

New from the acclaimed author of *Roll with It*
JAMIE SUMNER

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FOCUS ON RETAIL

Your Time to Shine

by Christy Dollins, CRA Board Member & Munce Group COO

Ever feel like you just can't compete with online stores? Have you heard people say, "I can get it cheaper and faster online"? We all hear these phrases, and the noise of it can be deafening. But we must remember there are other comments being made. And although they may not be the loudest, they make the biggest impact on your business.



I believe online stores cannot compete with you!

Last year, I was invited to a graduation party that was planned at the last minute. But I knew just what I wanted to give the graduate! When I was in high school, my youth group leader gave me the book *My Utmost for His Highest*. She wrote a nice note on the inside cover and tucked a gift card inside. I will admit at that age I was more excited about the gift card than I was about the book. But her note said she read this book every day for years and it kept her trekking with Jesus. So I packed it up with my boxes for college and planned to read it daily. And I did. After a few years, I realized just how valuable that gift was, as it had a profound impact on my life and my relationship with Jesus through the years.

I knew I had to give my friend's daughter this book with a gift card for her graduation. But it was too late to order online. Even with Amazon Prime, it would not arrive in time. With Lifeway and Family closed, we no longer have a Christian bookstore in our town that I can just run into, knowing they would have exactly what I was looking for. So I did a Google search. After about eight pages, I found a small used bookstore that was beginning to sell new books. They had not done any advertising, online or otherwise, but they had a business listing. I drove there after work, and sure enough, they had my book. From that moment, I became a huge fan and loyal customer.

Another experience I had was buying an imprinted Bible online as a gift for my daughter. It was bright pink with her name on it, and I just knew she would be thrilled. However, imagine my surprise when it finally showed up in the mail after waiting two weeks and it was pocket sized! The print was small and we could barely read it. Thanks, Mom! Well, that was a bust. Do you think I have shopped that site again?

My takeaways from these experiences:

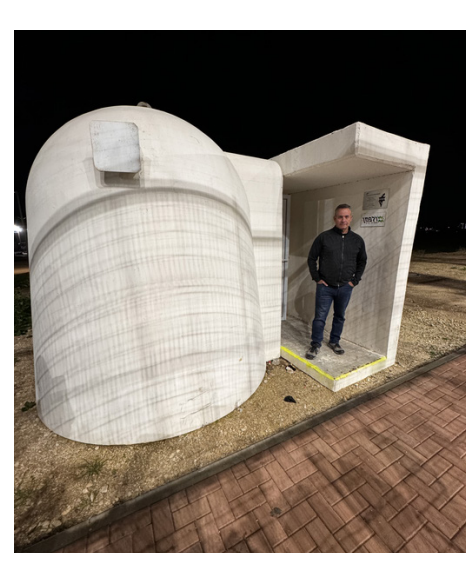
- There is no way an online store can compete with a customer service-oriented independent Christian bookstore that is stocked with the best products in Christian retail.
- I would have saved a lot of time and frustration if I found the local bookstore sooner than scrolling through Google and getting all the way to page eight (How many people give up long before then?).
- Shopping in a store to see what catches your eye is much easier than scrolling online. I was searching for a specific product and that's what led me to the store. But with holidays and special occasions, many customers are searching for gifts, they just don't know exactly what yet.

Do residents in your area know you are there? Do they know you carry gifts for upcoming special days for moms, dads and grads? Are they having to scroll far down into a bunny trail on Google to find you? Or are you sending direct mail pieces, posting regularly on social media platforms and checking Google to see where you rank? Are you showing your vast array of products and not just announcing your store name? Are your displays enticing and ever changing so customers are constantly wanting to see what you're bringing in?

This is your time to shine! Customers are realizing your value. They may not be the loudest group, but they are consistently there for you. Online stores cannot compete with that!

FOCUS ON THE INDUSTRY

Kerusso Shirt Sales Help Purchase Bomb Shelters



The founder and CEO of 37-year-old Kerusso, the world's largest Christian apparel company, has twice been to Israel. Late last year, he was invited to be part of a specialized tour of the Holy Land, recently wracked by unimaginable violence. The October 7 massacre by Hamas prompted outpourings of support from many quarters, including pro-Israel Christian groups in America. One in particular, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (FOI), was able to take a small team to places most of us don't have a chance to go.

In January, Kennett continued the journey walking out his faith in the places where it began for the whole world.

FOI, based in New Jersey, has a history that dovetails with the interests of Americans like Kennett, who has lived his life in Northwest Arkansas. The ministry was founded 85 years ago, in the shadows of a ghastly season of violence against Jews in Europe. By November 1938, Hitler had begun gobbling up territory, and his scapegoat for Germany's defeat in World War 1 was primarily the Jews. On the night of November 9 and 10, Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues in Germany were firebombed and otherwise, destroyed. Hundreds of Jews were murdered, and 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and sent to concentration camps.

Some in America were paying attention. A gathering of pastors and businessmen in Philadelphia met and organized. One of the outcomes was the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. Since that time, the group has worked day and night to advocate for the Jewish people.

