from happiness seeks the stable gladness that endures. Joy is not the same as happiness, so that a woman seeks a deep and stable gladness rather than a passing feeling dependent on circumstances.

Joy Is Rooted in God

Real joy is rooted in God, found in His presence and relationship with Him, so that a woman cultivates joy chiefly by deepening her life with God rather than by improving her circumstances. The source of genuine joy is God Himself, for Scripture declares that in His presence is fullness of joy, so that real and lasting joy is found not in circumstances, achievements, or possessions but in relationship with God, in His presence, love, and the hope He gives, and a woman cultivates joy chiefly by deepening her life with God, through prayer, the sacraments, and growing union with Him, drawing her joy from its true source rather than from the shifting ground of circumstances. This means a woman understands that joy is rooted in God, so that she cultivates it by deepening her relationship with Him rather than by improving her circumstances, drawing joy from its true source. The woman who understands joy is rooted in God cultivates it by deepening

her life with Him. Joy is rooted in God, so that a woman cultivates it by deepening her relationship with Him rather than by changing her circumstances.

Practices That Nurture Joy

A woman nurtures joy through concrete practices, gratitude, prayer, savoring good things, and dwelling on God's gifts, that cultivate a joyful heart over time. Joy can be nurtured through concrete practices, for while it is ultimately a gift, a woman cultivates the soil in which it grows by practicing gratitude, counting and savoring the good gifts of her life, by prayer that deepens her joy in God, by dwelling on what is good rather than brooding on what is wrong, and by receiving God's love, so that these practices nurture a joyful heart over time, disposing her to the joy God gives and training her to see and savor the goodness that cynicism overlooks. This means a woman nurtures joy through concrete practices like gratitude, prayer, and savoring the good, so that she cultivates a joyful heart over time rather than waiting passively for joy to appear. The woman who practices what nurtures joy cultivates a joyful heart through gratitude and prayer. Practices that nurture joy include gratitude, prayer, and savoring the good, so that a woman cultivates a joyful heart over time.

CHAPTER TWO

Joy That Does Not Deny Reality

Authentic Gladness Amid Real Suffering

Genuine Christian joy is not naive denial or a mask over pain, but a deep gladness that coexists with the honest acknowledgment of suffering, sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Understanding joy that does not deny reality keeps a woman's joy authentic and credible rather than brittle or false.

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. — 2 Corinthians 6:10

Joy Is Not Naive or Fake

Authentic joy is not naive optimism or a fake cheerfulness that pretends all is well, but a real gladness that does not require denying the hard truths of life. Real Christian joy is neither naive nor fake, for it does not depend on pretending that life is easy, that suffering does not exist, or that everything is fine when it is not, and a forced cheerfulness that denies reality is not joy but a brittle mask that rings false and repels, so that genuine

joy is honest, able to acknowledge the real pain, injustice, and darkness of the world without being destroyed by them, a gladness that does not require the denial of hard truths. This means a woman understands that authentic joy is not naive or fake, so that she does not manufacture a false cheerfulness that denies reality but cultivates a genuine joy that can face hard truths honestly. The woman who understands joy is not naive or fake cultivates an honest gladness rather than a brittle mask. Joy is not naive or fake, so that a woman's gladness faces hard truths honestly rather than pretending all is well.

Joy and Sorrow Together

Christian joy can coexist with genuine sorrow, so that a woman can be at once sorrowful and rejoicing, her deep joy in God underlying even real grief. A striking mark of Christian joy is that it coexists with sorrow, for Scripture describes the faithful as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, revealing that deep joy and genuine grief can dwell together in the same heart, the joy rooted in God underlying and surviving even real sorrow, so that a woman need not choose between acknowledging her griefs and keeping her joy, but can hold both, sorrowful over the real losses and pains of life while rejoicing in the deeper and unshakable goods that God gives, joy and sorrow together. This means a woman understands that joy and sorrow can coexist, so that she can grieve honestly while still holding the deeper joy rooted in God, not forced to choose between them. The woman who holds joy and sorrow together grieves honestly while keeping her deeper joy. Joy and sorrow together means a woman can be sorrowful yet rejoicing, her deep joy in God underlying even genuine grief.

The Credibility of Honest Joy

Joy that honestly coexists with suffering is far more credible and powerful than a forced cheerfulness, for it shows a gladness that has faced the darkness and not been overcome. The joy that does not deny reality is far more credible and powerful than naive cheerfulness, for a woman who is genuinely joyful while honestly acknowledging the hardships of life demonstrates a joy that has faced the darkness and survived, a gladness stronger than the suffering it coexists with, so that her honest joy witnesses convincingly where forced cheerfulness would ring hollow, people trusting and being drawn by a joy that is clearly not denial but a deeper reality that has met the darkness and held. This means a woman understands the credibility of honest joy, so that she sees her authentic gladness amid acknowledged suffering as a more powerful witness than any forced cheerfulness. The woman who understands the credibility of honest joy witnesses through a gladness that has faced the darkness. The credibility of honest joy is greater than forced cheerfulness, so that a woman's gladness amid acknowledged suffering witnesses powerfully.

CHAPTER THREE

The Winsome Witness

Attractive, Not Off-Putting

A joyful presence draws people only if it is winsome, warm, and approachable rather than preachy, judgmental, or strange, so a woman does well to be the kind of believer people actually want to be around. Understanding how to be a winsome witness helps a woman draw people toward the faith rather than repelling them.

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. — Proverbs 16:24

Being Someone People Want to Be Around

A woman witnesses most effectively by being someone people genuinely want to be around, warm, kind, and good company, so that her very presence is attractive. The foundation of winsome witness is being someone people actually want to be around, for a believer who is warm, kind, interested in others, good-humored, and genuinely enjoyable company draws people to herself and, through herself, toward the faith, while one who is cold, self-righteous, dour, or tiresome repels them regardless of her beliefs, so that a woman witnesses powerfully simply by being attractive company, the kind of person others are glad to be near, her winsome presence an open door. This means a woman witnesses by being someone people want to be around, warm and good company, so that her very presence attracts rather than repels and opens the way to the faith. The woman who is someone people want to be around draws them toward the faith through her presence. Being someone people want to be around draws people toward the faith, so that a woman's warm and attractive presence opens the door.

Warmth, Humor, and Approachability

A woman makes her witness winsome through warmth, humor, and approachability, qualities that disarm defenses and make the faith attractive rather than forbidding. Winsome witness is marked by warmth, humor, and approachability, for these human qualities disarm defenses and make a believer and her faith attractive rather than forbidding, so that a woman who is warm toward people, able to laugh and bring lightness, and easy to approach presents the faith with a human face that draws others in, her good humor and approachability showing that faith does not make a person grim or distant but can make her more fully and attractively human, these qualities serving her witness. This means a woman makes her witness winsome through warmth, humor, and

approachability, so that she disarms defenses and presents the faith with an attractive human face rather than a forbidding one. The woman who has warmth, humor, and approachability makes her faith attractive and herself easy to approach. Warmth, humor, and approachability make a witness winsome, so that a woman disarms defenses and presents the faith attractively.

Not Preachy or Judgmental

A woman keeps her witness winsome by avoiding preachiness and judgment, which repel people and undermine joy, relating to others with humility and acceptance rather than condescension. Two faults especially undermine winsome witness, preachiness and judgment, for the believer who lectures, moralizes, or signals disapproval repels people and contradicts the joy she means to convey, so that a woman keeps her witness winsome by avoiding both, relating to others with humility rather than condescension, with acceptance of them as persons rather than evident judgment of their lives, meeting people where they are without preaching at them, so that her witness attracts rather than alienates. This means a woman avoids preachiness and judgment in her witness, relating to others with humility and acceptance, so that she does not repel people but keeps her witness winsome and her joy credible. The woman who is not preachy or judgmental keeps her witness attractive and her joy credible. Not preachy or judgmental keeps a witness winsome, so that a woman relates with humility and acceptance rather than condescension.

CHAPTER FOUR

Engaging the Digital World

A Positive Presence on the Screen

Much of modern culture lives on screens, and the digital world has become a real mission field, so a woman does well to learn to be a positive, joyful presence online rather than being drawn into its toxicity. Understanding how to engage the digital world helps a woman witness well in one of the culture's central arenas.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. — Ephesians 4:29

The Screen as Mission Field

The digital world is a genuine mission field where people spend much of their lives, so a woman is called to bring a witness there as in any other place she inhabits. The screen and the digital world have become a central arena of modern life, where people spend enormous amounts of time, form opinions, and conduct relationships, so that it is a genuine mission field, and a woman is called to bring her witness there as in any other place she inhabits, recognizing that her online presence is part of her apostolate, a space where she can witness or fail to, so that she takes seriously the digital world as a field of mission rather than a trivial or separate zone. This means a woman recognizes the screen as a mission field, so that she sees her online presence as part of her apostolate and brings her witness there as in any other arena. The woman who sees the screen as a mission field brings her witness into the digital world. The screen as mission field is a genuine arena where people spend their lives, so that a woman is called to witness there.