Now, a businessman from Berryville has taken up the baton to support the "People of the Book."

The tour Kennett participated in in January was specifically designed to reveal exactly what Hamas did last fall. The information is disturbing, even catastrophic, but FOI, led by executive director Jim Showers, believes it needs to be heard and seen.

"Now that I'm a witness to firsthand accounts and the evidence of what happened, I feel compelled to share it," he said from Kerusso's headquarters in the Berryville Industrial Park. "We visited with Israelis near Gaza who lived through the savage attacks and lost loved ones. We saw 1,200 cars that were gathered from nearby and held in a field; riddled with bullet holes, or completely burned out. Cars that once had drivers and passengers in them who were murdered at or near the Nova Music Festival. We spent time in the same hotels with more than a thousand Israeli refugee families; a small portion of the 200,000 who are currently displaced from their homes around Gaza and Northern Israel."

The group toured both the south and north, near the Gaza border where as many as 2,500 Hamas terrorists murdered and kidnapped more than 1,200 Israelis, along with the volatile border with Syria and Lebanon. Near Gaza, the day-long pogrom has been called the darkest day in the history of modern Israel, founded in 1948. The things Kennett saw almost defy description, but he saw it with his own eyes.

Kennett's tour coincided with his company's donation of proceeds from T-shirt sales. The money raised has helped Israel buy and install bomb shelters. Kennett explained that it was almost surreal to be able to stand in one of those shelters in a Kibbutz near Gaza.

"FOI works with donors and Operation Life Shield to provide as many shelters as possible throughout Israel. Each shelter can fit about 20 people, tightly packed," he explained.

Kennett was converted to the Christian faith, "saved" as they say in the South. Not so many years later, the whole experience literally drove him to start Kerusso. The modest beginnings—printing, folding and packing shirts for shipping—soon outgrew a spare bedroom. Kerusso was born and spent the first few years in Eureka Springs. Eventually, the company expanded, and the impressive facility in Berryville now employs 130 people. Kerusso's sales went global with the entrance into Christian retail. Today, the company daily receives faith stories, from Sarajevo to Sacramento.

"Now, I was able to go take our message to the Land of Israel, and that's something I'll never forget," he shared.

Neither will the people of Israel forget the life-saving message the powerhouse company from Berryville delivered.

Celebrating 30 Years of Ministry

Christian Retail Association would like to congratulate Joy Christian Bookstore for 30 years of ministry!

Originally opened in 1976, Joy Christian Bookstore was purchased in April 1994 by Kevin VanDuyne, who was looking for a way to further impact the small-town community of Wabash, Indiana. In December 2009, Kevin opened a second location in Kokomo, Indiana. The store's longevity is due in part to its staff members who go the extra mile to make customers feel welcome. Kevin says, "It's our prayer that, whether we sell a book, have a conversation or just share an experience, we are encouraging people in their walk with Christ."



FOCUS ON CPE

Have You Made Plans for Fort Wayne?



Did you know Fort Wayne is Indiana's second largest city? This walkable downtown provides access to shopping, dining, entertainment and riverfront views for a vibrant experience in an urban setting. Award-winning attractions include a children's zoo, minor league baseball, Union Street Market and live shows. To see all that Fort Wayne has to offer, click [here](#).

CPE Summer 2024 is expected to be one of the largest attended shows to date, so be sure to register and book your rooms early. You have two different hotels to choose from—the Hilton, which is attached to the convention

center, and the Courtyard Marriott, which is steps away from the convention center and attached via an overhead walkway.

Hilton
Discounted rooms are available for \$149 plus tax per night, for stays during August 1-7. Rooms must be booked by **July 2**.

Courtyard Marriott
Discounted rooms are available for \$148 plus tax per night, for stays during August 1-8. Rooms must be booked by **July 8**.

To reserve your room, click [here](#).

CPE Summer 2024 will be at the Midwest's award-winning event facility, Grand Wayne Convention Center, in downtown Fort Wayne, IN, on August 4-6. Registration is FREE for retailers. To learn more, visit [www.cpeshow.com](#).

Register Today

FOCUS ON PRODUCT

Honest Prayers for Mama Bears

by Hillary Morgan Ferrer with Julie Loos (Harvest House)

This new addition to the Mama Bear Apologetics series, which has sold over 300,000 copies, is an aptly titled compilation of nearly 150 prayers written from the heart, in the moment, without pretense or flowery words for any season of parenting. For moms trying to find the words they need, prayers are grouped into 12 sections, including "Short Prayers for the Daily Grind" and "Prayers for My Kids' Spiritual Formation," and listed in an index by topics that range from anger and anxiety to social media and wisdom. Many of the prayers end with an "honest" next step to help moms put their prayers into action.



To order now, contact Harvest House by calling 800-547-8979

How this book helps readers: *Honest Prayers for Mama Bears* puts words to the cries of a mom's heart as she seeks clarity and truth in today's confused culture.