Resisting the Toxicity

A woman witnesses online by resisting the toxicity of the digital world, refusing the outrage, cruelty, and negativity that dominate it and keeping her own presence clean and gracious. The digital world is marked by much toxicity, outrage, cruelty, pile-ons, negativity, and corrupting talk, and a woman witnesses there first by resisting it, refusing to participate in the online anger, mockery, and destructive speech that dominate, keeping her own words clean, gracious, and building up rather than tearing down, so that she stands apart from the toxicity, her refusal to join the cruelty and her choice of gracious speech themselves a witness in a space largely given over to corrupting talk. This means a woman resists the toxicity of the digital world, refusing its outrage and cruelty and keeping her speech gracious, so that her online presence stands apart from the negativity as a witness. The woman who resists the toxicity keeps her online presence clean and gracious. Resisting the toxicity means refusing the outrage and cruelty of the digital world, so that a woman keeps her online presence gracious and building up.

Witnessing with Grace Online

A woman actively witnesses online by using her presence to build up, encourage, and share what is good and beautiful and hopeful, bringing grace and joy into a cynical digital space. Beyond resisting toxicity, a woman witnesses online by actively bringing grace into the digital space, using her presence to encourage others, to share what is true, good, and beautiful, to bring hope and joy, and to build up rather than tear down, so that her online presence gives grace to those who encounter it, a positive and joyful voice amid the cynicism and negativity, her words and sharing offering light in a dark space and witnessing to the faith through the grace and joy she brings online. This means a woman actively witnesses online by building up, encouraging, and sharing the good, so that she

brings grace and joy into the digital space as a positive presence amid its cynicism. The woman who witnesses with grace online brings light and joy into a cynical digital space. Witnessing with grace online means building up and sharing the good, so that a woman brings grace and joy into the digital world.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conversations Across the Divide

Kindness in the Midst of Disagreement

A woman will often find herself in conversation with people who disagree with her deeply, and in a divided age she does well to learn to engage across that divide with kindness, finding common ground and building bridges rather than deepening the division. Understanding how to have conversations across the divide helps a woman witness through how she disagrees.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. — Romans 12:18

Staying Kind Amid Disagreement

A woman witnesses powerfully by staying genuinely kind toward those she disagrees with, refusing the hostility that marks the culture's divisions and treating opponents as persons to love. In a deeply divided age, a woman's kindness toward those she disagrees with is itself a powerful witness, for while the culture treats disagreement as warfare and opponents as enemies to be despised, a woman who remains genuinely kind, respectful, and warm toward those who hold opposing views stands out sharply, refusing the hostility and contempt that mark the divisions, and treating even those she deeply disagrees with as persons to be loved, her kindness amid disagreement a countercultural witness. This means a woman stays kind amid disagreement, refusing hostility and treating opponents as persons to love, so that her kindness becomes a countercultural witness in a divided age. The woman who stays kind amid disagreement witnesses through how she treats those she opposes. Staying kind amid disagreement refuses the culture's hostility, so that a woman treats opponents as persons to love and witnesses by her kindness.

Finding Common Ground

A woman builds bridges by finding the common ground she shares even with those who disagree with her, the shared humanity and concerns that make genuine conversation

possible. Conversations across the divide go better when a woman seeks common ground, for even with those who disagree with her deeply, she shares a common humanity, common concerns, and often more points of agreement than the divisions suggest, so that by looking for and naming what she shares with the other person, their shared hopes, fears, and values, she builds a bridge on which genuine conversation can happen, moving beyond caricature and hostility to real human connection, common ground making dialogue possible where division would close it. This means a woman finds common ground with those who disagree with her, the shared humanity and concerns beneath the division, so that she builds bridges on which genuine conversation can happen. The woman who finds common ground builds bridges across the divide. Finding common ground names what a woman shares even with opponents, so that she builds a bridge for genuine conversation.

Building Bridges, Not Walls

A woman engages disagreement aiming to build bridges rather than walls, keeping the relationship and the conversation open rather than deepening division or writing people off. The aim of a woman's engagement across the divide is to build bridges rather than walls, for she seeks not to win a culture-war skirmish or to write off those who differ but to keep relationships and conversations open, to maintain connection across disagreement, and to leave the door open for understanding and even the faith, so that she builds bridges to people rather than walls against them, refusing to let disagreement sever relationship, her bridge-building keeping alive the human connection through which witness travels. This means a woman aims to build bridges rather than walls in her engagement across disagreement, keeping relationships and conversations open, so that she maintains connection rather than deepening division or writing people off. The woman who builds bridges, not walls, keeps relationships open across disagreement. Building bridges, not walls, keeps relationships and conversations open, so that a woman maintains connection across the divide rather than severing it.

CHAPTER SIX

Resisting Cynicism in Yourself

Guarding Your Own Heart

A woman cannot be a joyful presence if cynicism has taken root in her own heart, and the surrounding culture of outrage and despair constantly works to make her cynical too, so

she must actively guard her own heart against it. Understanding how to resist cynicism in herself protects the joy from which her witness flows.

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable… think about these things. — Philippians 4:8

The Pull Toward Cynicism

A woman must recognize the constant pull of the surrounding culture toward cynicism, which would drain her of joy and hope if she absorbs it unawares. A woman is constantly pulled toward cynicism by the surrounding culture, for the steady diet of outrage, bad news, mockery, and despair that saturates the media and public conversation works to make everyone cynical, suspicious, and hopeless, so that she must recognize this pull and the danger that she will absorb the culture's cynicism unawares, letting it drain her of the joy and hope that make her witness possible, the cynicism of the age being contagious and ever-present, pressing on her heart. This means a woman recognizes the pull toward cynicism in the surrounding culture, so that she is alert to the danger of absorbing its outrage and despair and losing her joy and hope. The woman who recognizes the pull toward cynicism guards against absorbing the culture's despair. The pull toward cynicism is the constant pressure of a culture of outrage and despair, so that a woman must recognize its danger to her joy.

Guarding What You Take In

A woman resists cynicism by guarding what she takes in, limiting her intake of the outrage and negativity that breed it and filling her mind instead with what is true, good, and lovely. A chief way a woman resists cynicism is by guarding what she takes in, for the mind is shaped by what it dwells on, so that she limits her consumption of the endless outrage, bad news, and negativity that breed cynicism, and deliberately fills her mind instead with what is true, honorable, lovely, and good, as Scripture directs, nourishing her heart on what builds hope and joy rather than what corrodes them, guarding the inputs that shape her outlook. This means a woman guards what she takes in, limiting the outrage and negativity she consumes and filling her mind with what is good and lovely, so that she protects her heart from the inputs that breed cynicism. The woman who guards what she takes in protects her heart from the culture's corroding negativity. Guarding what you take in limits the outrage a woman consumes and fills her mind with the good, so that she resists the inputs that breed cynicism.

Choosing Hope Deliberately

A woman resists cynicism by deliberately choosing hope, refusing the easy slide into despair and intentionally holding to the hope that her faith gives even when the culture scorns it. Resisting cynicism finally requires a woman to choose hope deliberately, for cynicism is in part a choice, an easy surrender to despair that feels sophisticated, and she must consciously refuse it, intentionally holding to the hope her faith gives, choosing to believe in goodness, redemption, and God's work in the world even when the culture scorns such hope as naive, so that her hope is a deliberate and repeated choice against the gravity of cynicism, actively chosen rather than passively lost. This means a woman chooses hope deliberately against the pull of cynicism, refusing the slide into despair and intentionally holding to the hope her faith gives, so that she keeps her hope by choice rather than losing it by default. The woman who chooses hope deliberately resists cynicism by an active and repeated choice. Choosing hope deliberately refuses the slide into despair, so that a woman holds to the hope of her faith against the pull of cynicism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hope as the Root of Joy

The Source That Sustains It All

Beneath genuine and lasting joy lies hope, the Christian hope grounded in God and His promises, which is the deep root from which joy grows and the source that sustains a joyful presence through everything. Understanding hope as the root of joy reveals what ultimately makes a woman's joy possible and durable.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. — Romans 15:13

Joy Grows from Hope

Lasting joy grows from hope, for a woman can be durably joyful only because she has a real hope that the future, in God, is good, whatever the present holds. Genuine and lasting joy grows from hope, for a woman can be truly and durably joyful only because she holds a real hope, a confident expectation grounded in God that the ultimate future is good, that God is at work, that evil and death do not have the last word, and that all shall be well in Him, so that this hope is the root from which her joy grows, her gladness flowing from her confidence in a good future secured by God, joy rising from the soil of hope. This means a woman understands that joy grows from hope, so that she sees her lasting joy as rooted in the confident hope that the future in God is good, hope being the source of her gladness. The woman who understands joy grows from hope roots her

gladness in the confident expectation of a good future in God. Joy grows from hope, so that a woman's lasting gladness flows from her confident hope that the future in God is good.

Christian Hope Is Grounded, Not Wishful

Christian hope is not vague wishful thinking but a confident expectation grounded in God's character, promises, and the resurrection of Christ, which makes it strong enough to sustain joy. The hope from which Christian joy grows is not vague optimism or wishful thinking but a grounded and confident expectation, resting on the character of God, His promises, and the historical reality of Christ's resurrection, which guarantees the believer's hope, so that Christian hope is solid enough to bear the weight of joy, anchored in realities rather than wishes, and a woman's joy is durable precisely because the hope it grows from is grounded, her confidence resting on God who does not fail rather than on a hopeful feeling that could collapse. This means a woman understands that Christian hope is grounded, not wishful, resting on God's promises and Christ's resurrection, so that she sees her joy as durable because the hope it rests on is solid. The woman who understands Christian hope is grounded, not wishful, roots her joy in a hope that cannot collapse. Christian hope is grounded, not wishful, resting on God and the resurrection, so that it is strong enough to sustain a woman's joy.

Hope That Sustains Through Everything

Because her joy rests on a hope grounded in God, a woman can remain a joyful presence through everything, for the hope that sustains her does not depend on circumstances and cannot finally be defeated. The grounded hope from which joy grows is able to sustain a woman through everything, for because her hope rests on God and not on circumstances, it endures through suffering, failure, and the darkness of the age, and her joy, rooted in such hope, can likewise endure, so that she can remain a joyful presence through every trial, her hope and joy sustained by a God who cannot be defeated, the hope that abounds by the power of the Holy Spirit carrying her joy through all that would otherwise extinguish it. This means a woman understands that her grounded hope sustains her joy through everything, so that she can remain a joyful presence through every trial because the hope beneath her joy does not depend on circumstances. The woman who has hope that sustains through everything remains joyful through every trial. Hope that sustains through everything carries a woman's joy through trial, so that she remains a joyful presence because her hope rests on God, not circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Carry Joy into the Darkness

The woman who knew joy was a powerful witness now has the practical means to be a joyful presence. We have seen that she must cultivate real joy, distinct from happiness and rooted in God; that genuine joy does not deny reality but coexists honestly with suffering; that her witness must be winsome, warm, and approachable rather than preachy or judgmental; that she is called to be a positive presence in the digital world, resisting its toxicity and bringing grace; that she can engage conversations across the divide with kindness, finding common ground and building bridges; that she must resist cynicism in her own heart, guarding what she takes in and choosing hope; and that hope is the deep root from which lasting joy grows.

Running through all of it is a single truth: the joyful woman is the most subversive and attractive presence in a cynical age. Her joy, rooted in hope and grounded in God, witnesses to a reality the culture cannot explain, drawing the weary and overturning the despair that everyone else takes for granted.

So carry joy into the darkness. Cultivate real joy by rooting your life in God, and let it be honest, coexisting with the real sorrows of life rather than denying them. Be winsome, warm, and approachable, the kind of believer people actually want to be around. Bring grace into the digital world, resisting its toxicity. Engage those who disagree with you kindly, finding common ground and building bridges. Guard your own heart against cynicism, filling your mind with what is good and choosing hope deliberately. And root your joy in the grounded Christian hope that sustains it through everything. In a cynical age starved for joy, be the woman whose gladness the culture cannot explain. Carry the joy of Christ into the darkness, and watch it draw others toward its source.

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